

Good morning and thank you. On behalf of the University of B.C. and – if I may presume – on behalf of all Vancouverites, I'd like to welcome you to the 35th annual conference of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

As you all surely are committed to, teaching and learning are the life-blood of universities and colleges. It is through our graduates that we have the most impact on our communities, our country, and the world. Your work will help

ensure that we do all that we can to inspire, challenge, provoke, encourage, TEACH our students.

At UBC, where we are celebrating our 100th anniversary, we've been looking back on our achievements – considering, for example, how we have innovated in teaching and learning. We started our first extension programs in 1917, and our first student exchange in 1987. We were innovators in online learning long before

MOOCs, and we are proud to be charter members of the edX partnership.

But we are also sharply aware that this is no time to leave the tuning of teaching and learning to chance. We – and here I mean all of us – need evidence-based, technology-enabled teaching methods that improve the learning experience for a broader student community, including non-traditional learners. We need to offer choice, to promise engagement, and to facilitate success.

To which end, we at UBC have established a Flexible Learning strategy, buttressed on six pillars, which I would like to share – slightly out of order:

Pillar Number 2 is **Expanded Career and Personal Education**. Our job – and our opportunity – does not end when a student walks off the campus with an undergraduate degree and a vague plan for life. We can help – we can enrich the lives of learners – for decades more. And we should. UBC is moving ahead on

this, but I want to warmly acknowledge SFU as a leader in the Vancouver community with its community engagement efforts and downtown campus.

Pillar Number 3 is **Improved Student**

Experience. We've all heard the chatter about the internet making universities irrelevant.

People can get all the information they want, for free; why would they pay money to come to our campuses? I believe that's a question that no current UBC student would ask; there is so

much of value happening in every part of our organization and at all times of the day and night. But we can do better and, in deference to the skeptics: if we hope to survive, we must.

Pillar number 4 is **Enhanced Personalization**.

There are innumerable ways to arrange learning.

Some universities have found success with a fixed-curriculum First Year. Others have stripped away the curricular straightjacket to give every student more choice in how they design their own learning. I suspect that we

need to search constantly for a balance,
generally erring on the side of flexibility.

Pillar Number 5 is **Extended Bridging**

Programs, to make it easier to bring students
into the fold.

And Pillar number 6 is **Strengthened**

Academic Partnerships, to improve the quality
and capacity of the fold itself.

Which brings me back to Pillar number 1:

Transformed Teaching and Learning.

This, of course, is not just a goal in UBC's strategy. It's why we are **all** here – not to remake the educational landscape wholesale, but to think consciously and constantly about our performance, to be tireless in finding ways to teach and learn more effectively.

Now, before I go, I'd like to make two pitches.

First, I hope you can remember the url:

“flexible.learning.ubc.ca” – that's flexible-dot-learning-dot-ubc-dot-ca. It's our Flexible

Learning website and it has lots of links: to research, case studies, the Digital Learning Blog, and to relevant news and events.

Second, I want to mention our UBC2050 workshop coming this fall. It's part of our Centennial celebration, focussed on what teaching and learning will look like in 2050.

You can watch the web site for details and, please, join the conversation.

Finally, I'd liked to acknowledge your Conference Co-Chairs, Simon Bates, from UBC, and Stephanie Chu, from SFU, and to congratulate them on what appears to be an exemplary teaching and learning opportunity.

Enjoy the program. I look forward to learning more about what you teach, and learn, in your time together.