

Good morning everyone – thank you so much for being here.

Before I get started, I want to extend a special thanks to the Chair of Sheridan’s Board of Governors, John Fleming, whose leadership continues to fuel Sheridan’s aspirations. I also want to recognize my colleague, President Mohamed Lachemi, and underscore the value that Sheridan places on its relationships with both Ryerson and Algoma Universities.

Together, as partners, we are steadfast in our commitment to serving the City of Brampton by delivering high-quality, forward-focused programming that capitalizes on our unique strengths. Thank you, Mohamed.

---

I wanted to start with that video today because I LOVE IT! It’s a snapshot of what I experience every day at Sheridan and provides the perfect segue for my comments this morning.

**Simply: Sheridan is, and always has been, a trailblazer and a gamechanger.** We may have been founded on the same day – and with the same mandate – as other colleges in the Province but, over the past 50 years, we have evolved dramatically to become something cutting-edge, forward-thinking and unique.

**Sheridan never stands still.** And ... particularly when we work in partnership with industry and our communities, we – collectively – are an unstoppable force for transformation and prosperity.

Supporting learners, fueling their aspirations and celebrating their successes has been my passion for 30 years across a variety of positions at five colleges and universities in Canada and the United States. Over the course of the next 20 minutes, I'm going to share some of what I've learned over that time – and speak to why it is such a tremendous privilege for me to lead at Sheridan.

To start the story ... I need to move back in time about a year and half to June 11, 2018, when I was named Sheridan's 8<sup>th</sup> President and Vice Chancellor. I really wanted this job – and I worked very hard to get it – because Sheridan's values and character resonate with me. This was crucially important because I learned a long time ago that my leadership impact is amplified when there is tight and authentic alignment between my personal and professional passions. Let me expand a little on that point.

People in this room may appreciate that colleges and universities are fundamental to Canada's future as an economically secure, safe, sustainable, progressive, inclusive and equitable democracy. I am, nonetheless, shocked at the intensity with which some people continue to openly challenge that premise. Industry giants in the Silicon Valley, for example, and even those across Canada's tech sector, have openly suggested that a post-secondary credential is no longer a calling card to entry level employment.

Drawing on my time as an educator, administrator and leader in the sector – I'm here to tell you that post-secondary education matters greatly. Maybe more now than ever.

Specifically, the good that comes from higher education can be divided into two buckets: the first being 'market' or 'personal' benefits and the second being 'non-market' or 'social' benefits.

Let's start with the former. A 20-year analysis of cumulative earnings of post-secondary graduates released by Statistics Canada in 2015 found that male college graduates earned about 1.3 times more than men with a high school diploma; women with a college credential earned about 1.4 times more.

Without question: college and university graduates experience higher levels of employment and they make more money.

In 2019, Statistics Canada further released data to show that Bachelor's degree holders from colleges earn about 12% more

per year, on average, than university Bachelor's degree holders for the first two years after graduation.

All of this data attests, irrefutably, to the economic, personal or market gains to be gleaned through an investment in higher education.

This, however, doesn't tell the full story. Post-secondary education fuels personal transformation or what a researcher named McMahon refers to as those "social" benefits.

I dare say Mohamed and members of our respective teams see this – first-hand – every day. Over the last two years, for example, I've had the opportunity to mentor and support a young woman with a toddler whose lived experience has been plagued by complexity and challenge. She was on social assistance and had limited access to positive influences. With the help of a community partner agency, dedicated student services staff at Sheridan, and caring faculty from our Skilled

Trades Centre here in Brampton – that same young woman now has stable housing and food security; her son is in a licensed day care; she’s enrolled in an apprenticeship program; and she thrived in a summer placement program that I’m confident will lead to long-term employment, economic self-sufficiency and positive social engagement.

I am privileged to see this sort of personal development happen all the time. It’s what gets me out of bed every morning, excited and inspired.

Post-secondary institutions – like Sheridan – play a fundamental role in making students healthier, more engaged and more conscious citizens. These effects last a lifetime and have a huge impact on society at large.

This kind of transformation happened to me, and most likely, to many of you. I invested eleven years as a learner in post-secondary institutions in Canada and the United States and

earned four degrees. The outcomes I value most, however, are incalculable: University gave me a voice; it taught me to think; and, it compelled me to engage. It sounds simplistic, but the *process* of earning my academic credentials inspired *who I am*, not *what I do*.

Because it matters, I'm always mindful to acknowledge by privilege: I am a white woman who grew up in a house my parents owned; it was full of books and my brothers and I were expected to attend college or university, in part because my Mom, Dad and grandparents went before me; I didn't work during my undergraduate studies and I lived on campus.

My lived experience is germane: socio-economic status, marginalization and obstacles to success intersect and must be acknowledged. Frankly, many of the students I've supported at the University of Guelph, George Brown College, York University and Sheridan do not fit my profile. They work 25+ hours a week, commute 2+ hours a day, have partners or

dependents and debt. For them, getting a good job has to be the primary objective. I understand, admire and respect that. The literature is, however, crystal clear.

**Even after accounting for confounding influences like race, gender, parental income, and prior health status ... attending college or university has a positive impact on values, attitudes and quality of life.** Evidence further suggests that the influence of post-secondary education extends beyond individual graduates to their children. What does that mean in practical terms? College and university graduates score higher on measures of tolerance, have a lower propensity to commit crime, are more likely to vote, volunteer, participate in public debate and read to their kids. In short, graduating from a college or university drives positive behaviors that *make the world better.*

Beyond the personal and/or social benefits experienced by individuals, post-secondary education has a positive impact on

communities too. To that point, Sheridan continues to have a profound impact on the City of Brampton:

- Each year, we enroll approximately 12,000 students at our Davis Campus -- 85% of them indicate that they're satisfied they've gained the knowledge and skills that will help them in their future careers.
- Over time, that enrolment has generated a significant alumni community. Since 1995, Sheridan has launched over 62,800 graduates from our Brampton campus into the world – this includes a former Deputy Chief of Police at Peel Region, the President and CEO of Hydro One in Brampton and, the current head athletic therapists of both the Toronto Raptors and the National Ballet of Canada.
- Our graduates call this city home: over 33,000 Sheridan graduates live in Brampton today.
- So do our faculty and staff: the Davis campus is home to 417 full time employees – 33% of whom hold PhDs and 49% of whom hold Masters credentials.

- We're connected to industry, community partners and employers: in the last three years alone, 164 Brampton companies have hired Sheridan students into more than 500 co-op and internship positions. And every year, over 765 organizations across Brampton benefit from field placement students enrolled in 17 unique programs across the Schools of Education, Public Safety, Applied Health, and Community Studies.

In fact, the total impact of Sheridan on the regional economy in 2016-17 was \$3.6 billion. This includes the sum of our operational spending, the student spending impact, and the impact of our alumni.

***All of this combined is why I describe the opportunity to lead at one of Ontario's leading post-secondary institutions as a tremendous privilege.*** It also underpins my deep and enduring commitment to ensure that every student at Sheridan is positioned to *flourish*.

That, in fact, was precisely the challenge I put to our learning community last year – how do we ensure every student at Sheridan is positioned to flourish? It was a question that led to rigorous debate, crucial conversations and much collaboration ... all focused on co-creating a new, game-changing roadmap for the future of post-secondary education in Canada.

The resultant Plan, titled Sheridan 2024: Galvanizing Education for a Complex World – is both a collective chorus of direction and an actionable strategy.

It was curated through unprecedented dialogue and debate, with 3,000 voices from inside and beyond Sheridan contributing their boundless energy and enthusiasm. To my delight: we asked our community to share their biggest, boldest aspirations – and they did.

Sheridan 2024 calls on us to architect a new kind of higher education that brings together excellent teaching, academic rigour, connectivity to the workforce, interdisciplinary creativity and innovation, personal development, and applied research. It underpins our efforts to respond to what the next decade may hold, retains the best of our roots, and re-imagines how Sheridan must naturally and most meaningfully evolve.

Let me speak briefly to each of these three aspects in turn – starting with what the future holds.

Without question, we are living in an era marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity – a VUCA world – where the only constant is change. Daily, we are bombarded with stories about how Advanced Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and Collaborative Platforms are driving disruptive innovation. If you believe what Business Insider suggests, then the workplace that you and I know will be very different in 2050:

- Artificial intelligence will have invaded the workplace

- Everyone will work from home
- Employees will job hop ... a lot
- Management will be deconstructed, and;
- Retirement will no longer be an option.

Of course, the challenges, risks and disruption we're facing open up tremendous new opportunities – especially for those organizations who demonstrate courage. According to Deloitte's 2017 Courage report – successful, thriving, change-capable organizations demonstrate courage through diligent, disciplined and deliberate activities. They're proactive and challenge the status quo; they take calculated risks; and they do what is right.

At the individual level, we know that flourishing in this VUCA world will demand emotional acumen and competencies like agility, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. In fact, organizations from IBM to the Conference Board and the World Economic Forum have touted the importance of creativity as

one of the top skills that employers demand, that leaders must possess, and that companies will need to become more effective and innovative.

This is why our new Strategic Plan accepts and embraces this new reality, wherein:

1. Innovation will continually reshape how we work, learn, live and communicate;
2. People's careers will span many different roles and include non-traditional environments;
3. Closer partnerships between industry and academia will give rise to new, collaborative, work-learn possibilities; and
4. The global movement of people and ideas will place a premium on inter-cultural knowledge and the ability to harness a diversity of perspectives.

This brings me to the second prong – the fact that the new plan upholds the best of our roots, and respects what our people most value. Sheridan 2024 builds on our rich history of

academic excellence, creativity, innovation, and our trailblazing (some would say “renegade”) ethos.

Let’s start with the most important piece of that puzzle: academic excellence is, and will always remain, Sheridan’s hallmark. Today, we offer 26 four-year, stand-alone Honours Bachelor degrees. Five of those degrees are offered in Brampton, with a total enrolment of 700 students. I am very proud to boast that Sheridan is the most degree intensive College in the province and we are often cited by the Ministry for our commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement. We are wedded to small class sizes and meaningful connections with expert faculty whose primary focus is *teaching*.

The first thing I hear from students – always – is how much they value their professors. Students at Sheridan don’t feel like a number or a widget. In my 30 years of experience in higher education, I’ve never worked at a place more genuinely

student-centered in its orientation. This runs across the entire organization to include faculty, staff, and senior administrators.

Since day one, Sheridan has been synonymous with creativity – that skillset that CEOs want. We teach, cultivate and research it far beyond the traditional manifestations of the creativity rooted in, or confined to, the arts. It's bigger and pervades across all our work. We're the only institution in Ontario, for example, to offer a certificate in Creative Problem Solving, open to students across all of our Faculties.

**We drive economic independence for learners.** Since day one, our credentials have been career-focused – they position graduates to find meaningful work in their chosen fields. We combine hands-on learning, theory, internships, applied research and creative activities. Active external advisory committees and faculty who remain firmly connected to their professions ensure relevance and currency.

These attributes ensure that program design across Sheridan is strongly aligned with emerging social and economic needs – this, in essence, underpins our reputation for trailblazing. We developed the first program in animation, the first program in athletic therapy and the first undergraduate degree in cybersecurity in Canada back in 2004 – which was thanks to forward looking faculty who identified the imminent need for data security professionals.

**We are a research-intensive institution.** Working with industry (small, medium and large enterprises), our faculty create new products and processes and solve societal challenges. In 2018-19, 155 faculty and staff were involved in research projects, most of which involve students who are mentored by their professors to apply classroom knowledge and contribute to problem-solving. Last year, over 1,900 students were involved in tracked curriculum-based research and Sheridan was able to hire another 263 students to work on research projects with industry and community.

Our research is solving real-life problems. Over the past two weeks alone:

- Our Centre for Mobile Innovation announced the creation of a cost-effective, easy-to-use system for diagnosing childhood pneumonia in low-resource settings;
- Our Centre for Elder Research made significant advances to enhance the emotional health and well-being of long-term care residents with a new Virtual Reality recreational experience; and,
- A team of students from our Pilon School of Business and our Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Technology successfully programmed our ABB, YUMI robot to interact with museum visitors for an exhibit called Head in the Clouds at the Museum of Civilization in Quebec City that explores the complex nature of human relationships with technology.

Looking back at 2018-19, Sheridan received \$4.8M in external grant funding for research. In the annual listing of Canada's Top 50 research colleges, Sheridan was named #2 for completed research projects, #3 in research partnerships and #5 in paid student researchers. Clearly – what we're doing is working.

In summary, our plan builds on what has always distinguished Sheridan: our unwavering commitment to academic quality, our degree intensity, our cutting-edge research, our long-standing investment in graduate-level prepared faculty, and our library and learning services. This, combined, sets us apart.

And now last but certainly not least – I'd like to outline the ways in which our new Strategic Plan re-imagines **how Sheridan should most naturally, most meaningfully and most powerfully evolve.**

We know that existing models of higher education are insufficient for what the next generation of learning will

require. We must create the pedagogy that will purposefully develop people's capacity to thrive on change throughout their lives. To meet the demands of the new economy and the future of work, we must foster 'soft skills' like emotional intelligence, creativity, innovation, inter-cultural competence, and entrepreneurship.

One of the ways we're delivering on that mandate is through EDGE – our Entrepreneurship Discovery Growth Engine. EDGE is an innovation hub based at our Hazel McCallion Campus in Mississauga; the Centre offers training, mentorship and support for early-stage entrepreneurs. Since it opened in 2017, over 40 start-ups have been supported by EDGE – 13 of which reside in dedicated co-working space. One of EDGE's clients – Link Mental Health – has developed an online platform that matches people to the mental health services that best fits their specific need and connects them to the calendars of therapists, thereby reducing the referral process from months to minutes. Link Mental Health won the top prize in the Health

and Wellness Category at the CNE's Innovation Garage Pitch Competition for emerging innovators this summer.

Through initiatives like EDGE, and our work with the Brampton Library, Sheridan will continue to leverage our position as an anchor institution in all three of our home communities. We have an earned reputation as a convener of partnerships between government, industry and academia. This unique positioning cements our role as a catalyst for economic development and social innovation.

Key to this are reciprocal work-learn relationships like co-op, placements and internships. Moving forward, we must become even further enmeshed with industry, continuing to co-design our programming, curriculum and pedagogy. This will fuel our aspiration to be the destination of choice for skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling in Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville.

**We have the experience and relationships to make that happen.** Recently, for example, our Continuing and Professional Studies division launched a partnership with an industry consortium of power transmission leaders to offer an intensive, 16-week Industrial Distribution Program. It consists of 8 weeks in class followed by an 8-week paid work placement. Instructors from each of the consortium's partner companies will present workshops as part of the IDP curriculum.

A commitment to the skilled trades and apprenticeships is central to Sheridan's success. Our purpose-built facility in Brampton – for programs including Electrical, Plumbing, Industrial Mechanic Millwright, Precision Machining and Welding – is home to over 2,000 students – innovators and problem-solvers who are vital to Canada's economic stability.

The very first student I met at the Skilled Trades Center in 2017 had recently completed a four-year honors degree in Physics at the University of Waterloo. He came to Sheridan to pursue our

Electrical program because he wanted to do something practical, with his hands. Having just upgraded our home electrical panel, I might suggest that his earning power – three years post-graduation – is considerable!

Students in the Skilled Trades Centre are so impressive. We sometimes fail to appreciate the breadth, depth and significance of their contributions. We're working to address misperceptions and promote the Trades by partnering with organizations like Skills Ontario to support a Women in the Trades event, and supporting the FIRST Ontario Robotics championship and Halton Skills Competition.

We will continue to invest in city building and community leadership. Doing that well will demand that we better leverage our physical space and expertise. Sheridan, for example, has been dedicated to Sustainability for many years. A hallmark project in this regard is our commitment to cut our energy and carbon emissions in half, to create district energy

networks, to virtually eliminate the waste we send to landfill and to restore biodiversity on our campuses. We're incredibly proud to share our in-house expertise by partnering with the City of Brampton on the development of its Climate Energy Plan.

I've talked for a while now and I absolutely want to save sufficient time for questions. As Sheridan's #1 booster, however, it's really important to me that you leave here today with a solid handle on the crux of Sheridan's new Plan and our commitments to Brampton. Here's my two-part Coles Notes.

1. We will incorporate the best elements of colleges, polytechnics, and universities to architect a new, composite and visionary form of higher education.
2. Sheridan will tend to the development of the person as much as to the currency of knowledge, workforce preparedness, and a seamless transition to lifelong learning for our

graduates – a goal that we anticipate will include the ability to offer applied Masters degrees.

When we are successful – having ‘lived’ our commitment to the Mission, Vision, First Principles, and priorities espoused in Sheridan 2024 -- we will be known for:

- educating graduates who can navigate the world with confidence;
- cultivating resourceful, highly skilled and creative people and communities through the relentless incubation of new ideas; and
- being the epicenter for ground-breaking, standard-setting higher education that unleashes everyone’s full potential and empowers people to flourish in – and shape – an ever-changing world.

Imagine the impact of those outcomes. Drawing on the strength of our leadership team, the amazing faculty and staff who work tirelessly on behalf of learners, and – last but not

least – the talent, creativity and perseverance of our students ...  
I'm confident we'll get there.

In closing, I'm compelled to reiterate how immensely proud I am of the work we do at Sheridan to fuel human, social and economic development. Championing what we do is the easiest job I've ever had.

I very much appreciate the warm welcome I've received from the City of Brampton since joining Sheridan in 2017 and look forward to working collaboratively – with any and all of you – who wish to join us in our noble cause.

Thank you.