

**Fall Convocation
St. John's, October 21-22, 2010**

This is the consolidated text of the Reports to Convocations delivered in St. John's by Dr. Gary Kachanoski, President and Vice-Chancellor

Welcome to convocation, we are so pleased that you could join us today for this special time at the university.

First and foremost, I want to extend congratulations to our new graduands.

Congratulations also to your parents, your families, friends and professors who have a part in the success that you have achieved today. They have nurtured and supported you, opened your eyes to new ways of looking at the world, offered their direction, guidance, and encouragement.

Ultimately, of course, it was your efforts and talents, your learning and transformation that got you to today's convocation, so congratulations.

Convocations are special events in the life of a university because they celebrate and rededicate the university's primary responsibility: the success of our students: your success.

We celebrate not just the outcome from your journey the past few years, but also our combined future as we welcome you to the Memorial family, as alumni of this great university.

The relationships you have built here over the past few years are significant ones and will continue to influence you, to define you as you go out into the world to begin your careers, to continue with your education, or to pursue your passion.

Yesterday, I was formally installed as president and vice-chancellor of this great university. It was truly a life-defining event for me, and also for my family. We are thrilled to be part of this wonderful university community, and in this place that has such rich history and culture.

And today, I am honoured to join you on this special day of convocation.

Honorary Graduands:

Joining us today is our honorary graduand, Dr. Pamela J. Bjorkman.

Dr. Pamela J. Bjorkman is a professor of Biology at the California Institute of Technology. She is being recognized today for the importance of her research to the field of medicine.

Professors Emeriti:

Joining us are Memorial faculty members who will receive the designation of professor emeritus. Dr. James Barnes, Business Administration; Prof. Shane O’Dea, English; Dr. Phil Heath, Mathematics and Statistics; Dr. Colin Higgs, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation; and Dr. James K. Hiller, Department of History, have enjoyed outstanding careers at Memorial.

As I look out into the rows of our new graduands who will leave here today with degrees from Memorial University. I want to congratulate you for choosing to attend a university that is dedicated to making a difference.

From its very beginnings in 1925, Memorial has been committed to making life better for young people in Newfoundland and Labrador, to give them choices about what they could do with their lives, and how they could live their lives.

As many of you know, the mission of Memorial University recognizes its special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; it's written right into the *Memorial University Act*.

More importantly, here at Memorial, the faculty, staff, students, and alumni are proud of this obligation, and they understand that the people of this place, this great province, expect the university to live up to its obligations.

It's one of the reasons I came to Memorial – over the years in my career as a teacher, researcher and university administrator I have worked with communities in different ways. In Ontario and Western Canada, I have worked with rural communities, farmers and farm organizations to carry out research, and help share information, to promote innovative soil and water conservation.

It was through our close relationships that community partners shared their insights and knowledge and then together we were able to provide many new solutions that advanced conservation.

This type of community-engaged scholarship is common at Memorial University and I would like to share with you some great examples.

Drs Scott MacKinnon and David Behm from our School of Human Kinetics and Recreation are involved in research aimed at improving helicopter safety. Dr. Behm is studying the effects of inversion, that's when helicopters land in water and flip over, on performance and cardiovascular responses of occupants in the water. Dr. MacKinnon's research is focused on survival suits, escape times and problems. The researchers hope to answer some of the questions that came out of the Well's inquiry into the crash of Cougar helicopter flight #491.

In the Faculty of Medicine, a high rate of community participation over the last 10 years has led to important findings about the links between smoking and colorectal cancer. Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest rate of this type of cancer in the country,

and thanks to this ongoing research, new screening clinics have opened to help identify families that may be at high risk of this disease.

It is potentially life-saving research made possible because of our relationship with the people of this province.

Our award-winning Students in Free Enterprise team, also known as SIFE Memorial, is recognized for its entrepreneurial work in communities across the province, and for being the first Canadian team to win an international SIFE competition.

And in yet another first, the **first-ever** national expansion of a project for any Canadian team, SIFE Memorial's *Think Green Program* that teaches students how to run their own profitable recycling enterprises, is now up and running at a number of Boys and Girls Clubs across Canada.

Dr. Paul Snelgrove, an associate professor with the Ocean Sciences Centre and the Department of Biology, led the assembly and report of results from the first global Census of Marine Life. His book, *Discoveries of the Census of Marine Life* synthesizes a decade of discovery that involved more than 2,700 census scientists, and gives an unprecedented picture of the abundance, distribution and diversity of marine life in the planet's oceans.

This is an exciting time to be at Memorial. Our research income has increased from about \$30 million in the late 90s to almost \$100 million in 2010, and we have plans for significant further growth.

As a former Dean of Graduate Studies and Research and also a former Vice-President Research, I know very well that research, scholarship and creative activities at a university are intimately linked to graduate studies and graduate students.

There are many definitions of what it means to be a research intensive university, but ALL of them include the successful delivery of graduate programs, across a wide range of disciplines.

Universities are unique by integrating our research and scholarship with the education of students.

So, as a research intensive university, Memorial is defined by graduate students; your research, your scholarship and your creative activity.

And that importance is reflected in the growing number of graduate students who are choosing to study at Memorial. Our enrolment has topped 3,000, which is a record, and with more than 500 PhD students (double the number just four or five years ago), and more on their way, the university is continuing its transformation as a research-intensive university.

Memorial University values the freedom of researchers to pursue research based on their individual and collective intelligence, curiosity, ingenuity and creativity, but it is also a university where many chose to carry out this work in a way that is influencing and being influenced by the social, economic, scientific and cultural fabric of Newfoundland and Labrador.

And this world class community engaged scholarship is producing new knowledge and insight that is relevant nationally and globally.

Our Department of Folklore is now offering what may be the first folklore co-op Masters of Arts program in North America.

The department introduced a public sector stream to its graduate program this past September. It recognized that Folklore graduates have an important role in the larger community, especially in a community where culture and history are so vibrant, as is the case in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The School of Music's choral conducting program also benefits from community partnerships. Masters in Music students are working with the award-winning Lady Cove and Newman Sound choirs, doing internship-like programs that give them weekly, hands-on experience in a choral setting. It's the kind of podium experience that is rare in conducting programs across the country.

You might be interested to know that Kellie Walsh, director of the Lady Cove Women's Choir, is the first graduate of the music school's Masters in Music program in choral conducting.

I want to extend congratulations to our School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, and Distance Education and Learning Technologies, which partnered with the provincial department of education to create and deliver our new fully-online Masters in Physical Education program.

It is one of a kind in Canada. Students from across the country bring to their virtual classroom a diverse perspective around issues and topics related to education.

The program has just received this year's Innovative and Creative Programming Award at the University Continuing Education Association's recent international conference in the United States.

Many Canadian universities struggle with the challenge of connecting their activities to their communities. But at Memorial, it is not just a standard aspiration; it's a core value – and not only on paper. Memorial University is intricately woven in the social, economic, scientific and cultural fabric of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As new graduates, you are about to write a new chapter in your lives.

Many of you will choose to build your careers and your lives in this province. With the knowledge, skills and experiences gained from your time here at Memorial, you will help to further develop your chosen professions, whether in nursing, or commerce, or social

work, or engineering, or as entrepreneurs starting your own businesses. So we encourage you to continue to connect with Memorial as alumni and lifelong learners.

Many of you will also use your knowledge and skills to become the next generation of community leaders and volunteers, working with schools, sports groups, municipalities and local charities. You'll coach young athletes, sit on school councils, go into municipal politics, raise money for good causes, and raise awareness about important issues in your communities, building on the knowledge, and experience you have gained here at Memorial, and throughout your lives.

The engagement by our students with their communities; helps the university complement, support and reflect the social and cultural environment in which it operates. This is another way that Memorial contributes to the broader community.

So in closing, graduands, today you will receive your degrees and commence the next phase of your lives. It's a transitional time and a time for celebration. There will be challenges, but I am confident that you will meet these challenges.

And like the first group of students who graduated all those years ago from Memorial University College, you will go out into the world and make us proud. And we will want to hear from you. We will want to know about your lives, and your accomplishments.

Welcome to the family of Memorial University alumni, now 70,000 strong.

Congratulations.