

## **Arts Honour Roll Call, 2021**

**Dr. Peter Ricketts**  
**Acadia President and Vice-Chancellor**

Welcome Class of 2021, so this record of your academic accomplishment at Acadia University today.

I'm delighted to present the Honour Roll of every member of the graduating Class of 2021. Now, usually we only read out the names of those who are physically attending the convocation ceremony. However, in this extraordinary year of COVID-19, we want to make an exception and announce every graduate's name by faculty and degree. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to hear your name read out along with your fellow graduates.

Added to the Honour Roll Call are the messages from the honorary degree recipients and the dean of your faculty. The stories that they share are inspiring and uplifting, and I know that their words will serve you well as you embark upon the next phase of your life as a proud member of the Acadia alumni family. And as I said before, I look forward to inviting you all back to join us here on campus when we can celebrate your achievement in person.

And so, until we meet and celebrate again, remember how very proud we are of you. Take care and thank you.

**Dr. Rob Raeside**  
**University Marshal**

I am Dr. Rob Raeside, University Marshal. As university marshal, I'm pleased to present the Class of 2021 for the Faculty of Arts, including the graduates from the Fall of 2020.

**Honour Roll Call – *List read aloud and printed on screen.***

**Nancy McCain**  
**Doctor of Humanities**  
**Acadia University**

- Congratulations graduates and thank you for allowing me to be part of your celebration today. Earning a degree is a huge accomplishment at any time, that's especially true given the year we've just experienced. So, I really hope you take time to enjoy the day and take in all those congratulations from your friends and your family, because today, today is yours.

Now there are two things I would like to share with you today, and both are about the journey that you've already started. A few years ago, I attended convocation at Acadia as a very proud parent. In fact, two of my children are Acadia grads. It was here that they gained the knowledge, the skills and the friendships that set them on a lifelong path to success. But they're both on paths today that I'm sure they could never have imagined on that convocation day.

My community development grad is off to law school in the fall. And my history major grad is pursuing agricultural business. Who would have thought? Well, certainly not them and that brings me to my first point.

Not every step along the way can be planned. The future will come with twists and turns and the plans you make today can easily be derailed. We've certainly learned that in this past year. So be ready for that. Be ready to seize those new opportunities even if they don't fit in your original plan. And remember that every time you say yes to something new or something different, you're on your way.

You might end up in a place you didn't expect. And that just might be the place where you belong. As you take those brave steps forward, I also hope you'll remember my second point, to never forget the important lessons you learned here at Acadia.

I'm not talking about the ones that found their way into your lecture notes. I'm talking about the ones that found their way into your heart. I'm talking about the importance of giving, of finding creating community, of making a difference when and where you can.

I'm here today because I spent a great part of my life doing those things. But let's be clear, the work that I've done including giving back to communities like the one here at Acadia, hasn't been fueled entirely by altruism. The simple fact is when I've committed myself to serving communities I care about, I've always gained so much more than I've given.

So, every time you thank someone for their help, every time you share your wins, no matter how small, every time you shut down that inner voice that tries to tell you you're too young, you're too inexperienced. Every time you act with kindness and intention, the world takes notice. Opportunities appear, and you, you're on your way to making the world a better place.

So, graduates, thank you again for the opportunity to join you today. Congratulations again, enjoy your day. Enjoy your journey.

**Kyle Lowry**  
**Doctor of Humanities**  
**Acadia University**

Acadia Class of 2021. Kyle Lowry here, with the Toronto Raptors. And I am truly blessed and honoured to be here, celebrating with you virtually, this amazing accomplishment.

I want to first start off by thanking University President and Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Peter Ricketts, along with the trustees, faculty, and staff members. I am genuinely honoured to

be in your company and also to be receiving a Doctorate in Humanities, alongside my fellow honorees. You are all truly inspiring.

Like you, today is extremely special for me and my family. I'm a kid from North Philadelphia, one of the toughest places in America to grow up. And I'm going to be honest with you. According to the statistics, I shouldn't be here with you today.

I grew up in a rowhouse in 20th and Lehigh with me, my mom, my brother, my grandma, and my cousin. A place where you needed to be in the house when the streetlights came on just to avoid the gangs, the drugs, the shooting, and all the violence that went on. Basically, the hood.

I would go to the park and you have to be careful who you hung out with because honestly, you never know what was going to be the situation. Might be a drive by shooting. It might be some drug activity. And honestly, some mornings when I used to walk the school, you would see the ATF getting ready to raid a house. It's kind of a tough situation to be in, but I figured it out. I found a way to make it through.

Growing up the way I did, it defines you, it hardens you. I had to protect myself and my family. I mean, who could I actually trust that wouldn't bring harm to my family? That's all I had was my family. But over the time, I had to slowly learn how to adapt, adjust in my way of thinking to allow other people to help me.

It was then when I allowed myself to open up, that I was blessed and fortunate to have some really great people come into my life, that hands down would play a major part in my trajectory and my future.

Today, I can humbly say and I can humbly confess that I am not standing where I am on my own volition. There are two facts that I've learned throughout my journey.

Success can not be obtained without struggle, and it definitely can not be accomplished alone.

My mom worked two jobs. My grandma worked also. They did everything to provide, to take care and protect me and my brother, no matter what the situation was and how hard they had to work. I had guys like Dave Distel, who drove an extra 20 minutes outside of his way. When you had to go to New Jersey, he would drive 20 minutes to make sure that I got home so no harm would touch my way. People like that are very important to me and my life.

Then I had coach Jay Wright. Jay Wright was one of the coaches that basically helped me, you know, become a man. And he told me, "One thing about it, Kyle, is that you have to always be a legit man, no matter what the situation is."

It's because of people like that, the ones that I just mentioned, is the reason a kid from North Philadelphia had a real shot to make it out truly and making a life for himself. And here's the thing. They didn't have to do that. And I knew that. Which further inspired me to maximize the opportunities that I've been blessed with.

And I vowed that I would always pay it forward. No matter what the situation is, I was always going to pay it forward and give back, no matter what it looked like for me. My

service wasn't dependent on whether I became a professional athlete or not. I always knew that no matter where I ended up in life, that I would always give back in everything I had.

Whether that be my time, my financial resources, my mentoring, whatever was needed of me because I know what it looks like not to be seen. I know what it looks like to be overlooked. I know what it looks like to be stereotyped, forgotten, counted out. All of that just because of where you're from, how you grew up, what you look like, where I lived, where I came from. I just wanted to make, I just want to make... a real impact no matter what. I'm proud to say, my wife, Ayahna and I, we were able and blessed enough to start the Lowry Love Foundation.

Our family's foundation is committed to assisting and providing resources and opportunities to economically and socially disadvantaged families in both Philadelphia and Toronto, with hopes to help them experience a better, equitable quality of life.

But Class of 2021, look at you guys. You guys made it. After countless hours of studying your craft, pulling all-nighters. Some of us pulled all-nighters. Well, some of you guys pulled all-nighters.

You've also managed to navigate through an unprecedented and unpredictable pandemic. Your determination, your perseverance and resiliency to make sure you made it here, is truly admirable. You and those ones, the individuals that have supported you along the journey, are real champions today. Congratulations.

Before I go, I want you to leave you with these questions. How will you serve? How will you pay it forward? What will be your impact in your community? And how will you be a change agent for the next generation? If we do not, then who will?

Booker T. Washington said, "Those happiest are those who do most for others." So, remember Acadia family, leading is not only about achieving your own goals, but is also uplifting others to achieve theirs. Success can not be accomplished alone. It's because of my family's sacrifices and those who genuinely cared to invest in me and who I am, that I beat the odds and became a first-generation college student, attending Villanova University before embarking on my NBA career. And now receiving an honorary Doctorate in Humanities from Acadia University. Wow, it's a lot to take in.

I'm thankful. I know my grandma is smiling down on me right now, and she's extremely proud of me. And she was my biggest fan. I miss you grandma.

And my mother, like many of yours, is extremely happy of this esteemed accomplishment. As well as I honour her and thank her. Thank you, mom, because I wouldn't be here without you. Thank you also to my wife, my sons, my brother, and to all my family members who believed in me and all the people around me that believed in me. I wouldn't be here without you guys. I wouldn't be able to give this speech without you guys. Thank you.

Thank you again, Acadia University for this prestigious honour. It is one I will cherish forever and never forget. Yours truly, Dr. Kyle Lowry. Sounds even better when it's official. Acadia University 2021, Congratulations. We The North.

**Dr. Anna Redden**  
**Dean, Research and Graduate Studies**  
**Acadia University**

- Hi everyone, and congratulations to all of you who have completed a post-graduate degree at Acadia University. This is an exciting time for you, and I hope you find many ways to celebrate and savor this very special occasion.

I am Anna Redden, Dean of Research and Graduate Studies. And just like you, I am a proud graduate of Acadia University. I received both my undergraduate and graduate degrees in science from Acadia, and I remember well how exciting it felt to receive these degrees on graduation day. Some things you just never forget.

I also remember how very proud my loved ones were as I received a master's level degree, a first for my family. I am certain that your family and friends are feeling the same joy for you now, and that you are looking forward to the next step, whatever that may be and wherever you may go.

I'm confident that you're ready for what comes next. While we cannot be with you in person today to celebrate this wonderful achievement, we are thinking of you and sending our excitement and warmest wishes as you celebrate this significant milestone.

The research office staff extend their congratulations as well, and hugs too. Theresa Starratt and Joy Cunningham, one or both of whom you have interacted with throughout your graduate studies at Acadia, are thrilled to see you graduate. We are all very excited for you and happy that we could play various roles along the path to your degree completion.

As Acadia graduate students, you have put in much effort and sacrifice along the way, worked long and hard, have had ups and downs, have dealt with a pandemic that we're still experiencing, and you have persevered and succeeded in your goal. Bravo.

Most students now graduating with a master's degree have been engaged in exciting research projects with faculty supervisors at Acadia, spanning research in the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Professional Studies, and the Faculty of Pure and Applied Science. We want you to know how much we value the immense effort that you put into your graduate level coursework, the planning and conducting of a significant and original research project, and both preparing for and defending a thesis. This is no minor feat.

I hope you feel great satisfaction and pride in this major accomplishment. Throughout your life, you will remember your learning and growth experiences at Acadia, and we will remember you.

Please stay in touch in the years to come. We love to see our graduates visit the campus and to hear from you when we cannot see you in person. Please keep us posted on your career and life events.

**Dr. Laura Robinson**  
**Dean, Faculty of Arts**  
**Acadia University**

- Congratulations, Class of 2021. It's become a bit of a cliché to start a talk like this by making a reference to COVID-19 and I'm going to as well, but for different reasons than simply to congratulate you for making it through this challenging year, instead I'm flipping the focus and saying, thank the stars above that you are graduating with arts degrees right now when the world needs you the most.

As we've done with the classes that have preceded you, we've taught you about history, works of literature, political systems and theories, we've given you second language skills, interviewing skills, research skills, trained you in persuasive communication and essay writing, honed your ability for analysis and critical thinking about gender, the environment, society, economics, human thought and creative expression. But what your year has emerged with is something other years were not as aware of, nor were we to be fair. The knowledge that no one has all the answers, that we are always engaged in the messy process of figuring things out, that's what this pandemic has made clear.

We are always gathering information, analyzing it, sifting through other's rhetoric and arguments and trying to distill it all down to some type of evidence-based truth. In these past four or so years you have all engaged in learning the skills to do that, in sociology, philosophy, psychology, English, but this past year has been a year of experiential learning with the world as a real time laboratory.

We are all figuring it out as we go along.

You have collaborated with professors and decision-makers, you have understood that we are all working through building solutions together when we sometimes don't even know exactly what the problem is, much less what the solution should be.

Your Class has developed a resilience, an adaptability, a leadership, and perhaps most importantly a compassion that will serve you so well as you go out into this brave new world and take on the challenges of making it a better place. And I truly believe you will.

The Class of 2021 is remarkable and all the friends and families who are watching our Convocation are probably well aware of the deep accomplishments of you, graduating students. From organizing Black Lives Matter protests and food sharing and International Women's Day events and environmental action, to creating art that uplifts, plays that provoke, writing that stimulates, to volunteering or working with the ASU or the many other student organizations on campus, to participating in sports, you have all contributed in substantial ways and you haven't let a little thing like a pandemic get in your way.

I am beyond proud of each and every one of you. Getting a degree is never easy but what you've emerged with is more than that piece of paper, you are ready. And we will be watching and cheering you on and no matter what you are a part of the Acadia family and you will always have a place to come home to. Congratulations, Class of 2021.