

Mr. Chancellor, Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Grads, Colleagues,
Dear Family and Friends – All —

Before I begin my formal remarks, I want to express my thanks to Dr. George Pedersen for his extraordinary work on behalf of Emily Carr. Dr. Pedersen is finishing his term as Chair of the Board of Governors. He has been steadfast, insightful and generous not only to me and to the Board but to everyone at Emily Carr. We love you George, thank-you.

I also want to thank our Chancellor for his very generous donation to Emily Carr that will support awards to graduating students in perpetuity. I also want to thank Jake Kerr for all his help in securing a new campus for Emily Carr. I look forward to working with Jake over the next few years as we realize the dream of building a 21st Century Art and Design University. Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank Monique Fouquet, our VP Academic for leading the complex transition and planning process that is transforming us into a fully-fledged university of Art and Design.

Graduations are always auspicious occasions, special moments in time for you, -- students of Emily Carr University, and for us, faculty, staff and administrators — special because this event marks the both the beginning and the end of an important period in your lives and in ours. Emily Carr as an institution is small enough that we know many of you personally and have witnessed and in some cases participated in your struggle to become artists, designers, media creators — and because that struggle is so important to the future — yours and the society we live in, my comments today will

deal with the future and your potential contribution to the betterment of society.

Universities fuel social, cultural and economic growth and change. Universities are at the heart of what we mean by freedom and democracy. It is within the university context that we can freely share not only ideas, but also develop solutions to some of the challenges that we all face. To be a creative person in this context is both a privilege and a burden.

We cannot exercise our creative talents in a vacuum but must connect what we do to where we live, connect our visions to the communities we share, link our imaginations to suggesting solutions to the vexing problems of the day, explore and innovate with the hope that we will also communicate values that have an impact, values that we can believe in and support.

Over the last four years, many of you have witnessed some dramatic changes in our society. We have all lived through a major economic downturn and seen an extraordinary election in the United States. We have watched the emergence of China and India as important powers and lived through more and more examples of climate change. These are but a few of the many events during this compressed period in time. Throughout this period you have had to learn how to balance your personal lives with being a student, and to find a sense of equilibrium as our social context has become more and more complex. Whether you have desired it or not the history of this period has affected your art and it is one of our shared responsibilities as artists to understand these effects.

As creative people, we balance mastery of materials whether they are real or virtual with the creation of artifacts. When you become an artist or a designer or a media creator you commit yourself to this balance, to the shape and form of meaning, to the translation of meaning into form and shape and this commitment is sometimes difficult and other times seems to flow intuitively. The ability to balance all these elements teaches us something about balance in general, about the need to find and maintain some poise as the complex swirl of everyday life circles around us. There is an exquisite beauty to this balancing act — exquisite because we are privileged enough to be in a context where we can dream and where it is possible, even a requirement to translate those dreams into reality. Emily Carr University permits and encourages the imaginative leap from idea to reality! What an extraordinary thing! A place that actually opens up the possibilities of self, transformation and personal growth — a place that historically over 85 years has helped build the creative culture of BC and Canada — a place of freedom that has nurtured and supported some of Canada's most important creative people.

This heritage is what we all have a responsibility to maintain, support and celebrate. This is the present and the future.

I want you to imagine yourselves inside a room with the sounds of twittering everywhere, the chatter and exchange of ideas, disagreements, agreements, information and misinformation, think of that room as a large public square where we have assembled to talk, create and talk some more. Think of that room as a studio where the smells and tastes are integral to releasing the energy of creativity. Think of yourselves during that silent moment in front

of an empty canvas or a blank screen and that chance, that rare chance to create, to imagine and to produce. At each stage of your learning experience you have had to overcome that emptiness, the sense that there is meaning even if it is not immediately apparent. And each time that you have productively found a solution, you have validated your education, and reinforced the importance of what we do collectively and individually. This creative heritage is your responsibility to maintain, support and celebrate.

We live in a city that by virtue of location and history extends Canada eastwards to the vast nations of Asia. We live in a city that is small by comparison to the large cities of Europe and America. Yet, we have produced some of the greatest artists of the 20th Century and hopefully will continue to produce even greater artists in the 21st Century. Perhaps it is the fact that we are the mediators between Europe and Asia. Perhaps we have always been not so much a gateway to the East as a cultural point of transition between east and west. And perhaps that hybridity has given us a unique advantage — the advantage of understanding how cultures come together and how diversity is at the very core of our identities, at the very core of most creative acts.

So, graduates!!! You now bear the burden of carrying on some great traditions. You now have the chance to become what you imagine, you can translate your hopes into action, but you will also need to relate what you do, what you imagine to who you are and WHERE you are. You will need to connect to the community and understand where you can contribute. Now more than ever there is urgency to how we interpret the present and how we

see the future. And, as you engage with these challenges remember Emily Carr. We are and always will be your extended family.

Good Luck and all the best for the future.