

## A Synopsis of Remarks by Dr. Janet Morrison

Welcome Back Event for Sheridan Faculty and Staff – August 28, 2019

As we prepare to welcome our students back to class next week, I'm reminded that all of us experience challenges and setbacks. As members of a learning community, it's incumbent on us to help our students navigate tough times, and help them build the resilience to thrive and flourish.

This is central to our mandate, which was recently reinvigorated by the over 3,000 voices who engaged with our Strategic Planning process. What became crystal clear is that – although Sheridan was founded with the same mandate as other colleges – we have evolved (largely through your hard work!) to occupy a space that is a hybrid of the traditional college and university models.

When I'm asked what makes us different, I focus on four things:

1. We never, EVER waver on academic quality
2. We actively and purposefully cultivate soft skills like emotional intelligence, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.
3. We go way beyond work-integrated learning and experiential education to build immersive, enmeshed relationships with industry that impact our programming, our curriculum, our pedagogy, and our approach to Scholarship, Research & Creative Activities.
4. Finally, there is a trailblazing and renegade ethos baked into our culture that makes anything seem possible because we're undaunted by challenge and relentless in our efforts when we stand up for what we know the world needs.

These strengths combine such that Sheridan fundamentally changes the game in everything we do. This is reflected in:

- The uniqueness of our programming;
- The way we develop students to be game changers or to thrive in game-changing environments;
- The way we elevate the communities we serve, and;
- How we make companies more competitive by providing skilled talent who boast the hard and soft skills needed to thrive in a dynamic, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world.

So why does our commitment to 'changing the game' matter? What is the value proposition of further cultivating our game changing identity for students, parents, faculty and staff, industry and/or the communities we serve?

Students leave Sheridan with the with the technical skills, interpersonal skills, desire for lifelong learning and confidence required to thrive in a constantly changing world. Their credential opens doors and they, in turn, fuel our reputation for excellence. Our learners are excited and inspired by their programs and the faculty who influence them.

Parents trust Sheridan's reputation for preparing and equipping students to flourish in a future context not all of us understand.

Industry partners hire Sheridan graduates because they know we prioritize staying relevant and that our

graduates drive innovation or are eager members of innovation teams. Employers value the fact that our alumni can adapt to a changing environment because of their entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial mindset.

Communities acknowledge that their citizens enjoy a higher quality of life because of Sheridan's ability to convene and coordinate the expertise of its students, graduates, faculty and staff, and industry partners to tackle pressing social challenges. They appreciate that our alumni engage as active citizens and agents of change locally, provincially, nationally and internationally.

These and other benefits will fuel our continued evolution as an organization focused on creativity, critical thinking and producing new ideas. Further to the Strategic Plan language, we must "architect a new kind of higher education that brings together excellent teaching, connectivity to the workforce, interdisciplinary creativity and innovation, personal development, academic strength/integrity and applied research and knowledge. This is a space that tends to the development of the person as much as to currency of knowledge and workplace preparedness. In summary, we are incubating the future of postsecondary education".

Our vision is to be the epicentre 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.

Our mission is to cultivate resourceful, highly skilled, and creative people and communities through cross-pollinated, active learning and the relentless incubation of new ideas.

What does 'living' this look like in the immediate term?

Specifically, where will we be focused over the next year in relation to our Strategic Plan, our commitment to demonstrating Sheridan's first principles, our four priority areas of impact, and our five empowering enablers?

Here are some concrete examples of initiatives underway now to move us forward. These emerged from meaning-making and active planning sessions that happened across the College over the spring and summer.

Keep in mind that these are just a few examples of what's happening and that we're just getting started!

**Project Springboard** – Sheridan has allocated significant funding to invest in interactive and intelligent technologies. These are aimed at advancing our Sheridan 2024 goals and ensuring that employees and students have the tools they need to be productive and effective. Planned projects include expense management software, upgraded finance and HR systems, and others focused on enhancing the student experience. This is crucially important and it's happening!

**Employee Engagement Action Plans** – in the aftermath of our first-ever employee engagement survey, we developed and committed to a five-point Institutional Action Plan focused on (i) brand; (ii) enabling work; (iii) managing performance; (iv) career opportunities; and, (v) rewards and recognition. Further, each Faculty and departmental leader received survey data specific to their area. These will inform unit-level action plans that will be implemented in 2020.

**Sheridan Factor Initiative** – One of our most exciting priorities is to render Sheridan known for a signature palette of capabilities designed to foster lifelong learning, critical thinking, initiative, agility,

collaboration, equity and creativity. Together, we agreed that “the Sheridan Factors will guide truly unique, learner-centric experiences that position everyone to navigate an unpredictable, possibility-filled world with confidence”. I’m pleased to announce that Dr. Cherie Werhun, Associate Dean in the Centre for Teaching and Learning, has been seconded to lead a collegial process to identify and define the Sheridan Factors.

**Campus Master Planning Process** – earlier this year, we initiated an exciting, consultative process to develop a bold, innovative and comprehensive Campus Master Plan that will provide a road map to transform our built environment over the next 30 years. Our partner on this massive undertaking is Urban Strategies Inc and they’ve been working for months now on garnering input. The next phase of this project will manifest through Ideas Workshops that will be hosted on each campus for students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders.

**Inclusion & Equity** – since January, we have greatly expanded the budget allocation, physical footprint, and staff complement for the Centre for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. We also named the leader of this work -- Dr. Jane Ngobia – Sheridan’s Vice President of Inclusive Communities. We signed on to the Federal Dimensions program – an equity, diversity and inclusion initiative led by the Canadian Granting Agencies: CIHR, SSHRC, and NSERC. On May 9, the Honourable Kristy Duncan (Minister of Science and Sport) announced that Sheridan would receive ~\$400,000 from the Government of Canada’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Institutional Capacity-Building Grant Program. Sheridan is one of 15 postsecondary institutions selected nation-wide for this new funding and the only college in Ontario chosen. Last month, we were selected through a competitive process to participate in a related pilot research project.

Our colleague Dr. Mary Louise Noce accepted a secondment to the role of Director, Research EDI Initiatives that commenced July 1.

**Creating a community engagement strategy**, with an immediate focus on Brampton – our Strategic Plan commits us to “engage with communities and employers to strengthen learning-integrated work, locally and globally, co-creating new approaches for hands-on learning, continual development and interdisciplinary innovation.” To that end, we want to become a valued resource hub – locally and globally. Most immediately, we’re going to focus on Brampton and I’m pleased to introduce our new colleague: Karen Lemoine -- Director, Community Engagement & Stakeholder Relations – who will be leading this work on our collective behalf.

On top of what I’ve just described, amazing stuff is happening in every crevice of our organization: a community wellness strategy, the launch of a “Galvanize Fund”, a new talent management strategy, and a tweaked approach to the First Year Experience. I know from speaking with Melanie, our Provost, and the Deans, game-changing stuff is happening across all our Faculties.

It’s awesome ... but, admittedly, it’s a lot. Ironically, this is precisely the phenomenon that our future graduates will confront as they ready themselves to compete in a global, new economy. What we know about preparing our students to successfully navigate the unknown with confidence calls on us to be bold, more agile and courageous ourselves.

If we want to help our students flourish, first we all must let our own light shine. Each of us has so much to give. So please, channel your inner wisdom and strength ... don't be afraid to live with some ambiguity ... and remember – for 50 years, we've been leading transformation.

What we aim to accomplish over the next five years rests on a solid foundation of trailblazing and impact – one that so many of you had a direct role in shaping. I couldn't be more excited about the future – and how we're going to shape it together. Thank you.