

**Notes for an address by
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President of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
to the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences
“The Future is a Foreign Country”
(The Value of Liberal Arts and Sciences in a Globalizing World)
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Thank you for choosing Montreal as the location for your meeting. I hope that you all have a chance to explore the city. The conference program is excellent, but I want to encourage all of you to play hooky. Take time to walk up Mont Royal and get a commanding view of the city and the St. Lawrence River. Consider going to the archaeology museum to see the early days of European settlement or take a few steps to the Boulevard St. Laurent to see where Anglophone, francophone and global cultures meet in a dynamic mix of people language and community.

Before turning to my prepared remarks, I'd like to answer a few questions I have already been asked. The first question was "What is the red badge I am wearing?" It is a poppy – it is one of our national symbols of remembrance of those who died in war in defence of our country and in the promotion of freedom and democracy. We observe November 11th as a national day of Remembrance – at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month – when the first world war ended. Poppies are wonderful – but they do tend to fall off – so I keep an extra one in my pocket which I will give to Valerie. And I invite you to watch for a veteran offering poppies while you are here and invite you to make a donation, wear one, and take it home with you as a souvenir.

The next question I have been asked us – "How are things in Canada?", and I answer that in a typically modest, Canadian way. Actually, on the whole, not too bad. We were the last country into the global recession and the first out. We have the strongest debt-to GDP ratio in the G7. Our banks did not require a public bail-out. And while there were job losses, our unemployment rate is lower than the US rate for the first time in a generation, and we have recovered all the jobs lost. I do not say this to be boastful – or to turn this into a recruiting speech. I do say that as a country that does 80% of our trade with you, we are all pulling for America to recover.

Now I like to think a good conference is one where I can take away one good idea or one good reading suggestion. Let me recommend to you a recent book by David Hackett Fisher, entitled Champlain's Dream. It is a masterful new biography of one of the early explorers of Canada, Samuel de Champlain, who became our first Governor. I mention it because 400 years ago on this very site, the Island of Montreal, he was engaged in a process of exploration and exchange with Canada's first nations. The book describes how he left a continent rife with religious conflict in pursuit of a new and better world. It argues that Champlain's language skills, his intercultural skills, and his commitment to the rule of law made him exceptionally able to pursue a new vision for a new world. And I would submit to you that these are the very skills we need in the 21st century. And this takes me to the subject of my remarks to you today.

Thank you so much for inviting me to be with you today. Let me bring greetings from Canada's 95 universities and degree granting colleges. We were all in Montreal just last week – celebrating our centennial. It has been a century of growth dynamism and diversity, and we take pride in the contributions our institutions of higher learning make in building a strong society, a strong country and a strong economy.

I hope I can contribute to your upcoming discussions by providing a perspective that is close to your own yet somewhat different, just as Canada is close to the US, yet somewhat different.

Where you say "restroom" we say "washroom." When I say "university," you can hear "college." I trust we can understand one another.

The topic that I wish to address is the role of Arts and Sciences in our increasingly globalized world.

This is a subject that I am passionate about, both personally and professionally.

But first, let me welcome you to this “foreign” country, Canada. I understand that you have twice before held your annual meetings in our country, eleven years ago in Toronto and six years ago in Vancouver. I trust that the fact that you’re here means you’ve enjoyed your previous trips across the border. But this trip has been a little different and in an important way. I’m not referring to the fact that you are today in Quebec where the principle language is French. *Toutefois, le fait que le français est la langue officielle ici, au Québec, et que vous l’entendez parler donne une saveur « internationale » à la réunion de cette année.*

No, I’m referring to the fact that this year, in order to attend this meeting of the Council of Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences... You not only needed your passport, you had to have one.

That’s a profound change in recent years. You might have carried your passport when you journeyed to Toronto or Vancouver for previous conferences, but it wasn’t mandatory. A driver’s license or birth certificate would’ve sufficed. Not this time. You used to be able to get along pretty well without a passport in North America. But no longer. It’s the same for the value of a Liberal Arts and Sciences education.

A Liberal Arts education has always been a passport to a larger world. The manifest skills and inner resources that a Liberal Arts education cultivates prepare us to navigate a larger, unpredictable and rapidly changing world. In today’s interconnected, knowledge based economy, that’s not just nice to have; it’s essential.

The case for Arts and Sciences in a time of globalization is really the same case that most of us have been making for the liberal arts all along, only more so. An education in the Liberal Arts and Sciences fosters critical thinking, interdisciplinary learning, discovery, collaboration, communication, the confidence to respond to challenge and ability to react to change.

The world our current graduates are encountering is one in which economic, social and personal fulfillment depend not only on what they have been taught, but to greater and greater extent upon their ability to continually learn. This ability to inquire, learn, communicate and adapt is a hallmark of a solid grounding in the Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Let me suggest this to you: the future is a foreign country. No one knows for certain what the jobs of the future will be, where they will be located or what mix of languages they’ll be speaking. What we do know is that our world is being shaped by international, quickly-moving and interconnected forces. Those who are well prepared to thrive in this new reality will have knowledge of other countries, languages and cultures, and an ability to establish partnerships and work productively with colleagues from around the world.

This is the kind of passport that the Liberal Arts and Sciences can and should be offering to graduates. A discovery-enriched, globally-engaged learning experience marked by what has been called “educational connectivity”—networks of learners.

This is my professional opinion, and it reflects the direction of Canada’s university presidents as articulated last week during our own meeting here in Montreal to mark our hundredth anniversary. This

is also my personal experience. Exposure to the larger world in university changed my life.

In my third year of university, twenty-five years ago, I travelled to newly independent Zimbabwe. I lived in residence with the first generation of African undergraduates, peers who years earlier were fighting for their country's independence. I was taught by professors who had fled apartheid South Africa. That year changed my life. It laid the foundation for my graduate work. Fifteen years later it brought me back to Africa, where, as executive director of World University Service of Canada, I spent time in Dadaab, a camp in Kenya housing hundreds of thousands of refugees. There I witnessed the incredible tenacity of people to invest in education.

Dadaab is a refugee camp in North East Kenya, established temporarily in 1990 to house 90,000 refugees. 20 years later, Dadaab is now home to close to 500,000 refugees. And you have seen the recent media stories of hunger and death.

When I visited Dadaab, and asked the refugees why, in an environment of so much loss and deprivation, education for their children was such a priority. And they told me, "We have walked for months from our homes. We left behind all of our material possessions. We have been robbed of our future, but our children may succeed. Nobody can take their education away."

I tell this story not only because it is my own, but to illustrate the fact that no matter who or where you are, whether you are an emerging super power or a disenfranchised refugee, the strategy is the same – invest in education. It is the first priority. It's one thing whose value will never diminish.

Canada and the US have enjoyed an abundance of natural resources, but the United States is a super power and Canada enjoys its favorable position among world economies not just because we exploited our natural resources. But because we invested in our human resources.

For decades, the US and Canada have sat at the top of the charts in terms of university and college enrollment, and also attainment of degrees.

It should not surprise us then, that the rest of the world should borrow from our playbook. In the 21st Century the world's emerging nations are investing, and investing heavily, in higher education.

This year, for the first time in our history, Canada has one million undergraduate students currently enrolled in university. Recently, China increased its university enrollment by one million students - and they accomplished this during a single 12 month period. South Korea now leads the world in the percentage of its youth enrolled in university. In India, plans are under way to establish 1,300 new universities during the next decade.

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff recently announced that her government would provide 75,000 university scholarships for Brazilian students to study abroad, with another 25,000 such scholarships expected to come from Brazil's private sector.

That's a lot of investment in education. Now, it can be tempting to interpret information such as this as evidence of a kind of global educational "arms race," and as a threat to our nations' competitive advantage. While that reaction is understandable, I would rather encourage you to look at the situation a little differently.

First: this is unquestionably powerful evidence that the strategy of investing in higher education is still valid and still potent in our current environment. We have only to look to our global neighbors to see this strategy validated.

Second: this is not a threat; it's an opportunity. The whole world is waking up to the value of education in a globalized, knowledge-driven economy. We, in Canada and the US are looking at a window of opportunity - to engage with the blossoming of higher education internationally to build enduring people-to-people linkages and institutional partnerships and to enrich the learning experience of our students within our own institutions.

Let me say this again: the future is a foreign country. The world that our graduates will thrive in will be one marked by a large, diverse, widely dispersed international population of highly-educated men and women who are capable of navigating many languages and cultures, establishing partnerships and networks with international colleagues and addressing issues that cross borders. Our graduates will need to speak these languages, collaborate with these people and engage these issues. These skills will open up larger worlds to these graduates and give them entrance into them.

These skills will be their passport.

This is the kind of passport that the Liberal Arts and Sciences are ideally suited to provide. And these are the kinds of learning experiences towards which those of us in the Liberal Arts and Sciences should be directing our resources and our creativity.

At just this juncture in time we are also facing significant challenges to our ability to adapt to and capitalize on these opportunities. Both we here in Canada and you in the United States face two different forces that impede our ability to adapt and change. One is complacency and the other is austerity.

Complacency says that we already have great educational systems; we sit at the top of the heap; what others are doing doesn't really concern us; we just need to keep funding and administering what has always worked for us. To this I quote the great American Will Rogers who said "Even if you're on the right track you'll get run over if you just sit there."

Austerity says that we are in a time of financial crisis, and we simply cannot afford to fund anything as elite and impractical as a liberal arts education; college is too expensive; we need to put people to work right now. To this I try to point out that during the recent recession, even as Canada was losing jobs overall, the number of new jobs for university graduates rose dramatically.

Perhaps the most insidious form of resistance to change in Liberal Arts and Sciences education comes when austerity joins complacency and fuels attacks on education.

The attack takes the form of an argument that universities, while nice enough, are an expensive frill that doesn't address current needs or pay back its investment.

A recent and typical example of this kind of attack was published last week in a New York Times Op Ed column by Michael Ellsberg. Entitled "Will Dropouts Save America?" it points to Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg, each a college dropout, as a way of saying that American universities are good at producing lawyers but can't produce entrepreneurs.

Ellsberg says that what people need in order to start up and succeed in business are “skills like sales, networking, creativity and comfort with failure.” He goes on to say that you don’t learn these skills “crouched over a desk studying for multiple-choice exams. You learn them outside the classroom, talking to fellow human beings face-to-face.”

It would be easy to simply dismiss this argument. It sets up an absurdly simplistic and false straw man sitting in for higher education. But I’d rather pick up on what Ellsberg praises, as a way of talking about what Liberal Arts and Sciences education can and should be doing, in our changing times.

Sales. Networking. Creativity. Comfort with failure. Engaging outside the classroom with fellow human beings. These are all important hallmarks of a great and valuable learning experience. While they are already part of a liberal education, I suggest that we can and should be doing more of this.

Over the past year Canada’s university presidents have thought long and hard about the role of higher education in this globalizing world. And we have realized that the success of our institutions – and the success of our students, our communities and our countries – depend upon our ability to hold fast to the enduring values of higher education while at the same time making some fundamental changes in how we realize those values.

Traditionally, the university mission is described as having three pillars: teaching, research and community engagement. Most critics of the Liberal Arts and Sciences tend to see these as separate and they focus on the teaching element in isolation. In fact, we see these three university missions as inseparable. Certainly they are converging.

So, for example, members of AUCC are focusing on learning rather than teaching. We are moving to incorporate more research into the undergraduate learning experience. And we are addressing community engagement not just as one-way service to our surrounding community but as a dynamic relationship in which universities engage in local, regional, national and international communities. These communities in turn transform universities, shaping their teaching and research, bringing new ideas and insights to address real world issues.

We are challenging ourselves to think broadly about the kinds of places students learn and to offer them opportunities, as undergraduates, to learn through conducting their own research, to engage in open conversations with diverse community members, to listen, to sell their ideas and yes, to become familiar with failure and grow resilient in the face of it. We are looking for more and more opportunities for undergraduates to collaborate with each other, with faculty, with graduate students, with service groups, communities, governments and with businesses in meaningful research that enables them, together, not only to absorb knowledge but also to create new knowledge – to create new solutions.

Over the past 15 years, enrollment in Canadian Universities has increased by 57%. Operating support from governments has more than doubled, and investments in research have increased four-fold. That is a pretty impressive track record. But we see important trends developing in our country and around the world.

We see a surging need to engage beyond our borders, both with talented individuals and with international institutions of higher learning.

In particular we see great opportunities for collaboration for mutual benefit between Canada and the US.

Let us agree together that we live in a larger world and that the best thing we can do for our nations' future is to cultivate a generation of curious, resilient, creative and engaged global citizens. Citizens with valid passports for the future.

We can and will do this, in part, by studying the world. Certainly a strong curriculum is required – in international studies, languages and the many important issues that cross borders, like healthcare, immigration, drug policy, sustainability, and economics.

But study alone is not sufficient. Global citizenship requires authentic global experience. I can attest to this from my own life, and I daresay that my story is one of millions. Study abroad is a tremendous opportunity, and it can be a transformative, life-changing experience. Speaking for Canada and the rest of the world, we'd love to have you! I am well aware that overseas study is open to criticism as some kind of glorified spring break abroad. Let's be candid: a term encased in a bubble of your fellow classmates, arranged to be just like home, is likely to be both more expensive and less transformative than a term in an unfamiliar country more or less on your own.

“Culture Shock” is not to be avoided. It is, in fact, one of the great benefits of overseas study and an excellent preparation for the future.

We can also invite the world to our place. Canada is a growing destination for international students and researchers, where they greatly enrich our campus communities, providing not only diversity but also connections and networks that may grow over the course of a lifetime. Today, international students make up 10 percent of Canada's campus population, and they contribute about \$6.5 billion dollars to our country's economy every year: a benefit over and above the ways in which they enrich the learning experience for all our students. As your population is about 10 times ours, improving the global engagement of your campuses could represent a \$65 billion dollar boost to the US economy.

Technology is another way to ramp up global awareness, global engagement and global communications. Real-time joint collaborative classes, seminars and conferences can link students, professors, researchers and institutions. Already our faculty are collaborating internationally on their own research, and so are businesses. Networked learning is a valuable skill for undergraduates, and the technology is, in most cases, already in place.

Languages and intercultural communication are two other vital components of a globally engaged learning experience. I urge you to fight for your language instruction, particularly for non-European languages. And encourage interdisciplinary, cross-cultural team learning in your curriculum. Some of our most pressing global issues are very close to home. Our global citizenship grows with every experience of listening, learning and contributing to real-world situations outside of our comfort zone. It isn't hard to find diversity. Some of it is close to home.

I do want to urge you to advocate for these kinds of learning experiences. Yet I know that many of you are faced with severely limited resources.

By way of encouragement let me offer you a couple of examples from three of our smaller institutions.

They are not blessed with an abundance of resources, but they are taking exciting measures to promote global engagement.

Consider *l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi*. This is a relatively small French-speaking university in a city of less than 60,000 people about 470 kilometers northeast of here (that's about 300 miles).

While this university is firmly committed to serving its rural Quebec region, this is a truly globally-minded university. Students from more than 30 countries study here – either to learn French, or to enroll in bachelor's, master's or PhD programs in information technology, management or education. You might hear the distinctive French accents of students from Algeria, Djibouti, France or Morocco in the hallways of this university. But you're just as likely to hear Mandarin spoken. This university also partners with institutions in China, Lebanon, Brazil, and Colombia. I can tell you how impressive it was to see a young, Muslim woman from North Africa studying as an engineer, or to learn of their program in China which has graduated more than 300 students.

This little university town of Chicoutimi also happens to be one of the world leading centers of aluminum research, in partnership with Rio Tinto Alcan, and through numerous international research collaborations. In terms of understanding, knowledge, technology, money and jobs, this is a pretty powerful impact in the region, in Canada, and for the world.

Or travel in your imagination to Thompson Rivers University on the West Coast of Canada, in Kamloops, British Columbia. In this city of about 80,000 people, the university has 13,000 students, and more than 1,400 of them come from some 80 countries around the world. Thompson Rivers also has 1,600 of its own students enrolled in accredited programs with partner institutions overseas. It offers its curriculum in China, India, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and next year Vietnam and Dubai as well.

Or consider Vancouver Island University, a newer institution based in Nanaimo, British Columbia. It has close to 1,000 international students, most of whom live with families – in a community adjusting to the new knowledge based economy from its origins as a fishing and forestry centre. These students are making a real economic contribution, and they are introducing their countries of origin to the families they stay with – making links that will last a lifetime.

During this time of financial uncertainty and global change, I see a great opportunity for the educational institutions of Canada and the United States to work more closely together with a view to playing important roles in the larger world that we share. On Saturday I understand that you will have a panel discussion on internationalizing teaching and learning through the Liberal Arts and Sciences. I want to encourage you to bring your ideas and creativity to this discussion. Beyond this meeting I want to give you some courage and conviction, if I can, to optimize the resources at your disposal toward enhancing your global engagement.

There is no denying that we live in a world of heightened accountability. Living and working in this era can be frustrating. But it is our lot. Every generation has its cause. Earlier generations went to war fight fascism, marched for human rights... It has fallen to us to take on positions of leadership and responsibility in this era of accountability.

Well, let us make sure that we do not forget to be accountable to the future. Let me say that in a results-based world, constrained by resources, we must not constrain our imaginations. We can do more than protect what we already have. We can find ways to do more.

Let's not forget the special responsibility that we all have in marshaling our resources of intellect and determination to bear on the world's most tenacious problems. And let's remember that in a world where \$2 billion people live on less than a dollar a day, and 500 million children do not have access to primary education, that if all we are doing is setting out to achieve what we set out to achieve, then we are setting our sights too low.

The future is a foreign country. We will inevitably find ourselves in unfamiliar territory. That's both frightening and exciting. As stewards of higher education it is our role and responsibility to explore the landscape. It will take all our knowledge, skill, creativity and experience to prepare the next generation to thrive in this larger world.

Thank you. I look forward to continuing this discussion with you. Please enjoy your time here in Montreal. And hang on to your passport.