

The University of British Columbia:  
Here it is – It is yours

Installation Address of  
Professor Stephen J. Toope

As Twelfth President and Vice-Chancellor  
Of the University of British Columbia

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Chief Campbell, Deputy Minister Quayle, Mayor Sullivan, Mr Chancellor, Chair of the Board of Governors, Governors, distinguished representatives of sister universities, Fellow Professors, Students, Staff Members, Alumni representatives, my Family and Friends:

Thank you all for joining me today in honouring the history and the promise of the University of British Columbia. The installation of a new president is a singular moment in the life of any university; a moment to reflect upon the past, to celebrate the present and to imagine an even more illustrious future. You have asked me to take on a mantle worn by such notable predecessors as Frank Wesbrook, Norman MacKenzie, David Strangway and Martha Piper. So my first words must be words of thanks to courageous and visionary forebears who in just under a century have built a university from extremely humble beginnings into a research and teaching powerhouse with global influence.

But more than a proud 12<sup>th</sup> President, I am also an eager new student of UBC, and what I have discovered so far is fascinating, often inspiring, and always instructive. For example, it was the first President of UBC, Dr Frank Wesbrook, who coined the university motto: *Tuum Est*. I am happy to report that universities being what they are, privileged sites of debate and contention over ideas, there has long been disagreement over the proper translation into English of that motto. Although Wesbrook initially translated the phrase as "it is yours", he later wrote that he had come to prefer "it's up to you" because it emphasized a student's personal responsibility to learn and to achieve. With great respect, I beg to differ; I think that "it's up to you" fits the predominant individualism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it underemphasizes the extent to which teaching, learning and research are collaborative ventures.

It is through social interaction that most great intellectual advances are made; even the archetypal lonely scholar of classics or philosophy sitting in her office and burning the midnight oil is interacting with earlier generations of scholars on

whose shoulders she stands to make her own contribution to knowledge. Scientists who work in labs know deeply that their discoveries are all collaborative. Nobel prizes are awarded to individuals, but I have always found that tradition a tad disingenuous; few scholars in any field work in isolation. Universities are not merely places where individuals pursue their individual endeavours, they are places where people work together to dream and to achieve common goals.

We need to find more ways to encourage collaboration, from building more physical spaces on the model of the Michael Smith Laboratories to seeding collaborative research that can attract support from outside the university. I am delighted to announce today the creation of the Martha Piper Research Fund, drawn from a five-year dedication of \$5 million dollars from the Trek Endowment. As you may know, this endowment is produced from the proceeds of the University Town Development. Beginning to Honour the remarkable contributions of my predecessor, the Martha Piper Fund will be available for important new research projects, providing one-time seed funding of up to \$25,000 for collaborative research projects, with a preference for interdisciplinary and international research teams.

What I like about "it is yours" is that the possessive pronoun "yours" in English can be singular *or* plural. And the attribution to the listener is not necessarily an attribution of ownership. No sensible construction of our UBC motto would suggest that each succeeding generation owns the University; merely that it is ours to cherish and to build together, as a trust for future generations.

So for today at least, let us accept this translation: *Tuum Est* – it is yours. But what is it that we have inherited in this great University, in all great universities? Let's be bold and frankly acknowledge the treasure that is ours: nothing less than the panoply of life itself. Please listen to the challenging words of the brilliant poet-singer, Leonard Cohen who, like me, hails from Montreal:

*Here it is*

Here is your crown  
And your seal and rings;  
And here is your love  
For all things.

Here is your cart,  
And your cardboard and piss;  
And here is your love  
For all this.

*May everyone live,  
May everyone die.  
Hello my love,  
And my love Goodbye.*

Here it is...Here it is...

So “here it is”, the triumphs and the tragedies of the human condition; all of life open to study, reflection and action based in the University.

Let’s start with the farthest, faintest stars in our known universe, discovered recently by a team of astronomers lead by UBC Prof. Harvey Richer. These stars died long ago, but as Professor Richer puts it: “pinning down their age narrows down the age range for the Universe.” Calculating the age of the universe; now there’s a big ambition!

From outer space, to inner space: Salmonella and pathogenic *E. coli* are everyday pathogens studied in the lab of UBC Prof. Brett Finlay. His team produces work leading to novel vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics that can be used to control and treat infections caused by a wide range of diseases that move across the globe and threaten our health.

“Here it is”:

Global environmental politics and corporate social responsibility are the objects of UBC Prof. Peter Dauvergne's work. He analyzes the environmental initiatives of international leaders in corporate social responsibility, explains why these initiatives are being undertaken, and assesses their impact in terms of transparency, citizenship and environmental accountability.

Understanding the complex and often confusing representations of diverse minorities within the mass media is the focus of Prof. Stephen Foster's work. He is coordinator of the CanWest Global Centre for Artists' Video in the Faculty of Creative and Critical Studies at UBC Okanagan.

To return to the powerful image of Leonard Cohen's song, "Here it is": the acid smell of urine, this time in the worst back allies of the Downtown Eastside, where in 2000 UBC opened the Learning Exchange. The Learning Exchange brings volunteers from the UBC community—including students, staff, faculty, and alumni—to inner city schools and non-profit organizations that work in one of the poorest and most challenging urban sites in Canada. The volunteers contribute to community programs while learning about the issues that trouble our fellow citizens in the inner city. Despite its poverty, the Downtown East Side is not a defeated community, and has much to give to those who want to learn. For students, the community work is often integrated into academic course work—an approach called Community Service-Learning pioneered in Canada by Margot Fryer, UBC's Learning Exchange Director.

The Kensington Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood Committee is a passion for Kim Nulty who works with the landscape crews in Plant Operations and for her husband Jeff who is a graduate of Landscape Architecture at UBC and works as a landscape designer in Plant Operations as well. They have been involved in the visioning process for their neighbourhood which has led to the start-up of many community groups. They played an active role in the Kensington Park Redesign Committee and in various initiatives to green their community. Our

UBC staff is found everywhere in the Lower Mainland and in the Okanagan, making a difference to the communities in which they live, including of course, right here in University Town.

Here it is:

Through the First Nations House of Learning, UBC facilitates the participation of aboriginal students at the University, and assists them during their studies. For over twenty-five years, the House of Learning has also run summer youth programs for Aboriginal high school students, to encourage their studies and to encourage them to consider higher education. Other programmes and Faculties are also working hard to support First Nations. In July 2006, 15 new Educational Doctorate students began a programme in Educational Studies. This cohort is focusing on “Leadership with Aboriginal Education”. This program is the only one of its kind in Canada. Of the 15 students, 12 are Aboriginal. But we must do more and better. As a clear signal of the importance of UBC’s relationship with First Nations, I am announcing today the creation of a new position at the heart of university governance. UBC will soon have its first Special Advisor to the President on Aboriginal Affairs.

Here it is; it is yours.

Together we, as students, staff, faculty members, alumni, and governors, have inherited a treasure: the treasure of research and learning, the treasure of teaching, the treasure of knowledge inherited and new-won. It is our obligation to do our utmost to pass on that treasure with more added than when it was passed to us.

I am deeply honoured that the Board of Governors has entrusted me with the task of helping to build this university. I say “helping to build” for I reiterate that universities are collaborative ventures. No single person is the repository of

hope for major social institutions like universities. President Wesbrook was singular, even bloody-minded in driving the creation of UBC, but even he was not alone. The first cohort of teachers and students set academic standards that were worthy of emulation.

Students were of course crucial in ensuring that Wesbrook's vision would come alive. Their march out to Point Grey on the Great Trek of 1922 was an eloquent political statement of need and hope that resonated with the ambitions of the British Columbians of that era. With much cajoling and no small delay, the Government of this Province wisely invested in the future by providing the much-needed seed money for those first tiny budgets of the University. More recently, the Government of British Columbia was instrumental in the creation of UBC Okanagan. The Province has long been the fundamental partner to UBC – and continues so today. In recent times the federal government too has invested significantly in post-secondary education across the country. Double cause for thanks.

At the very foundation of the university, Wesbrook's partners extended far beyond his academic colleagues and government. One of his chief supporters and principal advisors was the eminent forester H.R. MacMillan who would come to play a central role in the economic development of BC, and would be an early and generous benefactor to the University. The initial library collection was amassed through gifts from Wesbrook's medical friends including Sir William Osler. Philanthropy continues to be crucial to the pursuit of excellence at UBC, and we owe much to the wisdom, foresight and generosity of recent benefactors. Earlier this week we announced a million dollar gift from the law firm Ferris and Company for the Law Faculty. Just yesterday I announced a six million dollar gift from Dr Charles Fipke for UBC Okanagan. Thanks due again.

I must also signal a particular partnership that was central to the creation of UBC: the partnership with other universities. Lacking any library holdings to speak of,

President Wesbrook asked his friend J.T. Gerould, the librarian at the University of Minnesota, to take a leave of absence from his job to tour Europe and collect books to bring to the new university in British Columbia. The University of Minnesota agreed to allow Gerould to take on the temporary assignment. Thanks due again.

Given my own history, I am delighted to recall another university partnership that was even more important to UBC, indeed to higher education in BC as a whole – that is the partnership with McGill University in Montreal. As many of you will know, both UBC *and* the University of Victoria were rooted in colleges created by McGill to bring higher education closer to the people of the new province of British Columbia. This history is instructive in at least two ways for the present-day UBC. First, Canadian universities simply must cooperate if we are all to thrive. This need is especially urgent in what has become a global search for outstanding people and world-changing ideas. Second, BC has never had to go it alone. The Rockies may be a geological watershed boundary, but they are politically and socially penetrable. The University of British Columbia was founded as an expression of a local need for higher education, but from the moment of its inception, it was linked to the rest of Canada and it was linked internationally. Hence Wesbrook’s famous injunction that UBC was to be “a Provincial University without provincialism”.

Today, we might want to extend that metaphor, to account for UBC’s remarkable position in the world. Let UBC be a Provincial University without petty provincialism; a national university without crass nationalism; and a global university without thoughtless deference to the rhetoric of globalization. I wish the same for all of Canada’s major research universities.

To be without provincialism is to resist demands that would limit our vision to one that merely satisfies already identified local needs. Wesbrook wanted UBC to be a “people’s university” but he had respect for the people, not condescension. To

be of the people is to listen and to respond, of course, but it is also to engage and to challenge. Vancouver has made great strides as an inclusive city that welcomes new communities and that reduces physical barriers for the disabled. But research from UBC tells us that Canadian cities still have a way to go before we can claim to be truly inclusive societies and sustainable communities. We need to learn from Kim Schonert-Reichl's work on moral development and social education, from the studies of Martin Brokenleg on kids at risk, and from Bill Rees' groundbreaking research on our ecological footprint.

British Columbia is, right now, an economic success story. The extractive industries are doing well, but research from UBC helps us to understand how to address threats to those industries, and how to diversify the BC economy. Armillaria root disease is a fungus that is particularly damaging to the Interior Cedar-Hemlock zone. Profs Michelle Cleary and Bart van der Kamp have identified resistance mechanisms in western red cedar. Meanwhile, Prof. Terry Snutch's research at UBC's Michael Smith Laboratories led to the discovery of NMED-160, a compound with enormous promise as a powerful painkiller that is likely to be especially beneficial to sufferers of chronic pain. Prof. Snutch is co-founder of Neuromed Pharmaceuticals, which in partnership with Merck Pharmaceuticals, is moving to the full commercialization of NMED-160, a research spin-off success story. The public will benefit directly from this UBC-based research, as will the BC economy.

UBC is the home to thousands of the brightest students that BC has to offer; it is the primary source of leadership for Vancouver, for the Okanagan, for British Columbia today and tomorrow. But it is much more than that: it is a crucible in which the future success of our local society is tested. It is a source of new ideas, like the Learning Exchange, like Ray Cole's work on green building practice. It is a principal site where received wisdom is challenged. That is what a people's university must be.

A national university is one that aspires to contribute productively to the great national debates, that attracts students, staff and faculty members from across the country, that links fruitfully with researchers at other Canadian institutions, and around the world. I believe that UBC needs to be pressed to do more in this regard. I was surprised to discover that in the entering undergraduate class at UBC this year, 12 percent of the students come from outside Canada, but only 8 percent from provinces outside British Columbia. If we do not do a better job amongst Canada's universities in furthering inter-provincial student mobility we will reap the consequences: regions that do not understand each other, provinces that perceive themselves to be isolated, the lack of those personal connections that make a truly national politics and society possible. I will encourage our student recruiters to increase the number of out-of province applications, so that over the next three years we can move to balance the number of international and out-of-province entering undergraduate students. At the same time, our continuing primary responsibilities will be to educate the future leaders of this province, and to make this institution available to all qualified British Columbians.

UBC must also play an even more active leadership role in national research consortia. We already contribute to twenty of the twenty-one national Networks of Centres of Excellence – the highest level of participation by any university in the country. We should move with confidence to increase our participation at the national level in areas such as public health, democratic institutions and multiculturalism, and climate change and biodiversity, where UBC has great research and teaching strength. None of this is likely to descend into crass nationalism in the case of UBC; if anything, the need is to place the national perspective even more firmly on a radar screen that sometimes seems to have been strangely bifurcated between the local and the international, with only a faintly dotted screen where the rest of Canada is concerned.

UBC has already committed itself in the Trek 2010 Plan to the nurturing of global citizens. The view across the Pacific is steady and sure – although it may have to be more focused in the years ahead. UBC is already Canada's Global University. The challenge for UBC is similar to that facing all great non-American research universities: how to contribute globally and how to learn from international colleagues and students without the resources available to the top US universities? Here is a place where stronger mutual support amongst leading Canadian universities is crucial.

In the period after September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the number of international graduate students seeking places outside the United States increased dramatically. The United Kingdom and Germany benefited, and now each hosts twelve percent of all international students. Australia, a much smaller country than Canada in terms of population, also benefited, and now welcomes ten percent of all international students. The Canadian share of the global market for graduate students hardly grew at all, and stands at a lowly one percent. Top Canadian universities, private foundations and governments must work to address this signal failure. We need to strengthen our support schemes for outstanding international graduate students. *All* graduate students bring incredible vigour to university research; they are the basis for our future success as a knowledge society. *International* graduate students additionally bring fresh insights, skills and international networks into Canada; in the long term they bring important political connections and market opportunities. We cannot wait for governments to solve the problem of Canada's underperformance in the global competition for brainpower. I will challenge UBC and some of our sister universities to work together to recruit, support and retain the best graduate students that the world has to offer. Our country has strong universities and UBC is one of the best – we must do better in bringing the world to Canada.

In speaking of global citizenship and a global role for the university, we must not be constrained by the rhetoric of globalization. Yes, global market opportunities

are greater than ever, as is global economic competition. Scholars in the Sauder School, the Department of Economics and in other parts of the university are working hard to make sense of this new hyper-competitive world. UBC's work on international transportation economics and policy is locally, nationally and globally relevant. But global citizenship is about more than looking for exciting jobs in Hong Kong, London or New York. It is about more than building-up BC and Canada's international trade. If we link the UBC mission statement's promotion of global citizenship to the commitment to build a civil and sustainable society, we can see that a global university can only exist as a sustainable university, environmentally and socially.

As global citizens, we face difficult personal choices about how we live, what resources we consume, what we give back to the communities that pay for our work. So I hope that UBC will continue to claim the language of the global, while recognizing that such language is a continual challenge not only to the world but to ourselves, as individual global citizens and as an institution. I will encourage UBC to extend the community-service learning concept pioneered in the Learning Exchange to our international partnerships with other universities and with civil society in the developing world. I will also encourage a stronger set of linkages between UBC's Campus Sustainability Office, already the leader in Canada, and UBC researchers in sustainable buildings and sustainable communities, so that we can share what we learn on campus with universities around the globe.

Here it is – in the memorable words of UBC's Trek 2010 Vision: “The University of British Columbia, aspiring to be one of the world's best universities, will prepare students to become exceptional global citizens, promote the values of a civil and sustainable society, and conduct outstanding research to serve the people of British Columbia, Canada, and the world.”

At its heart, every institution is people. When I first arrived in Vancouver, a radio host asked me whether I was a Mayor or a CEO. Too often when citizens think of this great university, they think of the physical beauty of our campuses on Point Grey and in the Okanagan, they think of big construction projects, they think of the scope of UBC and of its 1.8 billion dollar budget. Let's change that. In all our public discourse, let's talk about the people who make up UBC: The dedicated staff, the incredibly accomplished faculty members who are the intellectual heart of all our research and teaching endeavours, the wonderfully supportive alumni. Above all, let's talk about the students who are, after all, the very reason that each of us is here.

Here it is.

Pasha Bains is pursuing his Ph.D. in Education. He is a top student and a star athlete, having led the UBC Thunderbirds to their first Canada West perfect season in 22 years. But he does much more – he founded the non-profit coaching programme “Drive Basketball” to help students in grades three to twelve develop sporting skills and attitudes, build strength, and acquire life skills such as teamwork, goal setting and reliability.

Nabeela Khan is a 4<sup>th</sup> year undergraduate, focusing on cell biology and genetics, with a minor in anthropology. She came to UBC from Brunei and Pakistan, and was the first elected President of the International Students Association. She is currently pursuing a work term at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS at St Paul's Hospital where she is assessing accessibility to HIV therapies for communities in the developing world.

Pasha and Nabeela deserve the best learning environment that we can provide, given the limits of our human imaginations and our resources. Every one of our students deserves nothing less. Concretely that means that when we make decisions in the university about how we will spend money, we must always ask

how that decision will affect the teaching and learning opportunities for our students.

Today, I am announcing a special fund for the enhancement of teaching and learning at UBC. This fund is created from proceeds of the University Town development, now in the Trek Endowment. In each of the next three years one million dollars will be devoted to a pilot project involving the recruitment of post-doctoral Teaching Fellows who will be matched with top university researchers in undergraduate classrooms. This will encourage world class researchers to connect more closely with undergraduate teaching in the context of collaboratively planned classes. The post-doctoral Teaching Fellows will benefit from mentorship in teaching in the areas of their academic strength. As a result of this initiative, between 40 and 50 new courses or new sections will be created to enhance undergraduate students' learning experience. Faculties with large undergraduate enrollments will be invited to submit proposals for their involvement with this initiative in January 2007.

I further pledge that in all our planning and in our financial decision making while I am President, the question of impact upon teaching and learning opportunities for students will be foremost in my thoughts. That will mean making some hard, hard choices. No university can do everything well. That is especially true of publicly-funded universities that do not have discretion over key sources of revenue. So a real commitment to enhancing the teaching and learning opportunities for our students will mean focusing our efforts. It will mean choosing *not* to do things that we cannot deliver to UBC's standards of research and teaching excellence. It will mean phasing in or staging initiatives where the goal is central to our Trek 2010 plan, but where our resources are not immediately adequate to the task.

I do not pretend that any of this will be obvious or easy. But one of the things that drew me to UBC was my belief that this University had done something

remarkable: it had worked collectively to articulate a vision for the future that was unique and compelling. It had gone a step further to begin to specify the concrete goals that would bring that vision closer to fulfillment. Now I ask you to join me in making the choices that will be required to turn Trek 2010 into a new and exciting reality. If we can do that – and I know that we can – I am confident that we will have built a university worthy of the imagination and sweat of our forebears, a Provincial University without petty provincialism; a national university without crass nationalism; and a global university without thoughtless deference to the rhetoric of globalization. Here it is – the University of British Columbia – it is yours.

Thank you.