

Pure and Applied Science 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 Pure and Applied Science, including the graduates from the Fall of 2020.

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

Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed
Doctor of Science
Acadia University

- Hello, Acadia University. It is my great privilege and honour to accept this prestigious award and title, Doctor of Science. And I do so on behalf of my former colleagues in public health. And in fact, the hundreds of public health professionals that I have had the privilege of working with over my time as a medical officer of health and the thousands that have stepped up to the plate to assist public health in so many ways during this enduring pandemic. You are all honoured by this graduation ceremony today.

I do want to thank, in particular, the Class of 2021 for taking me into your arms. Now as a fellow grad and also alumna, and for giving me the opportunity to say a few words.

And, also Kyle Lowry, I get to say, I graduated with Kyle Lowry. How cool is that?

I was asked to offer a few words of inspiration. I have to admit, it was hard to know where to start. Over my time as a Medical Officer of Health, I've been fortunate to be surrounded

by people and opportunities that have opened my eyes to the depths of character and competence and creativity that can go into having a career and making it both fulfilling and impactful. And so far, I've had a lot of fun.

I've learned way more than I would've thought or know was possible, even when I got my first degree from the University of Prince Edward Island in 1993. I didn't fully realize then just how much that was going to be the beginning of my learning and not at all an end to something. It was the opening of so many new doors and opportunities for much richer learning that I only have gratitude for today even as I continued to learn.

Of all that I have seen and read and learned, I thought maybe I'd focus on some learnings around leadership today because I do think that it's actually your leadership that the world will need over the next two decades, more than anything else. And I don't want you to have left here without somebody having told you that. I don't know, probably somebody has already.

So, there've been three books that have guided my journey around leadership that I thought I would share with you today. And the first one is this one, "The Ingenuity Gap" by Dr. Thomas Homer-Dixon, who I believe is at Simon Fraser University now. And what I love about his book, and I'm reading his second one, "Commanding Hope" right now, is not only his second but another one. "Commanding Hope." I love it because it points to the ways in which ingenuity is needed to deal with some of the world's most complex and wicked problems. Those big, hairy problems that we know, we're in the midst of right now and that will continue for the decades to come.

The next book that I want to share with you is this one called "Theory U" by Dr. Otto Scharmer at MIT and Harvard. And what I love about Dr Scharmer's work, it points to the ways in which any of us as leaders can dip into the ingenuity, that's inherent within us to solve and dive into some of those big, hairy problems.

The third book that I want to share with you is this one. Some of you may have this book on your shelves. It's called "Yes" and it's a book that was given to me when my daughter was born in 2006. And what I love about this book, it embodies the energy that I have manifested as a leader over my time in public health.

I get excited about saying yes to things, not because I can't say no, but because "yes" is the beginning of something. It's an opportunity and why not take it?

Part of the reason I wanted to share those with you is because I think you are going to be challenged in your lifetimes to say yes to things even when they're difficult because it represents you engaging with the world, the way it actually is, not just the way we wish the world was. And wishing the world can be a certain way won't make it that way, but saying yes to the things that can create the world that we want will be needed. And I think the leaders that will be needed will be those who can engage with that.

One of the challenges that you will have, the problems that the world will face will be those big, hairy, wicked problems. We've seen so many of them even in this past year, they will continue. And not everybody will be comfortable with dealing with complexity.

That's going to be your challenge, to be the type of leader who can engage with complexity. And this doesn't necessarily mean being the leader that has the best or

brightest idea. Being the leader that can hold space for others in complexity will be key. And I hope that you'll be up for that challenge.

I would also encourage you to be the type of leader who can avoid being trapped by systems who will resist. Yes, who will resist a change that could create the world that we want to have. So please, do say 'yes' to ideas because failing to try is not the worst thing that can happen. Or sorry, failing is not the worst thing that can happen to you. Failing to try is the worst thing that can happen.

Be prepared to call out obfuscation, misdirection, misdiagnosis when you see it because sometimes, things are exactly as bad as they look. And we need to own up to that if we're actually going to change. This means speaking truth to power.

Sometimes relationships are going to be more important than the issue. You'll actually need to speak to the issue and be prepared to sacrifice the relationship. Not all relationships, not all issues will be important, so be ready to discern which ones are, and then engage with them as needed.

Listen hard for what is not being said and by whom, and listen for that as much as for what is being said. Be an ally with somebody whose voice needs to be heard, in fact, speak for them if that need is there.

The loudest voices won't necessarily be the best voices or the right voices. Be aware of that. There will be a tendency for folks to want to follow the person who is speaking the most. the person who is the tallest, the person who has the best dressed, but the person who was saying the things that need to be said might be the person to follow instead. Be ready to support that.

Don't let systems take away your time for thinking. Your capacity to think is your most powerful weapon. It's what you spent your degree investing in so use it.

Systems tend to look at the people in them and value them by how busy they are, but that busyness is keeping you from realizing the ingenuity that's needed for the next good system change. Be wary of it and take some space.

And finally, to the women in the group, I know you've probably heard this before. Use your voice because it matters. Having said all that, what I would say to you more than anything else, when the world around looks like it wants to sleep through the next upcoming monumental event, Class of 2021, classmates, engage with that.

Wake us up, provoke us, move us to action. We'll be ready. I'll be there with you classmates. No worries. So, thank you for your attention. I wish you the very best. Do good things, have fun, and know that whatever life brings you from here, you will handle it. Thank you. Bye.

Dr. Robert Strang
Doctor of Science
Acadia University

Hi, I'm Dr. Robert Strang, and it's a pleasure to be here with you today. I want to, first of all, thank Acadia for providing or offering me this honorary degree. I'm honored and humbled to accept it, but I am accepting on behalf of all public health professionals in

Nova Scotia. People that I've worked with over the last year throughout this pandemic, and I'm accepting it in recognition of their dedication and expertise, and how we've worked together to keep Nova Scotia safe.

It's also a privilege to be among the other esteemed honorary degree recipients, especially my colleague, Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed, and we worked side by side for much of the pandemic.

Also, it's a pleasure to receive this from Acadia. I have a longstanding working relationship with Acadia, worked with them on a number of issues, starting back a number of years ago with a serious alcohol-related fatality, and that grew into Acadia's leadership on a national scale, and I want to thank Acadia for stepping into that leadership role.

And it's been a privilege to be able to work alongside them on that. We also had dealt with an outbreak of meningitis as well on campus a few years ago. So I'm well versed with Acadia and it's an honour to become part of the Acadia family.

Most importantly, I want to recognize the graduating students. It's been a challenging year, a year and a half for, when I think about it, for many of you this is probably half of your degree you've achieved, while having to work through and live with all the COVID fears and also the COVID protocols.

And I know that has made a challenging situation even more challenging. So congratulations for getting through this. And I also want to thank all of you because I know across the province, we've asked all Nova Scotians, including university students to come together, to do what's necessary to keep each other safe. And you have done that. It's remarkable of how safe we've been able to keep Nova Scotia, including our campuses. So again, thank you for that.

Let me end by just a few reflections on perhaps, for consideration for the graduates, that there's a phrase that, you know, never waste the opportunity of a crisis. And certainly COVID has shown us a number of things that we need to, that is an opportunity for us to be better.

We're going to be different as we come out of COVID, but can we also be better as well? Certainly we know that COVID is a reminder that we're all connected globally. Nothing happens in isolation. And I think that's an important way to frame things.

The phrase that's out there, everybody's heard it, "think globally, and act locally", but COVID has reminded us to make sure we understand all our interconnections and that we're all together. And what we do affects everybody else around us and across the globe potentially. But locally also, COVID has shown us in our response that Nova Scotia, we have been able to remain as safe as we're able to be, simply because Nova Scotians have heeded the call to come together, to do things, to put aside perhaps our own priorities, our own perspective, and to say, what do I need to do? What sacrifices do I have to make? because it's to make my community, keep my community safe for the common good.

So I think there's really something there, as we may well face future pandemics. We certainly have a climate change crisis in front of us that, that the way we get through all of these things is big and small. That is that we put each other first and we come together as communities. And I think if we can be better at that by the lessons from COVID, we'll be able to take on anything.

And so that's lessons to learn moving forward and the last one is, COVID has clearly shown that in our communities, we're not all equal. We're not all on a level playing field. COVID has had a significant impact on those who are most vulnerable, whether it's because of socioeconomic status, race, gender, type of employment, that makes you more vulnerable. So I think an important thing that I encourage you to think about moving forward is, wherever you go, whether it's for further education, for wherever you work, is what do we do to learn from COVID and try to make those inequities better? How do we make our communities or society fairer, more just, and more equitable?

And that's something I focus on and think about as I continue my career moving forward with those perspectives in mind. And I challenge all of you to think and to carry that moving forward as well.

So let me say thank you once again to Acadia. It's an honour to receive this honorary degree and let me give my hearty congratulations to all the graduates.

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. Suzie Currie,
Dean, Pure and Applied Science
Acadia University**

- To the Class of 2021. As I sit here today in front of the camera on this spring day in Wolfville, I can't help but think that something's not quite right. Aren't you supposed to be here with me with your friends, your families, and your supports, wondering which way your grad hat tassels should be flung, feeling a little hot and uncomfortable but happy and excited in your grad gown under the hot lights and U-hall?

I do get that a taped message from your Dean is not really what you expected or hoped for today. But if this unique and challenging year of the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that you are very skilled at coping with unexpected changes and new circumstances. COVID-19 turned our world upside down.

The knowns in our lives became unknowns. When we can travel, where we can travel who we can visit, how many people, the proper way to navigate the grocery store.

And the unknowns became knowns. The virus itself, how rapidly we can design effective vaccines, what a quarantined world looks like, PPE, the difference between one ply and three ply, masks and toilet tissue.

We've been reminded that without health, we have nothing. We have a new appreciation for hugs and being with friends, family, and even your professors in 3D.

This crisis provided us with an opportunity to look at the world from the inside out rather than the outside in. It forced us to think about what we value, what really matters.

You became more creative. You quickly found ways to be social in a virtual world. You met on Teams and in Zoom. You got moving. You figured out how to be physically distanced in the Axe.

This crisis has also highlighted the fundamental importance of science and engineering in our society. Think about just one example, the spectacularly fast production of COVID-19 vaccines actually rests on decades of meticulous, basic research into mRNA.

On the other side of COVID, as science grads, you will have important roles to play in our brand-new world. We need you to help us chart a course of recovery.

We need the freethinkers like you because now more than ever before, we need people who can look at the world in a rational way and make decisions based on facts and on reason. And of course, in every cumulus cloud, there's a silver lining.

During the year of "quiet" created by the pandemic, there is much less traffic noise and human activity. So, you hear more bird song and maybe see more wildlife. Population and carbon emissions hit record lows and dramatic photographs were published out of China and India with no smog.

In this unintentional global experiment, scientists are now monitoring sounds in the ocean to understand how decades of ocean noise from shipping and other human activities have affected marine life. This is awesome.

This pandemic will end. And you will be there for the new beginning to take advantage of these learnings to move us forward in a better world. Investments and advances will come. And you will be the change-makers to build a better and brighter post pandemic world.

As Acadia grads, you will address the systemic inequalities exposed by COVID-19. You will be champions and allies for greater equity, diversity, and inclusion wherever you work and live. And you will be defenders of science and technology and promoters of scientific literacy.

Thank you for your unprecedented resilience, grit, in this generation defining year. And most of all, congratulations to all of you. We are so proud of you and who you are as students and as humans.

You will always be part of the Acadia family. Here's to your brilliant new beginning. You are ready for what lies ahead because you, Class of 2021, never gave up. I'll leave you with the profound line from Steve Perry, lead singer of the band, Journey, and the first album I ever bought with my own money. "Don't stop believing."

Thank you and congratulations.