

**Humber College  
President's Breakfast  
August 31, 2012  
Chris Whitaker's Speaking Remarks**

Good morning,

Wow, when they told me the President's Breakfast was a big deal they weren't kidding. I am delighted to be here this morning and I would like to welcome and thank you all for joining me as I host this great event for the first time. I hope you've had a chance to enjoy this wonderful summer and are ready for the year ahead.

In addition to my new colleagues here at Humber, there are many community partners and friends of the college present. Greetings to all, and a special greeting to our Board of Governors, external guests, elected representatives and Ministry colleagues. I would also like to acknowledge and welcome my wife Vicki, who today is visiting Humber for the first time.

I believe that great institutions are built around great traditions, and this breakfast – the 31<sup>st</sup> annual President's Breakfast, certainly qualifies. While this event is a welcome back and kickoff of the new academic year, it is, more importantly, a celebration of the spirit of Humber and the contributions of the many staff, past and present, who have, and will continue to make the college the great institution that it is. The special awards and recognition of long-service employees that follow this speech are a reflection of this.

I have been briefed on the nature of speeches delivered by my predecessors at this event and while I hope to meet expectations in terms of tone and content, my sources tell me that I am not likely to break the record for the longest speech. On the other hand, we all have much to brag about and be proud of at Humber, so my remarks, by necessity, cannot be short.

This morning I want to talk about the state of the Humber nation – a strong proud leader in Canadian postsecondary education – and to share with you my perspective on the future. As I see it, Humber will continue to work together to ensure that we respond to the needs of learners by providing quality programs and credentials that are closely aligned with labour market requirements. We work in a dynamic environment and the work we do is critical to the future of our communities and province.

As I begin, let me say how thrilled I am to be given the opportunity to lead this wonderful institution, which I believe is the crown jewel of Ontario's world-class college system. Having worked in the sector for the past 25 years I am well aware of Humber's reputation as a great learning college that places students first, emphasizes access, innovation, excellence, and invests in our people.

These priorities and the values they reflect are very much aligned with my personal values, and are a big reason why I wanted to come to Humber. Simply put, I wanted to be part of this success story.

So what does a new president do when coming to a place, which is best in class? Well the answer for me is pretty easy – you get even better.

By this I mean building on our strengths and the vision that has guided Humber and produced the results in which we take great pride. As a teaching and learning organization we are focused on continuous improvement, and to that end, we are interested in evolutionary change. What this means, and what it will look like depends on how well we work together to leverage the collective knowledge and enthusiasm of the organization. And from what I have seen so far, I would say we have an abundance of both.

In the coming months, we have an opportunity to further shape Humber's future and the postsecondary education landscape in Ontario as we develop our next strategic plan. After experiencing the phenomenal growth and expansion of the past five years, we will take the time to reflect, assess and engage in dialogue about where we are and our aspirations for the next phase in our history.

So keeping this in mind, let me share with you some of the things I have learned about Humber that I feel demonstrate the strength of the institution. Let me start by stating the obvious – students want to come to Humber.

In terms of enrolment and applicant demand, we continue to lead the system going into the 2012-13 academic year. By last count we have received almost 75,000 applications and have enrolled more than 11,500 new students. People are recognizing that there is indeed more for you at Humber.

We are anticipating a 4.5 per cent increase in enrolment over fall 2011 and expect to have about 27,000 full-time students including the innovative and highly successful University of Guelph–Humber programs, which continue to thrive and grow.

The guiding vision of excellence in polytechnic education has led to the creation of the most comprehensive range of credentials in the province. Enrolment remains strong in all areas with:

- more than 17,000 students in our one-, two- and three-year certificate, diploma, and advanced diploma programs
- 3,000 students in Humber degree programs
- 2,000 students in postgraduate certificate programs
- 1,800 apprentices
- more than 800 students in the collaborative Nursing degree with UNB
- and more than 3,500 students at the University of Guelph-Humber.

During the past year Humber saw 7,200 graduates join the ranks of our proud alumni, which now stand at more than 169,000 and are making a difference locally and around the globe.

Our suite of 150 full-time programs continues to evolve in response to student and labour market needs, and we are developing and launching new programs across our credentials, true to the polytechnic commitment. This fall we are launching 12 new programs including:

- Bachelor of International Development
- Food and Nutrition Management diploma
- Web Design and Interactive Media advanced diploma
- Graduate certificates in the following areas:
  - Fashion Management and Promotions
  - Event Management
  - Research Analyst
  - Alternative Dispute Resolution
  - Advertising Account Management

- Certificates in:
  - Electrical Techniques
  - Plumbing Techniques
  - Professional Windows .Net Programming
  - Institutional Cook Apprenticeship.

While the numbers are impressive, what is more impressive is that growth has not come at the expense of quality and student success.

Direct and anecdotal evidence, including Key Performance Indicators, student feedback questionnaires, formal and informal student feedback, program review data and classroom visits, all validate significant increases in student satisfaction at Humber.

In terms of Key Performance Indicators specifically, Humber ranks first in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) for graduate employment and also rates the highest in the GTA for student satisfaction with the teaching and learning environment, at more than 75 per cent.



Beyond the numbers, Humber students and graduates are achieving great things. From international acknowledgements to notable awards, our students and grads from all schools continue to be recognized in many ways. Here are just a few examples from this past year:

- Rahul Singh who won the Premier's Award in the Health Sciences category at the annual Premier's Awards for outstanding college graduates. He was also recognized with the Order of Ontario and awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, given to him by Prince Charles. A 1993 Paramedic grad, Rahul is the founder and director of emergency programs with GlobalMedic providing international disaster relief
- five alumni from Humber's Comedy Writing and Performance program who won top prizes in the 12<sup>th</sup> annual Canadian Comedy Awards

- Culinary student Sophie Doria who won a silver medal in the Skills Canada competition, gold at the Canadian Culinary Federation Junior Chef competition and was among a group of five Humber students selected to assist with the preparation of the reception for the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at Parliament Hill
- Electromechanical Engineering Technology – Automation and Robotics students Zachary Piskun and David Dacosta who won gold at the Skills Ontario and Skills Canada competitions for the second year in a row. David and Zach will now represent Team Canada at the World Skills competition in Germany in July
- three Creative Advertising students who swept the top prizes in the National Advertising Awards in the student category.
- Business students who placed third overall and won top individual and team awards at the Ontario Colleges Marketing Competition

- Zsofi Balazs, a second-year Police Foundations student, who competed in the women's 10k open water swimming event at the London 2012 Olympic Games.
- The students on our varsity teams, who set a provincial record, winning 17 OCAA gold medals and 26 medals overall, as well as national records, winning three CCAA national team titles and 12 national medals overall.

I could go on to note many more examples and I know that many of you in the room have your own success stories based on your work with students, and I thank you for your time and effort in helping them achieve their goals.

Humber's commitment to investing in our people is well known and plays a large role in contributing towards our reputation for teaching, learning and service excellence. Just as the learning needs of students are evolving with the rapid change in the knowledge economy, so must the skill sets of faculty and all who support learning.

During the past year, 3,300 registrants were involved in the 300 organized professional development activities offered to faculty and staff. From what I've seen, we have the most sophisticated professional development program in the province. With these types of initiatives it is easy to see why Humber has been recognized among Canada's Top Employers for Young People, Greater Toronto's Top Employer, and Best Employer for New Canadians.

In turn, the expertise and achievements of our faculty and staff have led to positive publicity and awareness of Humber. You are published authors, award winners and internationally renowned experts, representing more than 40 areas of study. Your professional experience and industry connections provide students with an understanding of what they can expect in their future career.

Most of all, you have shown that you care about your students' academic and personal success, and that you enrich their time in the classroom. In the past 12 months, these success stories have helped to generate more than 150 Humber Today news stories, videos and photos galleries on our website, along with an average of two media mentions about Humber every day of the year and more than 18,000 visits daily to our website.

In terms of our online presence, our real success extends to the online classroom. We are enriching the learning environment and responding to learner needs by continuing to expand our e-learning initiatives. Many may not be aware, but during the past year, seven new programs were brought online, which brings the total to more than 40 fully online certificate and diploma programs. Our online course database now has more than 430 courses.

In addition, as part of the polytechnic vision, our applied research initiatives continue to grow through both internally seeded projects and external funding. All projects engage students and are linked to programs. This past year, 70 faculty members and more than 2,500 students participated in applied research projects as part of their learning experience. We have expanded international education opportunities with 56 students accessing the Study Abroad scholarship program in the past year, and 147 studying abroad in credit programming.

I want to thank our faculty and staff for the many focused efforts and strategies that have led to progress in our student retention and graduation rates. It is particularly worthy of note that overall graduation rates at Humber for 2012 saw a 2.3 per cent year-over-year increase to 63.5 per cent. While this may seem incremental in terms of percentages, we potentially make a huge difference in the lives of every student we keep in school or help to graduate.

In addition to great teaching, some of the innovative programs designed to offer additional support to students include:

- the Easy Start Transitions program, which helps students with disabilities prepare for the coming academic year
- the Mental Health First Aid workshops, which raise awareness and develop skills for assisting people who may be suffering with mental health issues
- the Transition Advising program for first generation students, which is demonstrating positive results in terms of improved grade point averages and improved student retention.

Changing the focus to look outside of the college, Humber can also be proud of its community involvement. From workforce development, employment services and assisting internationally trained immigrants to a focus on youth in transition from high school to college, we are leaders in community building.

Examples of these activities include:

- our five Community Employment Services centres in Toronto and Brampton that saw over 5,800 individuals in the past year
- our Aboriginal Camp Choice, a three-day college experience for Aboriginal students in Grade 7 and 8. The program is recognized as a truly worthwhile endeavour by Aboriginal communities in Northern Ontario where students have traditionally had fewer options to explore the breadth of careers available to them
- our strong support for the School-College-Work Initiative, with more than 800 students from Grade 11 and 12 enrolled in the innovative and highly successful dual-credit program where students facing challenges finishing high school in a traditional environment can attend courses at Humber and receive both a college and high school credit
- finally, there are a host of faculty and staff driven initiatives dedicated to helping people in the community. Programs that everyone may not be aware of, but programs and commitments that help others.



In addition to great people, Humber has also sought to continually improve facilities, which in the last year, included the Lakeshore Commons at the Lakeshore Campus, and the Design Centre at the North Campus. These, and many other investments, contribute to an enhanced student experience both in and outside the classroom.

Some recent improvements include:

- a new 80 seat computer lab and classroom in The Business School to support collaborative learning and provide a home for the International Development Institute.
- Sound Edit Suites to support years three and four of the Film and Media Production degree.
- a new open access computer lab in LX at the North Campus, courtesy of the Humber Students' Federation
- and most obviously, the major North Campus parking lot redesign, which makes way for the next major project, the Learning Resource Commons (LRC).

The new LRC will be the largest project in Humber's history and is supported by the largest funding grant Humber has ever received from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The LRC will provide a new home for all student services, the library, a learning commons, the school of Liberal Arts & Sciences and administrative offices. Construction will commence in the spring of 2013 upon selection of the preferred design build team. Stay tuned for more details.

Although less visible than new buildings, we are also continuing to upgrade our enterprise systems to improve decision-making, business processes and operational effectiveness. Through the dedicated work of the implementation teams, the finance system is now live, and we are moving onto the major component of the enterprise system project, the student registration system, which is on schedule for implementation in September 2013.

And for those who have been waiting patiently, we will change our email system from FirstClass to Microsoft Outlook beginning this fall. This will improve access to email and calendar systems and enable mobile synchronization.

The highlights I have summarized from the past year, speak to Humber's strengths and they are a reflection of the efforts of many to deliver on our strategic priorities, which are:

- managing enrolment growth
- a commitment to teaching and learning excellence
- a commitment to human resources planning and professional development
- a commitment to high-quality services to support student success and business practices.

As we look to the future, we have an opportunity to build on our history of success. Indeed, as acknowledged leaders in Ontario's postsecondary system we not only have the opportunity, but also the responsibility to continue our tradition of innovation, excellence, access to pathways, and a learning centred focus, and to work collaboratively with our partners to do this in a manner compatible with the realities of the environment in which we operate.

Just as Humber is looking ahead to evolve our vision of excellence in polytechnic education through the development of our new strategic plan this year, the Ontario government, through our Ministry and in consultation with stakeholders, is currently developing a new vision of postsecondary education for the province.

The vision, as it is framed, is aligned with the values and priorities of colleges, namely:

- a system driven by learning outcomes and the quality of education
- a focus on developing lifelong learners
- a nimble and adaptive system responsive to the changing needs and the accelerating pace of change in technology and the economy.

These words resonate with us. This is what we do and what we will continue to focus on.

Our challenge, and one of the considerations that we need to think about as we look ahead, is to do this, and indeed do this better, in an environment of lower rates of public spending growth for the foreseeable future. There is an expectation that through innovation and differentiation, our institutions and the postsecondary education system will achieve productivity gains and a realignment of resources to continue to meet our mandate.

As we take the next steps in refining and advancing our vision of excellence in polytechnic education at Humber, I am confident that we will develop strategies and achieve results that support government policy and our institutional goals. In order to do this we need to engage in open dialogue about what it is we do well and how we can get better.

It is clear to me that what differentiates Humber in Ontario's postsecondary landscape is our approach to polytechnic education. While the term polytechnic may mean different things to different people, what we have created at Humber is access and support to a comprehensive range of ladderred pathways and credentials that is distinct in the province. As we work to improve credit transfer and student mobility within the province, Humber will play a unique role and offer some of the best options for students.

As we move forward, we will ensure our program mix reflects the value and importance of all credentials from apprenticeship through diplomas, degrees and postgraduate programs. As a student-centred institution, we need to continue to develop alternative modes of delivery in response to evolving learner needs within a learning outcomes framework. This should include a focus on prior learning assessment and recognition.

We will continue to provide innovative approaches in integrating applied and liberal education that produces job ready graduates who are adaptable lifelong learners and responsible caring citizens.

We should continue to integrate experiential learning activities such as applied research, study abroad programs, service learning, and entrepreneurship, to engage students beyond traditional methods of teaching and learning.

Given the restraint measures affecting all institutions receiving government funding, it is incumbent on us to continue to seek alternative sources of revenue. With public operating grants accounting for just over 40 per cent of our revenue, it is in our interest to look for opportunities to increase existing avenues of diversification and be open to new ones. This should of course be aligned with and support core activities and not detract from them.

I believe that how we work together to achieve our goals is just as important as the things we do to achieve them. As a modern organization operating in an environment of change, we need to leverage the knowledge and creativity of everyone at Humber. To be the greatest learning college that we can be, we also need to be a learning organization that welcomes and respects diverse opinions and ideas, actively seeking to engage others. In exercising the humility to acknowledge that none of us alone has all the answers, we become more open to trying new things, exploring different approaches and paving the way to innovation.



I know this message is not new to many of you as I know Humber has a great culture of collaboration. However like many things, it is often easier in theory than practice, and we owe it to each other, the college and our students to look for more and better ways to communicate and work together both vertically and horizontally across the institution.

In closing let me offer some words of thanks.

First to the Humber Students' Federation (HSF) whose executive members are here today with its president, Bhalinder Bedi, who you met earlier. The HSF has a long history of exceptional student leadership and I want to thank them for their many contributions to our students and wish them continued success.

To our many community, employer and business partners whose support is integral to our success. I look forward to building on established relationships and looking for new ways to work towards our mutual benefit.

To the Ontario government and the civil servants who work hard to support us as we transform lives through education and build a better future for families and communities in our province.

Sincere thanks to members of Humber's Board of Governors, and former governors joining us today for volunteering your time, energy and enthusiasm. Your efforts have contributed greatly to the development of this fine institution and I thank you for support and continued stewardship.

Thank you to Humber's dedicated staff. Our support, academic and administrative staff across the organization from Orangeville to the Lakeshore and all points in between are the key to our success.

And finally, my thanks to the exceptional executive team whose counsel and support is invaluable to me. You all make a difference in the lives of our students and it is to you that we owe our gratitude for establishing our stellar reputation as a leading postsecondary institution. In my short time here, you have welcomed me into the Humber family and made me feel at home. I look forward to working with all of you as we enter the next phase in Humber's history, building our vision of excellence in polytechnic education.

Thanks once again for joining us today, and while this event is called the President's Breakfast, it is above all a celebration of our great college and for me it really feels like the Humber Breakfast.

Have a great long weekend and best wishes for the new academic year.