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## **State of the University Address**

**September 18, 2014  
12 pm – 1 pm**

**Convocation Hall  
Old Arts Building**

**I.V. Samarasekera, OC  
President and Vice-Chancellor**

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- Faculty, staff, and students . . . colleagues, alumni and friends,
- Thank you for joining me today.
- Today I give my final State of the University address. For me this moment sparks both reflection and anticipation. Reflection on a decade of tremendous growth and change—and anticipation for the University of Alberta’s great future.
- When I stood before the first major gathering of the university community for my installation, I ended my speech by relating a story. Let me share it again today.
- I had the privilege of being introduced by Professor Emeritus Pat Clements to Her Honour Lois Hole not long before her death. She was one of Alberta’s most beloved public servants, who had once held the roles of Lieutenant Governor of Alberta and Chancellor of the University of Alberta. Although we had just met, she embraced me and immediately brought me into her circle of friends.

- Her energy and vitality were still very much in evidence. She charged me, with passionate force, with the responsibility of being a champion for education.
- She told me: “This is a time of great opportunity for Alberta. We must not miss it.”
- It was a moment charged with great emotion. In response, Pat began to recite a famous passage from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, and Lois Hole and I joined in. Together we said:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and miseries*

- It was, as I said, an extraordinary moment and one that has stayed with me—and inspired me as president of the U of A.
- It reminded me that you have to leap into challenges with total commitment—to take on risks, to dare greatly, or miss out. So I leapt—and invited the rest of the community to join me.
- When I was appointed president, there was a palpable sense of anticipation and ambition here in Alberta—it seemed that the province was on the verge of rising to national and international prominence as never before.
- That same feeling of anticipation was evident on campus. Before preparing my installation speech, the deans and I met in August 2005 and in that extraordinary meeting we set out the framework for what would become our Dare to Discover vision and mission—

a vision and mission that all faculty, staff, and students helped to refine over the course of that first year.

- Together, we committed to the daring goal of building a great global university, by inspiring the human spirit to serve the public good through outstanding learning, discovery, and citizenship.
- Our vision was a powerful one—and was embraced enthusiastically by our partners in the provincial government. They responded with strong increases in investment, 6% per year over four years that enabled an exceptional period of renewal in Alberta’s post-secondary sector—and through that we quickly built up the cornerstones of Dare to Discover, stone by stone—initiative by initiative.
  - Talented People
  - Learning, Discovery and Citizenship
  - Connecting Communities and
  - Transformative Organization and Support
- We won the support of Albertans in part because our ambitious aspirations affirmed that their flagship university would connect them to the world and the world back to them.
- And we all knew that that connection was going to matter in ways that were unprecedented.
- In 2004, Google was about 6 years—and had made its first public offering in July. Mark Zuckerberg had recently launched Facebook. Twitter emerged two years later in 2006.

- Social media is so ubiquitous now that we sometimes forget it wasn't always with us. But the birth of the social media universe and the blossoming of the Internet in the last decade made it clear universities with the aspirations and capacities of the U of A needed to be part of the global conversation—should be part of the global community's search for answers to shared challenges.
- University enrolments were growing quickly, not only in Canada and other developed nations, but more interestingly in developing countries across the world. The explosive growth in India's and China's economies and post-secondary sectors were grabbing international headlines.
- International rankings were just beginning to take hold. The worldwide academy was becoming increasingly aware of what the global dimensions of the higher education could demand from us and mean for teaching and research collaboration.
- It was within this context that we set a vision—we named strategic objectives, defined achievable goals, and took action. We leapt.
- How far have we come? What has been the impact of our work? What is the state of the University of Alberta today?
- Consider our first cornerstone—Talented People—beginning with a quick look at our students.
- Since 2005, overall enrolment has increased by 11%—with a 26% increase in graduate students and 7% increased in undergraduates.
- The U of A continues to be the choice of Alberta's top students—and they are considered by our national peers to be among Canada's top students.

- Through dedicated efforts, we have remarkably increased our complement of international students of total undergraduate student population, from less than 5% a decade ago to over 13% today.
- Even as enrolment has increased, so has demand—the number of applicants far out-strip available spaces resulting in increases in admission averages—another indication of the high quality of our students.
- Over my presidency, U of A athletic teams have won 17 national championships and we now hold the distinction of having the greatest number of Academic All Canadians in the country.
- To add to the talent of our students, faculties and units have conducted worldwide searches in order to rebuild and renew our academy.
- We have attracted people from institutions around the world and our full-time faculty numbers have risen from 1830 in 2005 to 2056 today. The ranks of our talented administrative and support staff have also grown in concert with student enrolment to approximately 3000.
- During the first competition for Canada Excellence Research Chairs, the U of A attracted four top global research leaders, more than any other university in the country.
- In Dare to Discover, we committed to be a community that not only attracts talent but celebrates and rewards it. Lorne Babiuk, Vice-President Research set out to improve the U of A's awards nomination process, to ensure that talent at this university would be properly recognized.

- What's been the result? 43% of all our Royal Society Fellows have been elected in the past decade. There's been a 25% increase in U of A faculty and staff elected to the Order of Canada.
- U of A faculty members hold prestigious Trudeau and Killam Fellowships.
- They have also garnered many exceptional international honours. For example: membership in the Royal Society of London and the National Academy of Engineering in the US, the Canada Gairdner International Award, the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement, as well as Humboldt and Sloan Research Fellowships.
- Since 2004, five U of A students have been awarded Rhodes Scholarships—this following on a previous nine-year lull in the U of A's record of success.
- Honours and awards are a hallmark of individual achievement and excellence—but they also play a critical role in building and reinforcing any university's reputation.
- With Dare to Discover, the U of A pledged to create and sustain a vibrant culture of teaching and learning—to enrich our students' experience and inspire their learning, discovery and citizenship—Dare to Discover's second cornerstone.
- What have we done to build this second cornerstone?
- Excellence and innovation in teaching have been supported and celebrated by the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund, the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and annual Festival of Teaching.

- The value we place on teaching is perhaps best exemplified by the U of A's remarkable record of winning 3M National Teaching Fellowships for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. Our university outstrips any other in Canada with our total of 41.
- U of A excellence in teaching stems in part from the fact that we have paid attention to what it means to be a research- **and** teaching-intensive comprehensive post-secondary institution. We seek innovative ways to explicitly link teaching and research for our students. And then go one step further to show that academics inform and shape citizenship.
- The highly successful—and continually expanding—Undergraduate Research Initiative introduces direct research experience into the lives of undergraduates long before graduate school.
- Community service-learning, now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, enables students to apply classroom research and study to the practical challenges faced by community organizations across the city and province.
- More students participate in international internships and educational opportunities than ever before.
- The development of the U of A's first two MOOCs—Dino 101 and Understanding Video Games—have garnered international attention precisely because they are founded upon substantive pedagogical research and best practices in student assessment.

- Centres and institutes, such as the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services, the Centre for Public Involvement, and the Office of Sustainability, bring students, faculty, staff, and community partners together to share U of A expertise and translate evidence-based research into civic action.
- The impact that U of A research discoveries have had over the last decade also exemplify the link between learning, discovery, and citizenship. I can only include a few examples.
- Major medical breakthroughs over the last ten years—such as Michael Houghton’s breakthrough in a HepC vaccine and Robert Burrell’s nano-particle wound dressing—have the potential to ease the suffering of millions of people around the world.
- Catherine Bell’s celebrated research in indigenous and metis law has reshaped Canada’s justice systems.
- Sociologist Kevin Haggerty is leading efforts to create new understanding and analyses of how the ubiquitous presence of surveillance impacts the individual’s relation to society.
- And, physicists James Pinfold, Roger Moore, and Doug Gingrich’s contribution to the discovery of Higgs Boson goes to the most fundamental understanding of our universe.
- The U of A’s participation in major research projects such as this is just one of many ways in which we have indeed been connecting Alberta to the world and the world to Alberta.
- A main focus of Dare to Discover’s third cornerstone—connecting communities—has been the development of significant, influential and effective international partnerships.

- Taking a targeted, strategic approach, we have focused our university-wide efforts on India, China, Germany, the US, and Brazil, recognizing that the Faculties and academic community are linking with every region of the world. The results?
- High quality, multi-leveled partnerships that are more than exchange agreements. Instead they create interdisciplinary, cross-border research teams and projects—open up graduate student and post-doctoral internships—link universities with industry, community organizations, and government agencies—and so on.
- Building on the foundation laid by former president Rod Fraser, we have expanded our influence and reach among China’s post-secondary sector. We attract the highest number of China Scholarship Council students into our graduate programs in Canada. Our most recent major partnership was signed with Tsinghua University—widely considered to be one of China’s top institutions.
- We have built the first significant engagement with India, working with three of the top Indian Institutes of Technology. Through the federally funded IC-IMPACTS project, we are partners with UBC and U of T conducting and applying research in the areas of water, public health and infrastructure. With India’s rising middle class, and demand for higher education, we are well positioned to be a destination for top talent.
- In Germany, our extensive partnership with Helmholtz has gone into a second round of funding and has expanded from an initial focus on energy and environment research to infectious disease and neuroscience.

- In the US, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities agreed to open up its membership to the U of A—the first time it has granted membership outside of the US.
- And earlier this year, I completed a two year term as chair of the board of the World Universities Network—a consortium of 16 world universities devoting to promoting and facilitating global research.
- We are attracting the attention of WHO, the UN FAO and other global agencies for our effective platforms of researchers across the world.
- If not for our dedicated efforts in reaching out and building influential and innovative international partnerships, the U of A's membership in an organization such as the WUN would simply not have been possible.
- Just as important has been the work done much closer to home to connect with our city and province.
- In 2005, the U of A was on the precipice of becoming a major part of a new phase of city-building here in Edmonton. One of the first things I did as president was announce the purchase of the Hudson's Bay building and the decision to build a downtown campus.
- Since then, the city and university have launched and sustained the Festival of Ideas, presented a joint bid for Expo and again for Universiade, and built exceptional athletics infrastructure in the Saville Centre on South Campus.

- TEC Edmonton—located in Enterprise Square—is one of the most successful university business incubators in the world, last year generating more than \$106 million.
- And now in cooperation with the Edmonton Downtown Academic and Cultural Centre Foundation, the U of A is set to be an anchor tenant of the Galleria project.
- One of the most ambitious projects undertaken over the last decade was the celebration of our centenary. Through it, we both rediscovered our own history—and with it, our promise to uplift the whole people—and used that rediscovery to position the U of A as one of Canada’s top universities.
- At the centre of the celebrations was the Prime Ministers Conversation Series which featured all former, living prime ministers—and demonstrated our keen awareness that we must learn from our former leaders if we wish to nurture and sustain democracy in our country.
- That event raised our profile and strengthened our influence at the federal table. The U of A has played a national role in the past decade in the development of all federal funding initiatives, including the creation of the CERCs as well as Vanier and Banting fellowships, and now the Canada First Research Excellence Fund.
- Looking at the fourth cornerstone of Dare to Discover—transformative organization and support—we see more enormous change.
- Today, I am **pleased to announce** that the university’s endowment has just reached the one billion dollar threshold—

- This is a tremendous endorsement of the work we do from our donors, many of whom are alumni.
- It is also the remarkable result of years of effort from deans, chairs, faculty, staff, and volunteer champions working on behalf of the U of A. A critical piece of this was the \$580 million raised in the centenary campaign.
- Over the last decade, I should also highlight that more than a billion dollars in annual giving has occurred—with a good portion of those dollars flowing into non-endowed funds that sustain the day-to-day teaching and learning activities on U of A campuses.
- Between 2004 and 2014, the U of A's provincially funded operating budget doubled, from to \$900 million to \$1.8 billion and infrastructure funding of more than \$2 billion enabled us to transform our campus.
- There's been the addition of Enterprise Square, NINT, CCIS, ECHA, Katz and Li Ka Shing building, East Campuses Village, Augustana's Library and Student Forum, ICE, and soon—the PAW centre.
- In the midst of these successes, last year we dealt with one of the most significant financial challenges in the university's recent history—we were forced to think creatively and quickly.
- We developed a four-point action plan, made several hard decisions, and instigated necessary change through the efforts and dedication of faculty, staff, and students.
- The fact that we were able to deal well with this crisis—devise solutions and act—is in part the result of years of working hard on the fourth cornerstone.

- Indeed, the fact that we achieved a clean report from the Auditor General this past year confirms that we now have the systems and processes in place to be resilient in times of difficulty.
- Organizational transformation is ongoing as we continue to consolidate and streamline financial, IT, and HR systems as well as those systems that help students manage the “business” of being student from application to convocation.
- Provost Carl Amrhein, Vice-president (Finance and Administration) and Phyllis Clark, along with the deans, continue to develop and implement new budgeting models that put more control and responsibility into the hands of deans, while ensuring that financial managers in the faculties have the tools and skills to undertake new financial responsibilities.
- Vice-president (Facilities and Operations) Don Hickey is leading the process of establishing the University of Alberta Property Trust—which will enable the university to realize and benefit from the value of our land assets, by generating a new unrestricted endowment fund in support of our core teaching, learning, and research mission.
- Vice-President University Relations, Debra Pozaga Osburn has positioned us well to communicate our successes through an award winning web site, social media and campaigns such as “What’s Next”. We have also undertaken an “Advancing Alberta” campaign where she travels throughout to connect directly with Albertans and share how the University of Alberta contributes to their community.

- This advocacy along with the efforts of the government relations team, our Deans and Vice-Presidents positions the University strategically for ongoing investments by government.
- Before his departure a few weeks ago, former VP (Advancement) O'Neil Outar put in place the team and the administrative systems needed within to achieve the U of A's future fundraising goals. With more U of A alumni involved and connected to their alma mater than ever before, the stage is set to chart the course for the next major fundraising campaign.
- Reflecting back on the tremendous work done over the last ten years, the four cornerstones of our Dare to Discover vision are more than firmly planted—they are rising—and with them is our growing national and international reputation for excellence.
- On September 15<sup>th</sup>, the QS rankings were released and the University of Alberta placed 84<sup>th</sup> in the world, 31<sup>st</sup> in North America, 14<sup>th</sup> among public research universities on this continent!
- This is remarkable recognition of our role as a great public research university.
- When I arrived international rankings, as I mentioned, were new and we were 166<sup>th</sup> in the QS rankings. In the decade since, international rankings have sharply risen in influence – some countries now give scholarships to students accepted at universities listed in the top 100 in several rankings.
- To give international ranking organizations their due, they have also grown steadily in credibility. Now there are organizations which are evaluating the evaluators.

- The most recent QS ranking – on which The U of A ranks 84<sup>th</sup> in the world – has undergone an external certification process to assess the validity of the methodology and results.
- From my perspective, the assessments they provide in specific disciplinary breakdowns—such as the 2013-2104 rise of our of English department to #22 in the world and #2 in Canada—and the indicators they can provide about an institution’s overall reputation on the global PSE landscape and its reputation with employers are most helpful.
- In this regard, our marked rise in global rankings is due to our growing academic and employer reputation, increases in citations, and percentage of international students.
- In addition to our growing international reputation, we are now also consistently recognized in Canada’s top 4 by academics, opinion makers, global and national media.
- At our recent retreat in August, I asked the deans for their assessment of our community’s achievements of the last decade.
- Their answer? Our achievements are summed up by our impact and by our inextricable place in the heart of Alberta and the intimate links we have to our communities. Our growing our reach across Canada and the world follows from there.
- We have a played a more distinct role in the prosperity and promise of Alberta than many universities in other provinces.
- Located at the geographic centre of Canada's most dynamic province, we have differentiated ourselves from our peers since our founding.

- No other major university in this country had has such a significant impact on the industries that drive wealth creation in their respective provinces.
- We have been there from the beginning, making the discoveries that helped Alberta farmers and ranchers improve yields, strengthen animal breeds, prevent soil erosion and protect wetlands and ranchlands.
- We've play a central, historical role in oil sands research—indeed 60% of all oil sands research published in the world is conducted in our region.
- The U of A is now at the forefront of research on the environment—trying to understand and address critical threats such as the pine beetle, water contamination, and impacts of climate change such as flooding and forest fires.
- We are intimately involved in health care delivery in this province. First in partnership with Capital Health and now Alberta Health Services, our health sciences faculties are crucial to health and wellness of our citizens. We provide leading expertise in diabetes, cardiovascular, virology, transplants, cancer and much more.
- We are also on the frontiers of prevention, through public health, physical activity and nutrition with world leading expertise in obesity, and other leading causes of chronic disease.
- Our Campus Saint Jean has long played a leadership role in promoting and honouring Alberta's Francophone community. And Augustana Campus is a critical partnership to community building in the Camrose region. The soon-to-open Camrose Performing Arts Centre is illustration of this fact.

- Alberta has one of the best public education systems in the country and this is not by accident. It's our university that educates 60% of the province's teachers.
- And in partnership with northern colleges, we're delivering the education that teachers need in the communities where they live. The Aboriginal Teacher Education Program celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year—10 years of helping Aboriginal communities and teachers understand how best to develop pedagogies and curricula that will meet the needs of their students and help them succeed.
- The U of A has also been the driver of Alberta's cultural richness. Our music, visual arts, drama, and industrial design departments are among the best in the country—it is their graduates who are responsible for building Edmonton's vibrant arts and culture industries.
- Indeed, Tony Brigg's and Jennifer Jennings' alumni survey published last fall showed that the impact of U of A alumni in Alberta is proportional to that of MIT in the Boston-Cambridge corridor. One in five Albertans are employed by organizations founded by U of A alumni. U of A alumni have an annual impact of 350 billion dollars.
- We now also have data that shows that at least 50 per cent of U of A alumni have worked for a non-profit organization, and more than 75 per cent have volunteered for their local community. Serving the public good—uplifting the whole people—is an ethic that defines us.
- Consider for a moment the news of the past couple of weeks:

- The monumental discovery of one of the ship's of Franklin's lost arctic expedition?—John Geiger, Head of Expedition for the Victoria Strait Expedition and CEO of the Canadian Geographical Society, is a proud alumnus of the U of A history department.
  - Transition in the Alberta government? Jim Prentice, another U of A alumnus, has been sworn in as premier. His new chief of staff, Mike Percy, is former dean of the Alberta School of Business.
- Impact. Service to others. Learning, discovery, citizenship. That's the community the U of A is today. That's the reputation we aspired to when we committed to Dare to Discover.
  - This is an exciting time in the province of Alberta. Our new premier has experience, vision and ambition. He leads the fastest growing province, a destination for talent from everywhere.
  - The University of Alberta today has the momentum to help Alberta realize its promise and potential. We have built a foundation for excellence, for global and local engagement and impact. We are truly poised as never before.
  - All eyes are on us during this important year of presidential transition—it remains my top priority to set the stage for the new president.
  - There is work to be done in the next year on the university's 4-point action plan.
  - Let me highlight three priorities.
  - First, graduate education.

- Over the last three years, we have been engaged in a major process of review, analysis, and revision of graduate student experience. Many of you have been involved in this process and I want to thank you for your efforts.
- The goal is to ensure that we have the right systems—the right funding—the right educational and pedagogical frameworks in place to identify and nurture exceptional graduate talent. And to ensure that our graduate students leave the U of A with the academic and professional experience, skills, and achievements they need to succeed in a wide-range for future endeavours.
- We are now well into the implementation stage. A 90-day plan was set in motion over the summer. Kerry Mummery, Dean of Physical Education and Recreation, is leading a committee to fine tune the plan for implementation.
- The second priority I want to highlight is the establishment of Presidential Visiting Committees. The purpose of a PVC is to examine each faculty's strategic vision and establish their position relative to their peers.
- The goal of the review is to evaluate plans to advance the faculty and assess resource needs and capacity for advancement.
- The first two reviews are now underway in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation as well as the School of Business.
- Finally, let me say a few words about the Peter Lougheed Leadership College.

- Over the last year of planning and proposal, some people have prudently asked: why create a leadership college now? Is this the right time for the U of A to move ahead with such an initiative?
- I look at the world our students are entering and the answer is “yes”. Our global community needs leaders to help build peaceful, democratic, and civil societies.
- We need to people who can envision a more equitable and prosperous world, without wars and extremism, where millions of people can imagine and realize a better life.
- We need ethical and responsible leadership in corporations and government.
- Can the U of A meet this challenge?
- Clearly, given what our alumni and students are inspired to do after leaving the U of A, **we can** and we do. We have the teaching, expertise, and ethic to develop leaders of influence, insight, vision, and action.
- Go through our history decade by decade and we find U of A alumni establishing major national institutions. We find them leading our supreme court—provincial legislatures—and Canada’s parliament. They are pushing the boundaries of science and changing how we understand the world. They run our national newspapers and head up our national cultural organizations. They are leading writers, artists, and performers—many honoured by our highest national cultural awards.
- Like Peter Lougheed—the man we pay tribute to in the college’s name—so many U of A leaders have done more than assume leadership honours or roles or offices. As leaders, they have had

the vision, imagination, and daring to change their part of the world for the better.

- In my view, **now** is most definitely the right time for the U of A to begin to educate future leaders in a more dedicated, purposeful way—
- to give our students not only the opportunity to test their potential for leadership . . . but to step away from the arena and create a quieter space for them to think about leadership and gain an intellectual foundation that can help to shape their own potential to lead.
- How will we get there?
- As we always do. By putting in the place talented people with the capacity to unite interested faculty, students, and staff under a common goal and a shared desire to create a program of exceptional quality. We have that talent in our Founding Principal, The Right Honourable Kim Campbell, 19<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Canada.
- I know that she has an enormous pool of talented people to draw from on our campuses. Together, our university can create an exceptional new option for our students. One that captures the daring ambition and deep commitment to serve the public good that defines the University of Alberta.
- I hear again the words of Lois Hole ring in my mind: “This is a time of great opportunity . . . We must not miss it.”
- Nearly ten years ago, we came together as a community united by our bold and empowering vision to inspire the human spirit through outstanding achievements in learning, discovery, and

citizenship in a creative community, building one of the world's great universities for the public good.

- We leapt at the opportunity and we transformed our university to the benefit of the public we serve. We've had impact on individuals, communities, our country, and the world. We've defined our story and our place.
- We have in the words of Theodore Roosevelt entered the arena and dared greatly. Let me close with his words, changing his use of the singular pronoun into the plural to capture what our community has dared and achieved together.

*The credit belongs to the people who are . . . in the arena, whose faces are marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strive valiantly; who err, who come short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who do actually strive to do the deeds; who know great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spend themselves in a worthy cause; who at the best know in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if they fail, at least fail while daring greatly, so that their place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.*

- A great year lies ahead of us. Thank you **all** for taking on the challenge with me. . . and staying on for final leg of the journey...
- Thank you.