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Preparing for the 21st Century

Address by

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at

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Good morning.

I am delighted to be back in familiar surroundings where I spent my formative years. It is a place steeped in history with a rich tradition of academic and sporting excellence where students have been encouraged to strive for the stars. It is a place that has encouraged self-discipline and fostered a culture of leadership within the student body. It is a place that has had to adapt to the social, economic and educational changes that have occurred during my lifetime, without loss of focus. It is a place for which I have fond memories, a place that offered a rounded education that prepared me for a career of service and where I built long lasting friendships.

Being a student of this historic institution is a privilege, not least because of the environment in which education is delivered. One of our former principals referred to it as an oasis of calm. Certainly, it is a place for discipline and, of course, excellence. What I learnt here came not only in the classroom, but also on the field of play. For others of my contemporaries, it was their participation in extra-curricular activities such as cadets, scouts or any of the myriad clubs that existed at the time that made them the citizens that they have become.

This school has been blessed with some of the best academic talent that this small country has to offer. To whom much is given, much is expected. Over the years, the school has delivered. I measure this not by the many scholarships that it produces each year, but by the leadership that our distinguished alumni provide across all strata of society at home and abroad. It is legacy that you inherit and which you must pass on to future generations.

Much has changed since I graduated. Students are no longer exposed to the joys of studying my favourite subject Latin but the curriculum is broader, providing a range of subjects to meet each student's aptitude. More fundamentally, the school is no longer a Boys school but it continues to produce outstanding citizens who excel in whatever sphere of activity they dedicate themselves. It provides a reminder that talent carefully nurtured through commitment and hard work results in success. Many of you here today will receive recognition for your own hard work and commitment to excellence. I encourage you to continue to treasure this opportunity and experience.

My theme this morning is ***Preparing for the 21st Century***, a relevant topic for a student body most of whose members were born after the year 2000. I admit that advising you on how to prepare for the 21st Century is not an easy proposition as today's world is characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, more commonly referred to as VUCA, or what you would call *disruption*.

Some of you will opt to study and/or live abroad and you need to be prepared to embrace new cultures and to face increased competition, to excel and to provide the leadership of which I spoke. Even if you stay here, you have to recognise that there are few pure borders and the competition will meet you at your doorstep.

My comments, therefore, will hopefully provide you with a broad roadmap on how you can prosper in an era in which the only consistent thing is change. This will test your character and your resilience. However, effective adoption of these principles should empower you to manage change rather than to fear it.

Many of you already have dreams of what career you want to pursue. Others will be uncertain right up to the time when you graduate from here. In most situations, this uncertainty should not be a source of concern. Let me draw on a personal experience which I hope you will consider as you prepare for the future. When I left here just over 40 years ago, my intention was to undertake undergraduate studies in sociology and politics. The central bank which I now have the honour to lead was only five years old and economics was not a popular discipline. That I changed majors was perhaps influenced in part by my father's cautionary remarks about what he saw as the limited career opportunities available to sociology graduates. More critically, I fell in love with the discipline of economics. Interestingly, at least one of my contemporaries pursued sociology and he has distinguished himself in his chosen field.

That we both achieved some measure of success in our respective careers reflects our willingness and ability to be flexible and adaptable and to employ our critical thinking skills in the pursuit of our disciplines. This story also demonstrates the need sometimes to be bold

and be willing to take risks. You have to weigh the merits of parental guidance and keep an open mind when confronted with important but difficult decisions.

Preparing for the 21st Century is not the task for students alone. It requires the input of teachers, family and wider society. It is through these agents of change that values and societal norms are demonstrated, including integrity, honesty and punctuality.

Adequately preparing our students, our teachers and our administrators for the disruption of the 21st Century, requires the 4 Cs: collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. Indeed, internationally, educational institutions and employers have identified these 4 Cs as the most necessary skills to survive this era of disruption.

Why the 4 C's?

Today's students must think critically if they are to decipher and dissect the information overload that confronts them in this era of social media. They must be able to analyse, interpret and evaluate as they decide about relationships, career goals and options, school work, extracurricular activities, study habits, time management, life. They need to imagine and sharpen their intellectual standards in determining truth and facts.

Today's students must communicate effectively and proficiently in English and perhaps in many other languages, in several different formats, across several different borders, and using many different devices in this era of technology and services. Whether it's interacting with classmates, teachers, potential employers, or Snapchatting or IGing (using Instagram), effective communication is required. Words matter. Images matter. Responses matter. Listening matters. Time and place also matters.

What will happen to all that texting language, you ask? Idk (I don't know). But whatever might replace it, you'll need to be fluent in it.

That's because today's student must be able to collaborate. How many of you use Wikipedia, that ubiquitous, though imperfect forum for information? This platform is built on collaboration. Many persons, unknown to each other, have come together to produce articles for the benefit of all. The community-spiritedness of other social media platforms like IG, Facebook and Twitter, where success depends on the number of followers, the participation and engagement you rack up, and the extent of your reach, requires collaboration. Imagine that social media channels are collaborating with the traditional media like newspapers in the UK to help them regain their prominence.

Whether it's utilizing Web-ex, Go to Meeting, and Google Docs software or peer to peer lending and the crowd funding, which children like you worldwide are using effectively to

support national and international causes, and to effect change, collaboration is a dominant feature of the 21st Century.

To bring it closer to home, those group projects you are assigned ever so often at this school, are preparing you for the type of collaboration about which I speak, so optimize the opportunities of working together, sharing, and collaborating. This is your opportunity to develop research skills and strengthen your analytical skills, both of which are necessary in the 21st century.

And today's students must think creatively. Creative thinking is as important today as literacy was when I was at this school. The world needs creative thinkers to innovate, to explore, to enquire, to investigate, to challenge the norms, to push the envelope in order to find solutions for the old and new problems and challenges. These problems are all around us: in our schools, in workplaces, in our country and in the world. The technologies present great opportunities, but there are also inherent risks for which answers are needed. Cyber bullying, identity theft, and fake news are all challenges for which we need creative solutions.

We need creative thinking as we determine how to transition from using those dollars in our pockets and wallets to having money on a smart device. The prospect of a cashless society looms but to take advantage of this opportunity also requires us to find solutions for perceived risks. And thinking creatively will help us.

So these 4 C's are the skills that you need in this computerized, digitized, interconnected, disruptive age. These are the skills you will require for the careers and job markets of the future.

These are skills that you will require to master Science, Technology Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM).

These are the skills that will enable you to fulfil your civic duties of philanthropy, volunteerism, empathy and care for your fellow man.

These are the skills that will make you a better girl, a better boy, a better citizen. *Those who will never give up. All in the run of it. All for the fun of it!*

These are skills you will require to excel at this institution and to ensure excellence on the playground, in the classroom, and eventually in the workplace.

These are the skills that you will need to help our country evolve into a modern, vibrant, world class society and economy that can compete against the rest of the world.

These are the skills that will ensure lifelong learning, and help you to unlearn the many things that soon won't apply in this dynamic ever changing world.

Critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creative thinking are the skills that each of you must develop and master as you take on the 21st century.

Our responses to current economic circumstances reflect the usefulness, relevance, applicability, benefits, and potency of these skills, as we devise new and creative solutions to live within our means, manage our economic affairs and restore economic discipline. We are venturing into previously uncharted waters, and we are employing the 4Cs as we do so.

Teachers, parents and administrators you, too, must embrace the disruption that is emblematic of the 21st Century. The world is changing rapidly, and your approach to educating future generations of leaders must change, too.

When I was at this school, I solved Math problems with a slide rule. Students, I'm sure most of you have never seen one, so that's some homework for you – Google it. The generation after me moved on from slide rules to calculators, and now physical calculators are almost obsolete – I'm sure most of us use our phones if we have to work something out.

The same way the tools we use have evolved, so too must our areas of focus. We need our students to not only understand the subject matter, but also to be able to articulate it – not only on paper, but also verbally. Whatever our students become – sportspeople, entertainers, entrepreneurs, Governor of the Central Bank – they will almost certainly be called upon to speak publicly, and they will be judged on it. Their competence might even be measured by it. So if our children are to compete with others internationally, presentation skills will be key. Encouraging our children to speak and share these views, both at home and in the classroom, is integral to preparing them for the 21st Century.

That is only one example of how you must adapt to the needs of this era. Another, more radical change could be a shift toward what is referred to as phenomenon based learning – moving away from studying individual subjects to focusing on all aspects of topics and issues – so that our students gain a holistic view of the world they will inhabit and eventually lead. For example, studying history, geography and religion together as an integrated set may create more context and interest for the 21st century student.

For us to be competitive in the 21st Century, our educators must nurture and embrace the 4Cs. You must work in tandem with students to design programmes, projects and approaches to studies that incorporate and integrate them into every day learning and living. You must allow students to dream, to imagine, and to challenge, to create. You are up to the challenge at this school. You have the intellectual capacity, the energy, the talent

pool, the leadership, the strong traditions and, I hope, the passion to unearth these skills where needed, and reinforce them where necessary.

As I just mentioned strong traditions, let me encourage all of you students to pause and look at the boards on these walls and to be inspired by those who once sat where you now sit, who were once like you: young, smart, and full of promise. And now take a moment to look at the person to your left and to your right. In 10 or 20 years, that person could be your doctor, your financial advisor, your architect, or even your business partner. Perhaps that person will be your husband or wife. Certainly, I hope they will be your lifelong friend.

You might think, based on what you know now, that you can predict where either of you will be in the next decade or two, but as I have said this morning, this is a dynamic era, which, to paraphrase Alvin Toffler, the futurist and author, is about learning, unlearning, and relearning.

So as I close, I remind you of my opening story. I changed my career path, more than 30 years ago. I have also changed my mind on some long held views. In preparing for the 21st Century, you must adapt; you must adjust your position and pivot. With the skills of the 4Cs you will be in a unique, privileged and enviable position to do so.

I am tempted to end by saying Carpe Diem – seize the opportunity, but to stay closer to the ethos of the 21st Century, I will instead quote Colin Kaepernick in his Nike commercial and say “Don’t ask if your dreams are crazy, ask if they are crazy enough!”

Congratulations to all awardees. Well done. Continue to excel. Remember and embrace the 4Cs. Happy Holidays!

Thank you.