



Convocation 2016
June 3 and 4, 2016
Principal Michael Goldbloom, C.M.'s Address

Friday afternoon

Mr. Chancellor,
Dr. Sophie Brochu,

Saturday morning

Mr. Chancellor,
Dr. Monique Gagnon-Tremblay,
Dr. Xavier Dolan,

Saturday afternoon

Mr. Chancellor,
Dr. Abel Bosum,

Members of the Class of 2016,
Members of Convocation,
Families and friends.

Every year, for 173 years, Bishop's has celebrated this special day in the life of our university.

The central role of the Chancellor,

the academic dress,

the Latin citations,

and the other formalities of the Convocation proceedings,

remind us that the idea of the university as a community of learning dates back to the Middle Ages and has endured through the centuries.

Like all great institutions, Bishop's has evolved over the decades as each generation has been charged with ensuring that the University meets the needs of its time.

We can all take pride in knowing that although much has changed, Bishop's continues to pursue its core mission of offering a sound and liberal education to undergraduate students.

We remain focused on being an institution of choice for outstanding young people seeking academic excellence and a rich undergraduate experience.

We strive:

- to be a university that instills confidence, courage and a sense of responsibility in its students.
- to be a place that nurtures personal and intellectual freedom and fosters enduring friendships.

We are proud that our graduating students consistently tell us that we have delivered on the promises we made to them when they chose Bishop's.

Over the past few months, several external assessments confirmed that our students value highly their experiences at Bishop's.

In the 2016 Maclean's rankings, our students placed Bishop's first in Canada amongst the primarily undergraduate universities for:

- student satisfaction,
- the quality of our professors, and
- residence living.

Huffington Post ranked us:

- first for extracurricular activities, and
- first for sports & recreation.

Both Huffington Post and UniversityHub ranked us first for preparing future entrepreneurs, and the National Survey of Student Engagement placed Bishop's in the top 10% of over 3,000 universities across North America for :

- our supportive environment;
- the quality of our student-faculty interaction
- collaborative learning which occurs on our campus; and
- the high order learning we provide.

So we have had a good year. Bishop's is doing well.

Much of Bishop's endures over time, our heritage buildings, our bucolic campus, and most importantly our focus on a liberal education for undergraduates.

But, it is also true that each generation of students reinvents the University.

And the class of 2016 has contributed to Bishop's being an intellectually vibrant, ambitious and caring community.

J'ai été vivement impressionné par les efforts de nos finissants afin que les valeurs fondatrices de notre université soient transmises à la prochaine génération d'étudiants qui, à leur tour, sauront les adopter et les transmettre.

Ils ont démontré aux étudiants qui les suivent que les valeurs fondamentales que sont

- la curiosité,
- la rigueur,
- le respect d'autrui,
- l'intégrité,
- et l'engagement

sont des valeurs sûres et, ce faisant, ils ont marqué de façon positive leur université.

Et grâce à nos étudiants et toute notre communauté universitaire, je peux dire que Bishop's a eu une année exceptionnelle.

It was a year in which world events were felt very intensely on our campus.

Early in November Edward Snowden delivered a Donald Lecture from Moscow.

Although he only visited us virtually, his moral courage, commitment, and intelligence were evident to the standing room-only audiences here in Centennial, in Bandeen Hall and to the 500 Bishop's alumni who watched the conference on line.

No matter what any of us may think about the legality or morality of his actions, he did force us to think about the implications of the massive amount of data that governments are gathering about their citizens.

Ten days after Snowden's talk, the terrorist attacks occurred in Paris.

The attacks happened on Friday night and when Fiona and I got up on Saturday morning we decided to reach out to the French students on the campus.

We sent an email to five students inviting them for dinner and encouraging them to share the invitation with their French friends.

I am not a great fan of social media, but it certainly did its job that day.

Sixty students came to dinner at the house that night.

It was a special evening of solidarity and camaraderie.

And then a few days later the French police found three of the terrorists in an apartment in Paris.

And I was left wondering if the police had located the terrorists by using some of the information gathering techniques that Snowden had condemned.

One of the great challenges that our graduates will face is to determine how best to reconcile privacy and security.

You will need to consider the differences between privacy and anonymity and consider the risks and benefits of each.

The world is a complex place and it is important that we confront these questions.

And the Donald Lectures series helped us to do that.

Edward Snowden was followed by Naomi Klein who delivered a powerful Donald Lecture soon after returning from the climate change conference in Paris.

And Omar Khadr's lawyer, Dennis Edney, talked to us about what had motivated him to represent Mr. Khadr.

Mr. Edney spoke about the physical and emotional brutality that Mr. Khadr faced at Guantanamo.

He also spoke movingly of his faith in and gratitude for the Canadian judicial system.

Another way in which world events impacted Bishop's this year was the Syrian refugee crisis.

Every year Bishop's and Champlain Regional College sponsor two refugee students.

The University waives tuition for the first year and provides a room in residence.

Our food service provider, Sodexo, provides a free meal plan and a committee of volunteers engages in fundraising to provide support for the students.

In the face of the crisis in Syria, the University community came together to sponsor an additional refugee.

Amhad joined us in January and has just completed his first semester studying computer science.

We are proud to have him as a member of our community.

The Refugee Sponsorship Group held its annual garage sale a few weeks ago.

There were so many things donated this year that they could not all be accommodated in the W.B. Scott arena where the sale is held.

This great community effort raised over \$20,000 for our refugee students.

We can all take pride in the collective effort to help others less fortunate than ourselves.

The world not only came to Bishop's this year, we went out to engage with it.

A group of our students attended the Model United Nations in New York.

Our delegation, representing the United Arab Emirates, won an Outstanding Delegation Award and two students were recognized as outstanding delegates.

And Stephanie Tavares, who will graduate Saturday afternoon, is about to embark on an extraordinary journey of discovery as she aims to set a world record by visiting every country on earth over the next three years.

Each of us will have our own stories about what made this year unique.

Let me share three of mine with you.

The first occurred during orientation week.

There is a tradition that the new students congregate late one night in front of the house on Harrold Drive to wake the Principal and sing the school song.

I try to think of something original to say or do each year.

And this year I had what I thought was a brilliant idea.

I filled a mug with beer so that I could raise it when the students sang the line “Raise your beer mugs and little brown jugs to Bishop’s University.”

There were close to 400 students on the lawn that night and it all went as planned.

The students were in great voice.

And I raised my mug at the appropriate time.

After they finished singing, everyone was quiet and I was about to speak when from the back of the crowd a chant began to grow.

“Chug, chug, chug, chug”.

And suddenly I was facing one of the great character tests of my time as Principal of Bishop’s.

I instantly realized that I could resist the exhortations of the crowd, remain true to my message about the responsible consumption of alcohol, and look like a nerd.

Or I could ignore my own admonition by downing the beer.

So my choice was essentially nerd or hypocrite.

I chugged the beer.

Which goes to show you that maturity and good judgment do not necessarily come with age.

There are still life lessons to be learned even at 63 years of age.

My second memorable moment occurred a few weeks later.

Once every two years our football team travels to the Maritimes for a game.

This has traditionally required the team to leave by bus on Thursday, return overnight on Saturday and arrive back on campus on Sunday morning having spent more than 24 hours on the bus.

This year, with the help of some donors, we decided to charter a plane.

It did not actually cost much more because we were able to leave on Friday afternoon and return on Saturday evening, thus reducing hotel and food costs.

And we also sold tickets on the plane to some generous alumni who came along.

We played a hard fought game against Saint Mary's in Halifax and came from behind in the dying minutes of the second half with a touchdown pass for the win.

Before getting on the plane for the flight home, we stopped for dinner.

I found myself at a table with three of the players.

One of them, Mathieu Demers, was the quarterback.

He came to Bishop's from the CEGEP de Limoilou in Quebec City.

Bishop's is his first experience studying in English.

Trevon Millings, from Montreal, was also in his first year having come to Bishop's from Champlain College.

Mathieu – the quarterback – told me that the winning touchdown was the first touchdown pass he had ever thrown in university football.

Trevon then said that it was the first touchdown he had ever caught in university football.

And they both said that it was the first university football game they had ever won.

We were all smiling in the joy of their achievements.

And then they brought tears to my eyes.

They both said that they had never been on an airplane before and that it had been the best weekend of their lives.

In that moment they captured the best of Bishop's.

I was so pleased that Bishop's – with the help of our donors and the dedication of our staff - was able to offer such an important life experience for our students.

Mathieu and Trevon may not go on to be professional football players, but I am confident that we have helped them on their way to being confident, productive and engaged citizens.

Like my first story, my final story also entailed potential for hypocrisy but has a happier ending.

One of the messages I give to all of our new students during their first week on campus is that that they should not be afraid to try new things while at Bishop's.

That they should not let their insecurities impede them from doing things that take them out of their comfort zones.

That all made good sense to me until Fannie Gaudette, the Director of the University Singers, asked me to sing a solo line in the spring concert.

I desperately wanted to say no, but I knew that it would be hypocritical to refuse.

She only asked me to sing one line in the Pharell Williams song "Be Happy".

We had a private rehearsal in the basement of Bandeen.

And I was dreadful.

At one point Fannie said that I should stop coming in on the down beat.

I nodded knowingly, but I had no idea what she meant.

The night before the concert, I woke up in the middle of the night, panicked because I couldn't remember my line.

Fannie arranged for an extra rehearsal on the afternoon of the concert.

I could tell that she was worried, which, of course, made me even more nervous.

But somehow she got me through it.

And now I want to join the University Singers.

Under Fannie's direction The University Singers had an ambitious and successful year.

In addition to the Spring Concert of songs from the New Millennium, in December, they put on a Christmas concert and then joined l'Orchestre Symphonique de Sherbrooke to perform carols by John Rutter.

We hosted our fourth annual U4 weekend with delegations from our three sister institutions: Acadia, Mount Allison and St. Francis Xavier.

The debating competition involved eight teams from the four universities.

The two teams in the final were both from Bishop's.

I know it is impolite to boast, but you can probably figure out which university won.

We included a very successful business case competition for the first time.

And our Dean of Arts and Science, Dr. Michele Murray, our Chaplain, Heather Thompson, and our Student President, Matthew Robinson, gave talks on the theme that a Liberal Education Prepares U4 Global Citizenship.

So it was a year of achievement and it was also a year of reflection.

Across North America, post-secondary institutions have been increasingly focused on finding ways to support students' diverse needs, specifically addressing issues related to mental health, sexual safety and gender equity.

We were one of six universities to participate in an innovative national health initiative to encourage conversation on the hazardous relationship between young women and binge drinking.

In March we joined 15 universities and 18 student associations representing close to 185,000 students in launching a provincial campaign aimed at student awareness about sexual harassment, violence and consent.

Recently, we received a generous donation from one of our alumni, which has allowed us to create a new student internship position dedicated to sexual health and safety and gender equity.

We held our annual Mental Health and Wellness Week and continued our efforts to decrease the stigma related to mental illness and to raise awareness about how to facilitate mental health.

So the campus has been busy, but our community has also been very active beyond the Bishop's bubble.

Our B.E.S.T. program has enabled a new group of students to pursue their diverse and ambitious dreams. Here is a sample of what some of our students will be doing this summer:

- presenting research at the Canadian Chemistry Conference in Halifax;
- participating in an internship at the Institut National du Sport du Quebec;
- volunteering with a Child Rights Initiative in Jamaica;
- studying Jane Austen at King's College in London;
- attending the Summer Institute in Education at UBC;
- participating in a curatorial internship at a gallery in the Dawson City in the Yukon; and
- working as a research assistant to a veterinary epidemiologist in Calgary.

We continue to pursue our capital campaign – the first in more than a decade – which will help preserve the Bishop's we love – its small classes, its residential character, the access to professors and the other life-changing experiences that make it so special.

As you know, Quebec universities are facing major financial challenges.

We are a public university and our finances are in large measure dependent on government funding.

But private philanthropy has always been and will continue to be a key factor in Bishop's capacity to achieve its high ambitions.

We are well on our way to reaching our \$30 million goal.

And one of the key factors in the success of the campaign was the first major gift we received.

Wally Denver of the class of 1961 is the person who got the campaign started by making a very generous donation to our sports centre.

Wally is here today to celebrate his niece Bianca's graduation.

He won't be happy with me for doing this, but I would ask Wally to stand so that we can thank him for his generosity to Bishop's.

One of the highlights of the campaign this year was a \$2.5 million donation from the Joyce Foundation which will provide financial support to students who require it.

We don't want any student to be denied a Bishop's education for financial reasons.

It would not be possible to recognize every donor but I know that the Bishop's community would want me to honour John Donald of the class of 1960 who made a multi-million dollar gift to endow the Donald Lecture Series.

From Roméo Dallaire, Jessie Jackson, Clara Hughes and Edward Snowden to Michaëlle Jean, Ed Burtynsky, Chris Hadfield and Naomi Klein, each of our speakers has brought us unique insights and provoked stimulating debates on the most compelling issues and events of our time.

I cannot think of more appropriate way to show support for the essence of what Bishop's is – and what we must constantly aspire to be - than John Donald's decision to give us the means to invite these distinguished speakers to expand our knowledge, to challenge us, to encourage us to reflect, to question and to learn.

John is with us this afternoon to celebrate his niece Stephanie Lam's graduation.

I know that he won't be happy with me for doing this, but I would ask that John stand up so that we can express our great appreciation to him.

We still refer to the Abbott, Munster and Kuehner residences as 'Newside' but they were actually built more than 50 years ago and need to be updated.

Last August, with the support of the capital campaign, we undertook the renovation of Abbott.

I am pleased to report that the project was completed on time and on budget.

Another major objective of the campaign is to renovate the John Bassett Memorial Library.

La bibliothèque, est toujours la pierre angulaire de notre université, là où on peut trouver des renseignements et générer et partager des idées.

À une époque où l'acquisition des connaissances se fait à une vitesse sans précédent, nous devons adapter la bibliothèque aux réalités du 21^e siècle.

Nous imaginons de nouveaux espaces et de nouvelles technologies qui aideront nos étudiantes et nos étudiants à accéder à l'information et à collaborer ensemble.

Nous imaginons un corps professoral capable de poursuivre ses recherches et d'en diffuser les résultats efficacement.

Nous imaginons enfin un lieu qui sera le cœur spirituel de notre campus.

We are enormously grateful to the class of 2016 for joining with students from other classes in donating one million dollars to this project.

One of the most powerful messages of this gift is that our students have wanted to support future generations of students.

In current parlance you have chosen to 'pay it forward'.

You won't be here to benefit from the renovated library but you have chosen to support the students who will follow.

On their behalf we say thank you.

A year ago this week the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its report on Canada's Indian Residential School System and its on-going legacy.

The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair - now a Senator - issued a call for action towards reconciliation.

The Commission not only called upon governments to act, it called upon us individually and collectively to respond to the legacy of the Residential Schools.

Canada's universities educate more than a million students each year.

But fewer than 10% of Indigenous people in Canada have a university degree compared to 28 % of non-aboriginals

There is an urgent need to close this education gap.

Closing this gap will benefit not only indigenous graduates and their communities but Canada as a whole.

Bishop's offers a welcoming and respectful learning environment and we stand ready to do our part.

We have begun to discuss these issues with our indigenous students

We have much that we would like to do to make Bishop's and all of the educational institutions here in Lennoxville more welcoming and supportive to indigenous students.

We hope to work with Abel Bosum and other aboriginal leaders to learn from and contribute to our indigenous communities.

Included in Saturday afternoon Address

Individually and collectively, the Class of 2016 consistently responded to the needs of people less fortunate than themselves here in Sherbrooke and around the world.

Whether it was:

Cystic Fibrosis,

ALS, or

Disadvantaged children,

our students have consistently given of their time, their energy and their resources to help others.

Our students are concerned with making our world a better place.

So we owe a great debt of gratitude to the Class of 2016 for how they have cared for each other, for this institution and for the world.

And now I would like to ask the Class of 2016 to rise together so that we can express our gratitude to them - not for what they have achieved individually - but for what they have contributed collectively to Bishop's.

As I look out at all of you, I am reminded that it was late on a September night, only a few years ago, that many of you stood together on the lawn in front of the Principal's residence singing at the top of your lungs that

you were conditioned to your fate,

you would never graduate,

and that you would stay here forever more.

Well, fortunately, you were wrong about never graduating but I suspect that you were right when you sang the line that “College days will linger ever in our hearts”.

You will certainly linger in ours.

Vous avez fait honneur à votre université, à vos familles et, surtout, à vous-même.

C’est donc avec une grande fierté mêlée d’un peu de tristesse que nous vous disons au revoir.

You have done your university, your families and yourselves proud.

It is with a bittersweet feeling that we bid you adieu.

We do so, however, with confidence that you leave here ready and determined to choose your own paths

to further the boundaries of knowledge

to care for our planet, and

to do your part in the never-ending quest to advance peace, justice, equality and prosperity in the world.

Nous suivrons vos réalisations avec grand intérêt.

It will be exciting to watch you.

Congratulations for all you have achieved.

Thank you for all you have contributed.

So celebrate this weekend.

And then go out and use the knowledge and skills you acquired at Bishop's to make the better world you believe in.

Congratulations.