

TUESDAY A.M.

## 1997 Spring Convocation Speech

~~to~~ Mr. Chancellor, honoured guests, graduates & friends of the university

Conventional wisdom has it that universities are slow to change. Changing direction at the university, it is said, is like trying to turn around the Queen Mary in a narrow harbour. Managing the professoriate, goes the old joke, is a contradiction in terms, a challenge akin to trying to herd cats. Like most conventional wisdom, there is some time-worn truth in these observations. But cliches only get you so far.

This year at Dalhousie we amalgamated two universities, merged eight administrative units and two academic departments, created a new Faculty of Computer Science, added new Faculties of Architecture and Engineering through our amalgamation with the Technical University of Nova Scotia, laid plans to create new research centres in biomedical engineering and materials science, each with their own academic programs as well, started detailed planning for a new Management Information System that will transform administrative practices at the university and, in cooperation with our employee groups, introduced a major early retirement program and rationalized the collective bargaining system at Dalhousie by merging eight unions into four. That's a long sentence and a lot of change. Moreover, we managed these changes peaceably, harmoniously and by dint of an

enormous amount of extra work by our already hard-pressed faculty and staff. So much for conventional wisdom and cliches about universities.

Dalhousie's amalgamation with the Technical University of Nova Scotia on April First of this year is an event of enormous importance to our students and academic community, as well as our region. After decades of talk about this project and several false starts, we finally did it. As a result, Dalhousie now ~~contains~~ a new college of applied science and technology, which we call DalTech, responsible for offering our programs in engineering, computer science, architecture and regional planning. For the first time, the Maritimes now boast its only comprehensive, research-intensive university with a full range of undergraduate, graduate and professional programs.

Our impact on our region is and will be profound. With annual expenditures of \$250 million, over 80 percent of Nova Scotia's university research activity and one-third of the province's research and development efforts, the new Dalhousie is a powerful engine for change in our region. Because of the newly integrated character of our traditional academic programs programs at Dalhousie and TUNS, we can now offer our students a superior education across a much

wider range of interdisciplinary topics, linking engineering education to management studies, environmental studies to law, arts to architecture and the basic sciences to applied sciences and health studies. At the same time, our research capacity and its power for good in the wider community is greatly enhanced. The new Dalhousie currently earns \$41 million annually from externally funded research grants, contracts and international development projects. These competitively earned funds provide the resources needed to hire an additional 700 researchers and technicians, fund numerous graduate students, and purchase a huge array of equipment that our most distinguished scholars and undergraduate students alike use to advance their knowledge. With funded research projects in 31 countries, the intellectual and social reach of Dalhousie scholars is truly global. So, too, is our capacity to work with government and private sector partners to translate this activity into economically competitive opportunities for the people of our region to participate in the new knowledge-based, global economy. This is a big challenge for Dalhousie. It is also a huge opportunity which we intend to seize enthusiastically.

The winds of change blow briskly at the new Dalhousie, but there is a core of our efforts that endures, and shall endure, despite the

latest fads and the newest technologies in higher education. The best university education, and certainly this is our goal at Dalhousie, proceeds in a community of learners made up of faculty and students committed to testing all claims to truth, challenging all assertions of authoritative knowledge and open to discussing new ideas and values. In such an environment students learn to examine their own ideas, feelings and values, as well as master a body of knowledge about the world and its works, ~~and~~ In the process <sup>they</sup> grow <sup>we hope</sup> in new and sometimes unexpected directions. Traditionally, this is what we mean when we talk about providing a good liberal education, a phrase that derives from the Latin word "liber" and the Roman notion of an education appropriate to a truly free person. This was our mission when Dalhousie was founded in 1818, it was equally our mission when TUNS was founded as the Nova Scotia Technical College in 1907, and it will continue as the mission of the new Dalhousie so long as we remain a true university.

Today is a celebration of achievement, an acknowledgement of the truly impressive accomplishments of our graduates, our honoured guests and our faculty. It certainly was a busy year filled with success in the Faculty of Science. Dr. Ram Myers filled the new Killam Chair in Ocean Studies, Dr. Jeff Dahn joined us in the new NSERC/3M Chair in

Batteries Technology and Dr. May Anne White was honoured in the Killam Chair in Materials Science. Our efforts received notice beyond the university as well. Dr. Phil Dunham received the APNS Award of Excellence in Applied Research and Dr. Marlon Lewis, who exemplifies our efforts to translate university research programs into new economic opportunities for our region, received recognition as the Atlantic Canadian Entrepreneur of the Year. Across the Faculty of Science research activity continued to grow impressively with research funding increasing by 15% over last year, a remarkable achievement in the face of continuing government cutbacks of our national scientific granting agencies. Dalhousie's Faculty of Science professors now rank third among all of Canada's universities in terms of grants per eligible faculty member. Given this record of achievement, it seems entirely appropriate that today Dalhousie is celebrating one of Canada's most gifted scientists, Dr. Arthur McDonald, with an honorary degree, and we are delighted to welcome him back to Dalhousie on this happy occasion.

Faculty excellence was matched by the accomplishments of our student body, many of whom won national awards. Four students captured Canada Scholar Corporate Awards, the two Fessendon-Trott Scholarships in Canada

went to Faculty of Science students, one of whom, Andrea Ottensmeyer, also won the National Research Council Women in Engineering and Science Award. Another 62 Dalhousie Science students won highly competitive Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Scholarships. Interestingly, women students at Dalhousie won 63% of these awards, surely a positive sign of change in the gender composition of this field of activity. Finally, we capped a wonderful year when Carol-Ann Brown, who studied Marine Biology and International Development Studies, won the coveted Rhodes Scholarship, the seventy-first time a Dalhousie student was so recognized.

We certainly are proud of the accomplishments of our award winners, but we take equal pleasure in the development and achievements of all of the students graduating today. Your hard work and determination brought you to this point and I am delighted to offer congratulations and best wishes to every one of you. I hope you remember your days at Dalhousie fondly and that in the years ahead you feel your time here contributed in some measure to the success I'm confident you'll achieve. These are times of momentous change in the world, but you are fully equipped to meet the challenge of change with a first rate education. Dalhousie is proud to welcome you into our family of alumni and I wish you

every success and happiness in the days that follow this happy celebration. Thank you.