



- Colleagues: **It is a *privilege* to lead within the post-secondary system in Canada.** I love my job because, in part, I think what I do matters. What you do matters. We collectively fuel human and social development, economic independence, and – at our best -- transformation.
- I'm particularly honoured to lead at Sheridan, a learning community distinguished by its character, our celebrated commitment to academic quality, and a deep sense of accountability. We pride ourselves on being relevant, responsive, student-centric, and forward-focused.
- On day 22 of my new gig, I want to thank the Board of Governors and each of you for the trust you've invested in me as your new President & Vice Chancellor.
- Sheridan is a trailblazer, a pathfinder and a champion of undergraduate education. My commitment as your President is to ensure that we continue to lead locally, provincially,

nationally, and globally -- particularly during a time of social, economic, technological, and political change.

- To that end, and at the direction of the Board of Governors, my immediate priority is to facilitate the development of a new, 5-year Strategic Plan that reflects an unprecedented level of dialogue, debate, consultation and creativity.
- Together, we'll work to answer what I know are burning questions: are we going to become a University? When? Why? How are we living our commitment to access, pathways, a full continuum of credentials? What is a Polytechnic in Ontario anyway and who else is one?
- Consider this: students who will finish our diploma programs in 2024 are starting grade 7 next week. What will they need to succeed? How are we going to get them off Fortnite? How can we leverage Sheridan's past, present and future to ensure they do?
- Our Strategic Plan will clarify our institutional vision, mission, and values. It will also align with and fuel our Academic Plan, which remains our blueprint for teaching and learning. In essence, it will become our new 'North Star'.
- To resource this important work, we have retained a partner – The Potential Group – to facilitate a process aimed at engaging every member of our internal community, key external partners, thought leaders, cynics and critics. Internally, the

work will be led by the new “Sheridan 2024” office under the direction of Amanda Pike.

- **My charge to every member of our learning community is to lean in and lend your voice because this planning exercise will fundamentally shape our future through to 2024.**
- Together, we have a lot to contemplate between now and February, 2019 when a draft plan will be presented to our Board. To get us started, I thought I’d share a few of my thoughts about our current landscape and specifically: challenges, risks, disruptions, and opportunities.
- To help tell the story, I asked one of our amazing recent grads – Brian Ropell – to illustrate my thoughts.



Suffice to say we are living in an era marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (a VUCA world) – where the only constant is change.

Advanced Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Manufacturing, and Collaborative Platforms are driving disruptive innovation.

Business Insider notes that the workplace 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.

We need to think carefully and critically about these issues to maintain our status as both (i) a premier, forward-focused learning institution; and, (ii) a leading employer.

Further fueling our VUCA reality:

- government policy continues to impact institutional autonomy;
- we have less revenue and fewer tools to generate new revenue;
- the learner profile continues to change;
- everyone is talking about a nebulous skills gap; and,
- post-secondary institutions are now accountable – through legislation and/or regulation but largely without additional funding -- for addressing a long list of significant issues including sexual violence, intercultural fluency, truth & reconciliation and community mental health.

This type of VUCA cacophony was described by Schumpeter in 1942 as “Creative Destruction”: “a process of industrial mutation that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one.” This is, essentially, the equivalent of a ‘controlled burn’ in a farmer’s field. His theory makes explicit that there are always winners and losers in this process. As we contemplate the impact of ongoing creative destruction, Sheridan must be on the right side of the equation.

We don’t want to be Kodak, or Blockbuster or HMV and cling to the familiar which people might not want anymore.

I believe – 100% -- that the challenges, risks and disruption we’re facing open up new opportunities for Sheridan. Capitalizing on those opportunities, however, will – I think – rest on our ability to:

1. affirm our unique identity (it’s been said that “Sheridan is well-known, but not known well”);
2. leverage what differentiates us – for example, our expertise in SRCA, creativity and innovation;
3. connect and co-create so that we’re even more engaged locally and globally;

4. live our commitment to student success across Bowen's goals for post-secondary: cognitive learning, emotional learning, and practical competence; and,
5. invest in recruiting, developing and celebrating talent.

In their 2017 Courage Report, Deloitte encouraged organizations to demonstrate courage through “diligent, disciplined, and deliberate” activities:

- Being provocative and challenging the status quo;
- Taking calculated risks by incentivizing courageous risk-taking; and,
- Doing what is right!

I don't know precisely what that looks like in our context and am excited to listen, dialogue and seek counsel from internal and external stakeholders.

That said, I'm committed to engaging – more immediately -- on four key fronts.



**First: I will work to influence and effect system-level transformation in Ontario.**

The current – binary – organization of post-secondary education in Ontario isn't meeting the needs of today's learners or our changing economy. Most notably, it is wholly unacceptable that graduates of our Honours Bachelor Degrees – which are as rigorous as any undergraduate university degree—do not have unfettered access to graduate studies in Ontario. We must push to remove the barriers that put our students at a disadvantage.

More broadly and fundamentally, we need a systemic framework that celebrates who we are, an institution that:

- offers a range of credentials at the undergraduate level (from apprenticeship, to certificates, diplomas and degrees)
- invests in hands-on learning; and,
- excels at applied research.

Our children should be confident that enrolling at Sheridan is an entrée to a world of opportunity whether that starts with an advanced certificate, a skilled trade, a diploma or an Honours degree.

Quite simply: we're not a traditional university or a local community college. We are unique. WE ARE SHERIDAN.

**Second: I will cement, model and promote – shamelessly, far and wide – Sheridan's unique character, commitment to academic quality, and accountability to stakeholders.** This includes the promotion of our Creative Campus philosophy, which underpins our trailblazing approach to undergraduate education.

Here's what I know: Sheridan gives students the hard skills to find meaningful employment in their chosen field and the resiliency to thrive in an era where the only constant is change. That value proposition needs to be hollered from the roof tops. I'm on it.

**Third: I will lead our collegium of faculty and staff to focus, relentlessly, on the student experience and Sheridan's People Plan** to propel us towards having the highest indicators of student and employee satisfaction in Ontario.



These two things are central to our integrity and they're interdependent: what sets Sheridan apart is the unwavering commitment of caring and talented faculty and staff, whose enthusiasm, training and expertise combine to actively engage students and position them for success within and beyond the classroom.

**Fourth and finally: I will foster sustainability through an operational culture of planning, accountability and continuous improvement.** Nothing is possible if our house isn't in good order. We grew – quickly – and without always investing in systems and/or infrastructure. We've also experienced a significant amount of leadership change. I will work diligently with other leaders to recruit, develop, retain and celebrate our most valuable resource: talent.

As stewards of Sheridan, we're entrusted with ensuring its longevity. We must be committed to promoting sustainability across everything we do.



The work ahead of us might seem daunting. Here's the thing though: **I believe in Sheridan and am energized by your inspired commitment to learning, discovery and community engagement.**

What we do is fundamentally important; the way we do it effectively drives personal/market and social/non-market outcomes:

- Our programs and curriculum resource the new economy;
- Our pedagogy cultivates citizenship and an effective democracy; and,
- Our commitment to SRCA and collaborations with industry and community partners solves real-world problems and drives innovation.

Sheridan's values and character resonate with me deeply. I wanted this job – and worked really hard to get it – because I see

it as a great fit and I know that (personally) I succeed as a leader when there is tight and authentic alignment between my personal and professional passions. I'm so proud to lead at this phenomenal institution.

My commitment to every member of the Sheridan learning community is to listen, reflect, and test assumptions. I will make my best effort to communicate openly, demonstrate transparency, and invest in collegial governance. I'd be remiss if I didn't note that you can also expect me to push boundaries and relentlessly, respectfully challenge the status quo.

With specific reference to strategic planning, I will champion a vision for 2024 that 'speaks' to every student and employee who calls Sheridan home.

As we begin a new chapter in Sheridan's history, we have an opportunity to work collectively and collaboratively to define Sheridan's future. In the face of a VUCA world, Creative Destruction, disruption and change ... we must come together as an energized community, build on the best of our history, and remain squarely focused on fostering transformation.

I want us to be curious, bold, fearless ... emboldened by knowing that students are the reason we exist and confident that their potential is limitless.

It's 'go time' team and I can't wait to co-create our vision for 2024. Thank you for the warm welcome you've extended our new students this week and have a great fall term.

*In true Sheridan-style, and further to the theme of the role we play in shaping past, current and future learners who choose Sheridan ... let's all sit back and enjoy a musical performance of the song "When I Grow Up" from the hit musical, Matilda.*