



Inaugural Address for Convocation, July 13, 2014 – Dr. Lindsay Redpath

Thank you, Chancellor Peckford.

Thank you, Dr. Farrell

Graduands, Honoured Guests, Members of the Platform Party, Acsenda staff, and family and friends of our graduands;

It has been a great pleasure to serve as the President and Vice Chancellor of Acsenda School of Management for the past year. My, it has gone by quickly!

The timing of my appointment last June could not have been better. It was a celebratory year. Two thousand and fourteen (2014) marked the 10th anniversary of Acsenda and the Bachelor of Business Administration degree. Acsenda, formerly Sprott Shaw Degree College, had embraced a new identity and had just moved to a brand new campus. The Ministry had granted renewal of consent for the BBA, and had approved a proposal to offer a new degree – the Bachelor of Hospitality Management. The first Alumni Association had been formed and our parent company, the CIBT Education Group, had just embarked on a new commercial venture that would create affordable student housing in the Metro Vancouver. Much had been accomplished in a short period of time and the credit goes to those who came before me.

I would like to thank - Dr. Teresita Ireneo-Manalo, Dean of Business; Dr. Bill Garrett, former Vice President Academic; and Patrick Dang who preceded me as President of Acsenda School of Management - for all that you achieved in building a platform for our future success. I admire and greatly appreciate what you and the Acsenda staff and faculty have done to establish the credibility and quality of the School.

I would also like to thank the long serving external members of our Academic Council who bring such a wealth of experience in post- secondary education leadership and politics. You have guided us through very difficult and challenging times and you continue to do so.

Thank you, also, to the faculty, alumni and student members of Academic Council who have given of their time to serve on Council during this time of transition. And to our faculty

members - those who have been with us for many years and those who are new – thank you for your dedication to teaching and for your personal commitment to Acsenda and our students.

Much work remains to be done to take Acsenda to the next level. Over the past few months, we have all been engaged, including our students and alumni, in discussing a vision for the future – now captured in a new three year strategic plan. Collectively, we believe that we must expand our program offerings, provide career building experiences for our students, continue to enhance teaching and learning, and build our campus and alumni communities. These are all vital to our future success. Most importantly, though, we have to ‘put Acsenda on the map.’ We all want our graduates to be proud to say that they studied at Acsenda School of Management without having to explain why.

I am not one to be satisfied with plans and platitudes. We may not accomplish all we set out to in the next three years. We may have to adjust priorities along the way. But I won’t give up on becoming flagship that we know that we can be and I am counting on you, as graduates, to continue to enhance the value of your degree and the reputation of your School where ever you may be.

As you reflect on your accomplishments today, I am sure you will be thinking about those who influenced and supported you along the way. Many people have been instrumental in supporting me at different stages of my career. I would like to recognize three of those people who are part of our community today. In doing so I have a message to impart about the importance of role modeling and mentorship.

I will begin with Dr. Alan Davis, President and Vice Chancellor of Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Dr. Davis was the Vice President, Academic while I was at Athabasca University during the 1990s. Just before he arrived, I had agreed to take on the role of Executive Director of the MBA program. I did this ‘somewhat reluctantly’. I say reluctantly because I followed in the footsteps of a very dynamic leader, I had just begun my academic career, and I had a very active young son to raise.

Dr. Davis, unknowingly I suspect, helped me to establish my own leadership style. He let me run the show, deferring to my expertise and that of the faculty. “I am just a chemist,” he would say; “what do I know about running a business school?” But when I needed to talk things through I could speak to him openly and honestly without fear of being judged. Turns out he was a quick study – about the business school environment I mean.

And as for the internal politics, I learned much from the way that he dealt with conflicts between different interest groups, how he appreciated the critics and the idealists, and how he allowed people a little room to rant but then brought everyone back to focus on rationale and practical solutions. And, I learned how to take things a little less seriously.

Around that same time, the MBA program went through its first external program review – this is where the Ministry of Advanced Education puts together a team of experts to scrutinize your

business school and tell the government if your program should be allowed to continue - a very intimidating experience for someone who had just been appointed to head up a fledgling MBA program.

One of the external experts appointed by the Ministry was Dr. Stan Shapiro, former Dean at Simon Fraser University who had served on the Degree Quality Assurance Board in BC. Now if that wasn't intimidating enough, Dr. Shapiro is a very direct communicator and a keen observer – he doesn't mince words and he doesn't miss a thing. It could have been a disaster. Instead, it turned out to be a very positive experience. Dr. Shapiro and his colleagues recognized that something extraordinary was occurring. They saw potential for success where everyone had predicted failure. In the years that followed, I stayed in touch with Dr. Shapiro who became one of my best advocates – in fact he was instrumental in my coming to Acsenda as your President and Vice Chancellor.

More recently it has been Dr. Glen Farrell, former Chair of Academic Council, who has been a trusted confidante providing sage advice and guidance in my transition to the new role at Acsenda. Dr. Farrell is the founding President of the Open Learning Institute and the Knowledge Network (my favourite TV channel). He knows his way around the BC post-secondary system, understands the business side of academia, and has a knack for logical and practical problem solving. It is a huge advantage to have someone of his calibre to turn to for advice. But what makes it work is mutual respect and the commitment that we both have to see Acsenda reach its potential. No egos can stand in the way of that kind of goodwill and determination.

I share these stories with you because I know that you will experience such mentors in your life if you haven't already; people who are less concerned about their own glory and more concerned about seeing new ventures to fruition; people who support and challenge you as you grow and develop. Some of you have encountered such mentors during your studies here at Acsenda and they will have a lasting impact on your life.

But now it is your turn, indeed it is your responsibility, to recognize opportunities to mentor others. Keep an eye open for them as you pursue your own life and career. Make sure you are in a position to help them. Be genuine in your support. Do not expect anything in return. It is what will make you stand out as a leader.

But let us focus on the celebration this evening. Life moves on quickly. Convocation is about taking the time to reflect upon your achievements. You owe this to yourself. Each one of you is exceptional for being brave enough to come to a new country, to develop your skills in another language and to survive the rigors of completing a business degree.

On behalf of our faculty, staff and Academic Council at Acsenda; on behalf of Sprott Shaw College and the CIBT Education Group - congratulations to all of the graduates and to the families and friends who supported you throughout your studies.

Congratulations to the graduating class of 2015!