

Great Hall Community Farewell to Paul Davenport

What do you say when words are not enough?

For fifteen years, Paul Davenport has led our University with grace, vision, and an all consuming personal commitment to each of the thousands of students who have attended Western during his Presidency – numbers approaching 70,000 in terms of entering first-year students alone. He has truly brought “the best student experience” to all who have studied here – not as simply a phrase, not simply a slogan, not just a tag line, but a way of life and a path and a direction for Western and for all of us. That’s what great leaders do.

Paul has been a transformational President, who through focused and sustained effort, and with persistence and determination, has changed the face of our campus and the perception of our University. None have been more purple and proud than he, except perhaps us – all of us – so purple and proud of him.

All of us who are associated with Western – our students, staff, faculty, alumni and volunteers and supporters – are in his debt. This is a debt that we can never repay – except by adding his kind of energy and commitment to our efforts at keeping Western at the national pinnacle to which he has brought us, and to achieving even greater success around the world in scholarship, in leadership, and in learning in the years ahead. That is what our President will want from us as he looks back on his University.

For me, he has been a wise and understanding mentor – someone who made me believe in the value of my efforts, and one who in kind and careful ways has always been teaching me about how to understand and respect the diversity of ideas, ambitions and emotions across our campus – while always coming back to core values as the rock against which we test our decisions. Clarity in complex situations – my President has always brought us this, to our university’s benefit.

As Paul leaves Western as our President, he carries with him our respect, our admiration, and our profound gratitude for all he has done for The University of Western Ontario. Yes – indeed – it is time to say to him what he has said to all of our graduates – that he carries with him, wherever he goes, the good name of the University of Western Ontario. And I must say, the work of Paul Davenport, more than anyone else I know, has made that good name – The University of Western Ontario – the proud emblem that it is.

M. le Presidente – adieu, à bientôt, bon voyage et merci beaucoup.

Fred J. Longstaffe