

ACADIA SENIOR COLLEGE
Annual General Meeting, June 4, 2008
President's Remarks

Two years ago I had written a few remarks for presentation at the 2006 Annual General Meeting. But it seemed to me at the time that we were not ready for another commencement speech so I said to those of you who were here, "I am not going to give a speech today." And in a loud voice, Barbara Rappaport said, OH GOOD!" Today will be different.

Today we enter our ninth year of operations at Acadia Senior College.

The core of our programs from the beginning has been three sessions of courses led by faculty who are all volunteers, volunteers who have given their knowledge, their enthusiasm for their subject matter, and their time –that dwindling asset which everyone here has in common. Knowledge, time, and enthusiasm, these are all wonderful gifts. All faculty deserve our thanks for sharing those gifts with us.

We also have a strong membership. Every one of you who joins in a conversation, whether in the classroom, or during field studies, or at the newly initiated "Coffee Clash", or during the Question & Answer period that follows our summer lectures or our lunch and learn talks is likewise in a teaching role. Thank you one and all.

Acadia Senior College enjoys a strong corps of volunteers, who carry out the many tasks essential for a smoothly running organization, whether it is recruiting new people, handling the several thousand pieces of our postal mail that come and go every year, accurately carrying out all our bookkeeping, consolidating our book orders, writing grant applications delivering equipment to our classrooms, creating stimulating activities that add to our knowledge, arranging events that provided social interaction and fun such as this dinner and the entertainment to follow, serving on committees mailing and distributing our course brochures.

From the beginning, Acadia Senior College has a strong Curriculum Committee, a strong Executive Committee, and a strong Finance Committee. To this your Board has added over the past year Committees for Membership & Volunteers -- led by Ginny Blaney, Community Events -- Betty Massie, a Development Committee -- Tom Watt, and Public Relations -- Peggy Forster. These are the ones who are giving our organization vitality.

A word about your Board of Directors. Four years ago your Board recognized that the long term health of the college would be served by bringing to an end our dependence on the University and hiring our own staff so that we could continue to have a professionally run institution. By a professionally run organization I mean one that enhances good communications with members and the public, that manages effectively the administrative essentials to support a diverse and steadily growing membership, and that strengthens our day-to-day collaborations with the College of the Atlantic and ten other partner non-profits on the Island, that provides day-to-day continuity of operations. These are some of the responsibilities that Dorothy and I handled for a number of years, and which we have placed in the competent hands our Office Administrators, first, Phyllis Young, and now Jude Lamb, who have cheerfully taken them on since April 2005.

I have some more good news. I am retiring from the presidency today and Dick Crawford, whom I thank for his tireless service as our first Vice President is retiring too... This is good, I think, for us to move on. Why? For an educational start-up organization like ours to enjoy continued growth, to become an educational institution, it must be able to change. Thus, I expect Acadia Senior College to benefit from new people assuming new leadership roles. That is why I am happy that your nominating committee has persuaded Bill Dohmen to be a candidate for the Presidency, Ginny Blaney to be a candidate for Vice President, and Jim Kitler, for Treasurer.

Some months ago I was explaining what has transpired at our college since 2000 to a high school classmate, a businessman. To me he said, that sounds like an entrepreneurship, Jim, a characterization I had not thought of. And so it is. Since the year 2000, Acadia Senior College has exhibited entrepreneurial characteristics and

entrepreneurial spirit. ASC has thrived as an entrepreneurship because your Board has been willing to let Dorothy and I try new things, new learning opportunities of which I could give you 260 examples. That is the number of courses ASC has held since September 19, 2000, to say nothing of the 80-odd other offerings we have had since 2000.

We are now in the third year of our Final Friday Lunch and Learn series at Birch Bay Village, that was inspired by the success of Art Dole's "Current Issues" course and stimulated by the need -- uncovered in our "Co-Development" exercise led by Sam Felton -- for more one-time learning events for the whole community. But the history of successful institutions tells us that every era of entrepreneurship has to end. So the ideas of the Declaration of Independence were made durable by the institutional framework provided by the Constitution.

All of this does cost money. To the end of broadening and deepening the ability of this organization to raise additional funds, I have some more good news. First, ASC has begun to attract grant money that support services we provide to members and to the community in which we live and do our work, one of our core values. Second, some of that additional money is in your pockets. And third, with the creation and development of new committees your Board has strengthened the structure of our organization.

What your Board's initiative does is to allow the entrepreneurial instincts of our early days to gracefully give way to the habits of an established institution without stifling the original entrepreneurial spirit. I also expect that the entrepreneurial spirit that has motivated the creation of new learning opportunities available at our College will inform future decisions of your Board. I look forward to Acadia Senior College continuing to carry out its mission, crisply articulated in May 2000 by Mike Kennedy, a four-part mission of intellectual stimulation, practical knowledge, social interaction, and fun, and to do so even better in the future than we have so successfully done in the past.

So that is what I have to say Barbara, and I thank you all for listening.