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## **Dr. NORMAN WAGNER:**

PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

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**T**his evening, two ancient institutions, namely, the Olympic Movement and the university, come together to honour one another. It is our great pleasure, eminent Chancellor, to invite you tonight to bestow on the distinguished President of the International Olympic Committee the highest honour which a university can give. In so doing, this University brings honour to itself. We are a very young university and it gives us a great deal of pleasure to add to our list of very distinguished alumni, an individual of the stature and reputation of His Excellency, Juan Antonio Samaranch.

Later in this ceremony reference will be made to the activities and accomplishments of our distinguished guest. It is my duty to reflect briefly on how and why universities and the Olympics should come together at all. Do we share common goals? Do we have common aspirations, or are we merely finding a convenient reason for a celebration here tonight? I am convinced that there is a great deal of common ground in all that we undertake.

Both institutions go back to antiquity.

Universities are one of the more stable institutions to have endured for the past thousand years. But, the Olympic Movement goes back even further. Like the Olympic Movement, universities too have periods of renewal and we too refer to what might be called a modern era.

We both look in two directions. We reflect upon the distant past with our drama, our ritual, our symbols, our legends, and our myths, all of which develop and become a tremendously vital part of our stability. We look to the future. Both of us are vitally concerned with the youth of the world for we know that therein lies our only future. Tonight we witness in very small measure, a part of the ritual of the University as we meet in convocation and award what is in fact our gold medal.

I am sure that there are many critics around the world who feel that both institutions spend far too much money and far too much effort on things which matter so very little. The university has poets and artists who produce items which may not create many jobs or add much to the economy of Canada. Many of our professors orate and profess and are listened to by some, but how many people

in the world care or know? Similarly, athletes run or skate in circles. In fact, they finish where they began. An achievement not understood by all. So you see, both institutions often labour in those areas which few people understand and few appreciate.

Achievement does matter. The first person to complete that circle is the winner and is justly awarded the fame and glory. But, even more importantly, a standard of excellence has been set. The champion has given us all the excitement and thrill of human achievement.

In a like manner, the university scholar makes an exciting research discovery or publishes an outstanding book and is judged by the worldwide academic community as the "champion". Again, a new standard of excellence has been set and we are all able to rejoice in the amazing ability of the human mind. For all mankind there is a measure of success.

In both the Olympic Movement and the university there is always the quest for even greater achievement. Neither the athlete nor the scholar is ever content to rest on past laurels.

Not all of us have the ability or drive to become "champions". Many may claim that such a designation could be theirs but how many are actually willing to make the extreme sacrifices required in any area of endeavour.

Only a few will be called champions, but we all have the opportunity to urge them on to even greater attainment. And, as new records are broken and new discoveries made, we can take pride from our small role in what will become the achievements of mankind.

I would like to suggest that there is also another parallel in our institutions when we reflect on the fact that being a champion means more than exerting brute strength. I find it interesting that the much talked about runner, Philippides, who is alleged to have made the trip from Marathon to Athens in 490, is remembered as much for what he said as for what he did. When he arrived on the scene, he is supposed to have said, "Rejoice! we conquer" whereupon he died. Some 400 hundred years earlier, in a scene not unlike that which transpired at Marathon, a King known as David was awaiting word from a very important battle. The runner, who insisted upon bringing the message, was a man called Ahimaaz. He was the fastest of all runners at that time and, as he had so many times before, outran all others and returned to his



*The President with, from left to right, the Chancellor of the University of Calgary. Mr. Brian Norford. President and Vice Chancellor, Mr. Norman Wagner and the Dean of the Faculty of Physical Education, President of the Canadian NOC. Mr. Roger C. Jackson.*

master. When asked by the King as to the outcome of the battle, Ahimaaz stammered and said, "I saw a great tumult, but I don't know what happened". Fast he was, but a champion he was not, and as a result very few of you in this room have ever heard of Ahimaaz.

More than one individual has pointed out that countless people in our world seem to turn from page one of their newspaper, where they read of turmoil and grief to the sports pages. We have all wondered why. Many scholars have suggested that in so doing, temporarily, at least, conflicts seem to be resolved and perfection is attained. If page one tells us that all is in turmoil, the sports pages tell us that there is a clear winner, that the battle has been resolved, that all is in order. We cannot tolerate a tie. Somehow, even if it requires overtime, we want a winner to emerge. In this small way then, the battle takes on an importance far greater than the game itself. George Santyana, the eminent philosopher, stated that watching an athletic contest is a drama of great importance because "the whole soul is stirred by a spectacle that represents the basis of life". So in universities, a time comes when a grade must be assigned to a student in a class,

and a time when the student graduates or fails. We can, neither of us, live with endless indecision. At some point, even if only for a moment, we must resort to a scoring and a ranking in all that we do.

And so eminent Chancellor, I would reiterate that there are in fact numerous parallels between universities and the Olympic Movement. We both have constant challenges and conflicting demands. We understand the world of politics all too well. Occasionally we stage spectacles, events worthy of attention. And in the last analysis, the public is what sustains and determines whether or not we shall succeed. One thing is certain, more of us must become competitors and not observers. We must learn to give our all for the cause which we have chosen to pursue. We can only do so if we believe in the reason for our existence and if we believe that the rewards truly outweigh the costs. May I allude to Robert Faulkner's well known comments that "we will not merely endure, we will prevail". It is this challenge which confronts both of our institutions throughout our lives. It is the challenge which at once motivates and sustains us to become champions.

N. W.