

**Installation Address of Professor Arvind Gupta
as Thirteenth President and Vice-Chancellor
of the University of British Columbia
September 12, 2014**

*Check against delivery

Your Honour, Minister Fast, Minister Virk, Deputy Mayor Reimer, Elder Grant, Distinguished platform party, fellow faculty, students, staff, alumni, friends and family – thank you.

This is actually my second installation as President of UBC. On my first day, at the beginning of July, the Musqueam people recognized me with a blanketing ceremony. In a flourish of eagle down, chants and dancing, they welcomed me to this, the unceded land of their ancestors. I couldn't be more grateful.

We are all blessed to be here on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish people. As President, I will do everything I can to ensure that UBC is and remains a trusted partner and a good neighbour to the Musqueam people.

You might take that as an overarching theme for the day – the responsibilities that we all share as a community of elders and scholars, striving to excel in a spirit of integrity, diversity, inclusiveness and mutual respect.

I trace my own sense of citizenship to my upbringing.

I'm from Timmins. I was born in India, but I grew up in the hard, beautiful country of the Canadian Shield, at a time when it was common practice to bring home strangers off the street, merely because they needed a meal and a bed.

Well, maybe it wasn't that common. Certainly, the first time I brought a hungry vagrant to my home in Toronto, my startled family found it quite unusual.

But in Timmins, in the 1970s, my father did it all the time. Coming home from his job managing an environmental pollution lab, he would come across someone on the street. They had a need; we had the means – and my mother never batted an eye.

The world has changed, but people have not. I think we all recognize – as my parents did – that each generation has a responsibility to take the world as we find it and do our utmost to make it better. I have met so many of you who share that sensibility – that sense of responsibility to UBC. We didn't come here for what we might get; we came for what we can give.

We recognize UBC as a Place of Mind, but also as a place of shared cultures, traditions, and history. Next year we will mark a century of community, celebrating UBC's 100th anniversary. We will rejoice in our faculty's accomplishments, our students' successes, and in the achievements and service of our emeriti and alumni. We will sing the praises of dedicated staff, generous donors and a worldwide community of

supporters. We will salute our provincial and federal government partners; it was their foresight and investment that enabled UBC to contribute so broadly.

Ours is a record well worthy of celebration. UBC is widely recognized to be among the top 25 public institutions in the world. For this we must thank the great presidents whose leadership brought us here: Stephen Toope, Martha Piper – and from David Strangway back to Frank Wesbrook. And we thank all our Chancellors and Chairs of the Board who have inspired us by their example.

It is our challenge to build on their contributions – endeavouring to lift UBC from the top 25 to the top 10. That is, I would argue, our responsibility: to take UBC as we find it – and make it better.

I'd like to take a few minutes to place that goal in context, by proposing five themes for UBC.

First, UBC is a Place of Learning – for there is no better tool for personal empowerment than education.

Second, UBC is a Place of Engagement – directly, through our two campuses, and virtually, across the province and around the world.

Third, UBC is an International Place, a global microcosm and a nexus. It is a gateway to the whole social, economic and, we hope, sustainable world.

Fourth, UBC is a Place of Innovation, ready to address the challenges facing the societies that we serve.

And Fifth, UBC is a Place of Research, a place for plumbing the depths of human understanding and expanding the scope of all human knowledge.

Allow me to elaborate.

UBC as a Place of Learning

As MIT's Peter Senge has argued:

Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning, we re-create ourselves. Through learning, we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through

learning, we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning, we extend our capacity to create – to be part of the generative process of life.

This applies to our entire community: undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, faculty, staff, alumni, and yes, even administrators. Our UBC is committed to ensuring that every part of the university is functioning at its highest capacity so we can produce the leaders our society requires.

We will empower our students with enhanced resources for success, including:

- bursaries and scholarships;
- graduate support and state-of-the-art research facilities;
- auxiliary services, such as on-campus housing;
- improved physical and mental health facilities;
- venues for sports; and outlets for culture.

We will enhance the student experience within a second-to-none learning environment.

We will also reach out, tirelessly, to the underrepresented – whether based on gender, race or community – recognizing education as the best instrument for breaking down barriers to social and economic mobility.

I have frequently called today's youth the "empowered generation." They know that they confront unprecedented societal challenges. They see how quickly yesterday's innovations become obsolete. They are aware that some 50% of today's jobs will likely not exist in 30 years.

But they also know that what never goes out of style is the ability to consider information critically, to assimilate facts into bigger narratives, and to generate new ideas.

This is the gift of a great education – one that goes beyond knowledge in a particular field, or training in a specific skill.

Our students must have the ability to think systematically, to welcome change, to tolerate ambiguity, to disrupt and to innovate. These are all skills best learned from the broadly based programs available only in a research-focused university.

The knowledge-intensive world also demands that we extend UBC's service beyond our traditional undergraduate and graduate constituencies. We will embed lifetime learning in our core teaching-and-learning mandate, engaging alumni, mid-career professionals, retirees – everyone who looks to us for personal, professional, and career growth.

Here, technology plays a critical role, enhancing the classroom experience and transforming the concept of place for learning. Technology can bring UBC:

- to those juggling career and family demands;
- to those at a distance from our campuses;
- to all those seeking a creative outlet or a new path in life.

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UBC as a Place of Engagement

Consider the connections between the academy and the community. As the urban theorist Richard Florida argues, it is the creative class that is powering the post-industrial city, a class that is rooted in a complex interplay among art, science, design and utility.

Universities are at the heart of this transformation. Every globally significant city – every city considered among the “most liveable” – boasts a leading research university. In these communities, town and gown work come together to underpin a creative economy.

UBC enjoys two such relationships: two thriving campuses – two places with one mind, one aspiration to excellence, and one unquestioned call to service.

We recognize the responsibility – and the opportunity – of this symbiosis. We know how much UBC owes our two communities and how much we have to gain from our partnerships.

Our Point Grey campus and the City of Vancouver have grown together and grown up together. UBC has been indispensable in establishing Metro Vancouver as a provincial economic engine and a Western Canadian centre of culture and innovation.

We will continue to support the resource sector, the traditional mainstay of the BC economy. We will pioneer in fields such as health sciences, life sciences, multi-media, IT, and sustainability. We will fuel the burgeoning creative sectors – architecture, design, film, gaming, and the performing arts.

We will partner across civil society, expand our footprint in downtown Vancouver, and tend to community connections – virtual and physical – including, crucial public transportation links to Point Grey.

UBC Okanagan was established less than 10 years ago by farsighted provincial and university leaders, many of whom honour us with their presence today. In the blink of an academic eye, our Kelowna campus has proved itself worthy of the name UBC. It has doubled in size, tripled its infrastructure and expanded its student body to nearly 8,500.

We will build on that trajectory, expanding this unique learning and innovation environment – and, with our community partners, further energizing the B.C. economy and enriching its social and cultural life.

We will continue our integration across all B.C. Consider the partnership with our excellent sister institutions in a distributed program that is now graduating medical professionals in Victoria and Prince George, as well as Vancouver and Kelowna. UBC will partner with our provincial government to expand this model wherever it creates measurable benefits for British Columbians.

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UBC as an International Place

As one of the world's top 25 public institutions, UBC is a portal for global engagement, connecting our cities, our province, and our country to the world. Our students and faculty learn about the world, teach about the world, and stand in service to the world.

We will stretch this portal – and shrink the world – fostering research-and-learning links across BC, Canada, and beyond.

I want to particularly highlight our connection with the Pacific Rim. UBC is Canada's clearest window into the creative and entrepreneurial forces of the Asia Pacific. We owe it to our students to enhance their connections to this flourishing region. We owe it to our scholars, who collaborate with the Asia Pacific research powerhouses. We owe it to our province to showcase our researchers, our innovators, and our entrepreneurs.

Expanding this portal will require us to leverage UBC's global network of partnerships. I have spent much of my professional life thinking about those relationships. Watching – and helping – Canada's universities to collaborate internationally, it has become clear that no single university can match the productive capacity of multi-institutional, multi-national teams.

Such alliances tap into all of UBC's strengths: from the historically and ethically informed critical thinking skills of the Humanities, to the transformative capabilities of modern science.

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UBC as a Place of Innovation

Our UBC has moved well beyond the “build-it-and-they-will-come” paradigm of graduating students. We will become even more pro-active in transferring knowledge from our classrooms to the industries, theatres and meeting rooms of our communities. We will listen well, to ensure that our teaching, learning and research reflects societal imperatives.

In keeping with our academic mission and values, we will reach out across civil society, always ready to address the challenges facing governments, industries – hospitals or not-for-profits. We will integrate their needs into our research mandate, creating a robust two-way flow of ideas. And we will integrate them in our teaching mandate, through continuing and professional education tuned to the needs of learners, industry and society.

I have spent the past 15 years at Mitacs, developing pathways to employment for our graduates. This is my passion and I am dedicated to multiplying such opportunities. For example, we will proactively dovetail on-campus courses with off-campus experiential learning. Today, I am further committing that we will:

- Connect our students to career opportunities by doubling UBC's extra-curricular student experiences on- and off-campus through internships and co-op programs.

And we will build new opportunities for students to study, travel and practice innovation abroad.

Our graduates will shape the future, rather than be at its mercy.

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UBC as a Place of Research

None of these four themes – not one – would be possible were it not for the fifth. UBC is ever so proudly a Place of Research.

Excellence in research distinguishes great institutions from the rest.

Excellence in research puts our students at the cutting edge of knowledge, giving them access to the latest discoveries and revelations.

Excellence in research allows us to nurture leaders and to take a lead on the broad societal agenda.

Excellence in research ensures our graduate students are ready to join the ranks of elite world scholars and innovators.

Excellence in research makes our reputation – enabling us to attract the best faculty, students and staff from around the world.

Excellence in research is what guarantees the value of our diplomas.

Investment in research excellence makes sense – and it also makes business sense. North America’s most distinguished research universities are experiencing unprecedented enrolment demand. UBC is no exception.

For that, I salute our outstanding research faculty, past and present. It is by your accomplishments that we make the case – to students, to government, to private-sector partners and to philanthropic donors – that an investment in UBC is an investment in excellence – and in success.

But we are not done. We are not where UBC should be, can be, and must be.

That’s why, today, I am committing to you that my administration will be unwavering in its focus on research excellence. During my presidency,

- UBC will increase its base funding for research excellence by at least \$100 million.

This funding will be directed toward those who are leaders at discovering, developing, and deploying knowledge.

We will invest in what our Nobel Laureate Dr. Michael Smith called “follow-your-nose” research.

And, we will invest in targeted research.

And always, we will invest in excellence, enhancing our research capacity and thus our ability to train, nurture, and empower an unprecedented generation.

Our goal is to leverage this investment so that we multiply our external research funding and our research impact many times over.

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I know, now, that you're wondering how I propose to make all of this happen. So before I conclude, let me outline just three of my strategies.

First we must celebrate and support entrepreneurship. As a great university, UBC has entrepreneurship embedded in its DNA; in our classrooms, our labs, our cultural venues – in the downtown core – in every setting where we engage students, supporters and private-sector partners.

We know entrepreneurship involves risk.

There are personal risks, as when families send us their children – from B.C., from distant Canadian communities, like Timmins, or from halfway around the world.

There are professional risks, as when a researcher embarks on a truly innovative line of inquiry.

And there are organizational risks, as when we commit to becoming more accountable and efficient, even as we improve UBC's learning experience and extend the scope and scale of our research.

So, first, we will embrace entrepreneurship and we will embrace risk.

Second, we will – always – act in community.

Community does not mean consensus. Academic citizenship demands knowledgeable, honest, and respectful conversations – but not always agreement. Ours is a complex collaboration of intellectuals and iconoclasts, ever ready to ask difficult questions and challenge existing norms.

So let me assure you that mine will be a consultative presidency. I will do what I must in service to UBC, but I will always listen:

- To students, first and foremost;

- To faculty, with a renewed commitment to governance;
- To staff, who make this university our home;
- To alumni, who bear our brand on their sleeves;
- And to the needs of our cities, our province and our country ...

... for it is the citizens of B.C. and Canada who give us the social license to achieve success. We need to earn that license every day.

Third, we will premise all of our actions on success for our students. They are our greatest responsibility and our greatest hope.

I am acutely conscious of our duty to your sons and daughters, and to mine. When I say that we owe students an environment that is inclusive, respectful and safe, I say it as your President and Vice-Chancellor, but I also say it as the father of three daughters: Kamara, who teaches high school in Toronto, and Marista and Leandra – who are both UBC students.

I want to acknowledge and thank all three of them for their love and support. I especially want to thank my wife, Michelle, for giving me the strength and courage to embrace this great adventure.

And I thank all of you – for your attention today and for the faith that you put in me as President and Vice-Chancellor. We have much to do, and I will need your help. I will need student commitment, staff energy, faculty support and all the passion, dedication, brilliance and, sometimes, the good luck, that distinguishes great researchers.

We will need the support of our alumni, our donors, our government partners and of the citizens they represent.

And with all of that, we will continue to define success for our UBC.

I'd like to close by contemplating the UBC motto: *Tu-um est*, the usual translation being: "It is yours."

UBC **IS** yours and it is ours. It is a gift that we hold in our hands.

But I want to be clear. It is not ours for convenience. It is not ours to consume. We hold it in trust, for the next generation and for every generation after that.

Let us come together in proving that we deserve that trust – as we continue to build into UBC our aspirations for our province and our country.