

Installation Address to the Community November 1, 2018

Fleming College: Connecting with Communities and Unlocking Opportunities

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you so much for being here to share this important moment for Fleming, our students, our staff and faculty, and me. It is good to be home.

A very special thank you to my platform colleagues and to my team that accompanied me here today.

Both Dan Marinigh and Brian Desbiens have welcomed the many special guests here today.

I would like to echo their remarks and make special mention of:

- My colleagues Deputy Deborah Richardson and Deputy Shirley Phillips, who escaped Queen's Park to be here today. It means the world to me. These women are wonderful women and you should be proud that they are here.
- I see that there are other escapees from Queen's Park who have also made the trek here, and some of my former team. I see Jeff Leal in the audience, so thank you so much.
- To all colleagues, current and past.
- Serious team players like the women from my hockey team, the Leaside Wildcats. Watch out for those ladies in the parking lot.
- To family and friends, I hope you know how much it means to me that you are here.
- Chair Dan Marinigh and Board of Governors; both past and present, I am honoured to have you here today.

I must take a moment to also welcome all past presidents who could be here.

Past presidents, thank you for the leadership that you have brought to Fleming:

- Sylvia Sutherland on behalf of your late husband,
- President Sorochinsky,
- President Rork.

Of course, we would not be holding this event in this outstanding facility without the dedication of my predecessor, President Tilly.

Tom Symons and his wife Christine also join us today. Professor Symons is the passionate visionary who lobbied hard to bring Trent University and Sir Sandford Fleming College to Peterborough in the 60's.

There would be no such event today without the hard work of my Executive Assistant, Michele McFadden, and the Executive Director of Marketing and Advancement, Drew Van Parys. Thank you so much.

I am particularly honoured to have Bonnie Patterson as my keynote speaker today, and to have Brian Desbiens as my emcee.

Bonnie and Brian's names have been synonymous with postsecondary education in Peterborough, Ontario, and beyond, and I have admired them both for many years.

Bonnie, I have vivid memories of the newspaper articles my mum would save for me to try to convince me that Peterborough was progressive.

She would say, "We have this new female leader at Trent, she is changing things here. You must come back and go to Trent." Now that we have heard from Bonnie, I think my mother may have been on to something.

While my mother did not convince me to go to Trent, she did convince me to go to Fleming. I have no doubt that all of us in this room can relate to the influence of a parent, giving us strength to strive to be the best that we can, access new ideas and new adventures, and always treat people as you would like to be treated.

At Fleming, we want to provide for all of our students and our community. After all, we are a community college that exists for the communities that we serve.

If you would indulge me for one more moment, there is one more community member that I would like to acknowledge. Someone who has been part of this community for 93 years, my Dad, James O'Brien. My mother could not be here today but she is here in spirit. These are my true heroes.

I would like to frame my remarks around two themes. The first embodies the essence of our college: **community connections**.

The second is the key to the future of Fleming: **unlocking opportunities**.

Let me begin with a few words about our community connections in Peterborough, Lindsay, Haliburton and Cobourg.

Things have changed.

I remember growing up here in Peterborough when De Laval existed, Outboard Marine existed, Canadian General Electric was thriving and everyone spent their money at Sears.

All of these are gone or near gone.

They have either moved out of the area, closed or in the case of Sears, were destroyed.

But Fleming – Fleming has weathered the storm and continued to produce talented graduates for the future in this community, and in many others.

Fleming has weathered that storm because of our community connections and relationships with our local businesses and social organizations that see the value in applied education and job ready skills.

And Fleming has delivered.

Fleming has done this with partnerships like our very strong relationship with Trent University. Together, Trent and Fleming have produced some of the worlds most needed talent:

- Our nurses that have graduated through our integrated nursing program with Trent,
- Environmental Science students who regularly study at both Trent and Fleming's Frost Campus through program partnerships and unique 2+2 Diploma/degree programs and,
- Other joint programs.

We provide job-ready programs that university graduates take in parallel to their degrees or afterwards.

Now, more than ever, our communities, and the rest of the world, need these uniquely qualified graduates.

Fleming graduates are integrated into all sectors of our communities:

- In our social services,
- In our first responder services,
- Hospitality,
- Manufacturing,
- Construction,
- Technology,
- The arts and,
- The trades.

There is not a sector of our regional economy that is untouched by Fleming graduates.

Some leave our area to serve other communities, but many stay. And others, like me, return.

And often when they return, they support students and partner with Fleming through such activities as mentorship, applied research projects, advice and philanthropy.

In all of our communities, we are closely aligned with our Economic Development agency partners.

These partnerships result in tremendous initiatives like the Innovation Cluster in Peterborough, and Venture 13 in Cobourg.

Ensuring access is a key component of aligning with our communities' needs and growth.

We offer access and pathways for students who might not otherwise have postsecondary opportunities or might not otherwise see the pathway to further study at university and further success.

I am a beneficiary of these pathways. Thank you, Fleming.

After all, education is about creating access to learning so that no door will be shut for any student or learner in any of our communities.

And then there is the quintessential example of what we can achieve in partnership with communities: The Haliburton School of the Arts.

While a Fleming campus today, this is not how it started. It was started by the community. A community of artists and extremely passionate art advocates.

Today, this is a world-class arts campus, the Haliburton School of Art + Design.

If you have never been to the Sculpture Forest on the Haliburton Campus, I encourage you to go. It is comprised of 34 sculptures, many of which have been created by our faculty or graduates.

It is spectacular, nothing short of world-class, and all because of the early work and passion of people in the small community of Haliburton, and strong sustainable relationships.

There are many other examples of successful programs because they are built on relationships like:

- Our Museum Management and Curatorship, and Cultural Heritage Conservation Management programs with Peterborough,
- Our Pre-Service Firefighter program with Norwood Eastern Ontario Emergency Training Academy.

And speaking about community and relationships, I am honoured to have such strong Indigenous representation here at today's ceremony and working with the college. This is very important to me.

Connections to our Indigenous communities are more essential than ever. While a lot has been done, we have an opportunity, and indeed, an obligation to create opportunities for Indigenous students and improve our programming and support services for them.

More than that, Fleming must help close the substantial gap in employment rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

As we squarely face the fact that reconciliation requires societal change, we must do our part. Our part to educate all of our students about the history and legacy of residential schools in our country, and integrate Indigenous knowledge and perspectives appropriately in our curriculum.

I look forward to working collaboratively with community leaders and everyone at Fleming, as this is a priority.

Fleming staff, faculty and leaders understand that relationships cut across all boundaries and that relationships are universal.

I know this because we have great faculty, support staff and leaders that connect with our communities, and understand our communities.

They understand that deep engagement in our communities is a critical success factor in everything we do to serve.

We at Fleming are now, more than ever, co-dependent on our partners, employers, business communities, other educational partners and other jurisdictions, and our governments to ensure the success for our students.

The success of our students mean the success of our communities and our society. These students will form the fabric of our communities and will shape the demands of the next generation of our global market place.

Today, no organization can do it alone. Not industry, not broader public sector organizations, not a student nor faculty member.

Community connections are essential.

As I mentioned, things have changed since I was here. Our communities have changed, our demographics have changed and our society has changed.

We are ever more challenged to not only keep up, but to keep ahead.

As Bonnie mentioned, disruption is here and will accelerate.

And we know where things are headed, for the most part.

While we have experienced success, there is much work to do. Yes, challenges lay ahead but there are also a myriad of opportunities. It is our responsibility, and in fact our obligation to unlock these opportunities.

We know that jobs of today, and in the future for at least the next decade, are those that require business skills, trades and technology skills, project management skills and dare I say, soft skills.

We have an opportunity to become market leaders and become the “go-to” institution for many of the demands that will emerge in the ensuing years.

Our community is already on to unlocking opportunities as is demonstrated by Steelworks Design Inc.

This is an amazing business right here in Peterborough led by Rhonda Barnet, a woman that I have met only once but I am inspired by what she has accomplished. Not only for women in trades and technology, but for industry, our local community and our GDP.

Fleming graduates have been unlocking opportunities all along. We have produced:

- A business graduate who is now the Vice-President of Marketing at The Keg Restaurant chain,
- The CEO of a hospital in Sioux Lookout, a nursing graduate combining new technologies and traditional medicines in delivering healthcare in the north and,
- A recent graduate who is working on an “Uber for Optometrists” model to widen access to vision care.

This type of energy, commitment and vision is what will inspire us to keep getting better at what we do here at Fleming.

In our Centre for Advanced Waste Water Technology, we are working with giants in applied research and often leading the way.

Much of this work is aligned with Trent University. We attract new people with new talents to our communities through these collaborations.

Why? Because we are starting to look ahead rather than behind. Rather than simply looking at what other colleges were doing and replicating it, we must invent the way forward.

It is time for Fleming to shine the light on the great things that we do as we position ourselves for many, many more successes.

During the summer months, even before my arrival at Fleming, I began a listening tour in our communities.

I have continued this tour over my first 10 weeks here. I have never seen an organization more receptive to change. Fleming people are passionate, committed, resilient, and not only ready to go where we need to go, but are eager.

People who work at Fleming sincerely value the role of the college in our communities. They are invested and they see the potential for unlocking opportunities.

Some have said that we are siloed and that we are bureaucratic. Those are common comments that people make about many public sector organizations.

I am encouraged by what people have to say. We have an opportunity for true participatory change.

I have yet to hear from anyone that they do not want to be part of our next chapter. People have been honest and sincere in their advice, and to me, that takes courage.

So here is what I know, and here are my intentions as your new President.

To create an environment where together we can:

- Take risks. Take some informed risks and reward people for having the courage to do so,
- Be the “first mover” in our programming. Disruption is happening; we need to do everything we can to lead, not follow, and do so by building trusting relationships,
- Showcase to the world, not just locally but to the world, what we have done and are capable of doing,
- Invest in our people, even if it is just the gift of time for some creative thinking,
- Challenge each other and hold each other accountable,
- Engage productively with our partners, employers and communities, and understand our joint accountabilities as well as our individual accountabilities,
- Learn from jurisdictions beyond Ontario and Canada,

- Pick our space in the market that serves our students best, and be the best that we can in the areas that we know will be the market demand. We can no longer be all things to all people,
- However, we can be the best at what we do if we begin to unlock all of the many opportunities before us.

Thank you again to all of you for coming.

You have inspired me.
You have supported me.

I look forward to working with all of you as Fleming continues to connect with our communities and unlock opportunities.

This matters.

Maureen Adamson
President, Fleming College