

Each convocation period, the University of Saskatchewan Senate flex individuals to receive the highest honor or institution can bestow an honorary degree. I'd like to call up our Chancellor, Grit McCreath, to introduce the ceremony's recipient, Greg Smith.

On behalf of the Senate, I present to you Greg Smith. It is my privilege to recognize Greg Smith with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

From volunteer service to business excellence to exceptional educational leadership, Greg has long been engaged in his home community of Swift Current and with the University of Saskatchewan. Greg is an alumnus from the College of Commerce, now the Edwards School of Business, and he has given back to the University in so many ways since his graduation. He is currently a member of the Dean's Circle in the Edwards School of Business. He served on the university's Board of Governors for more than a decade and was chair from 2014 to 2017. He also served as chair of the Presidential Search Committee that selected current President Peter Stoicheff to his role.

During that time, he was viewed as a highly respected leader by his peers, and he is known for his integrity, intellect, dedication, and razor-sharp mind. In their words, he was always cool under pressure and had a level-headed, principles-based approach to leadership that helped guide the board through whatever issue was facing them that day.

Greg remains a passionate supporter of USASK and is a member of USASK's comprehensive campaign cabinet, helping lead the "Be What the World Needs" campaign. I've had the privilege of working alongside Greg as a fellow cabinet and board member, and I can say his passion and energy for the University of Saskatchewan is inspiring and contagious. Greg's leadership advanced the teaching, research, and outreach mission of the university, and we at USASK are grateful for all his contributions.

Greg's commitment to community was celebrated in 2008 when he was named Citizen of the Year by the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce, honouring his service with local organizations and his commitment as a volunteer. His involvement in the community includes serving terms as president of the Swift Current Kiwanis Club, a director for the Saskatchewan Special Olympics Games, Swift Current United Way and the Southwest Centre for Entrepreneurial Development, as well as volunteering with local arts and church organizations and as a coach in minor hockey and soccer.

A chartered professional accountant since 1983, Greg began working with Stark and Marsh CPA LLP in 1984 and was a partner in the firm from 1985 to 2019, continuing to serve as a consultant since 2020. He was also a governor of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants and past president of the Saskatchewan Institute of Chartered Accountants.

Greg served on the Educational Advisory Council for the Swift Current School Division for 12 years and was an instructor at both the University of Regina and Athabasca College.

He was recognized for a lifetime commitment to community when he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal in 2023. Greg is highly deserving of this honorary degree. Greg is joined today by his family. I know personally what a great supporter Greg's wife, Ray, has been in his journey of service.

Greg and Ray have two children who are here today. He's got his own fan club here, actually. His daughter Mallory with husband John and children Cohen and Dash and son Taylor, along with his wife Mandy.

Dr. Smith, would you please stand? (Applause) By virtue of the authority vested in me by the legislature of the province and with the consent of the Senate of this university, I admit you to the degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa and invest you with all the powers, rights, and privileges pertaining thereto. (Applause)

Sure. (Applause) I want to mix those up. It's my pleasure, Dr. Smith, to call you up for your remarks. Good morning, Tansi. Chancellor McCree, President Stoicheff, esteemed members of the platform party, honored guests, graduates, family, and friends, what a wonderful morning. First, I want to express my gratitude to the University of Saskatchewan for conferring this honorary degree upon me. When I received the letter from Dr. Julian Demkiw, informing me of Senate's decision to award me an honorary Doctor of Laws degree, I was genuinely surprised and delighted.

As grit mentioned, I'm pleased to be joined today by my wife Ray, our daughter Mallory and son-in-law John, our son Taylor, and daughter-in-law Mandy, and my brother Jeff and sister-in-law Brenda. Thank you for being here this morning. So how did I end up on this stage today? I was born in Ila Cross in northern Saskatchewan. My father served as a member of the RCMP. And in those days, members were transferred every few years. This meant that our family moved frequently from Saskatchewan to the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and northern Alberta.

Eventually, we moved to Swift Current, where I completed high school. In 1975, I moved to Saskatoon to attend the University of Saskatchewan and enrolled in the Edwards School of Business. In 1979, I earned my Bachelor of Commerce degree. I still remember the feelings of anticipation and uncertainty about my future as I received my degree from Chancellor John Diefenbaker and President Robert Begg.

I must say, both gentlemen had a very strong eyebrow game. That fall, I returned to campus to complete my accounting courses. And in the summer of 1980, Ray and I were married. We moved to Calgary, and I began articling with Clarkson Gordon, one of the national

accounting firms. I was an unremarkable student. I had an average academic record and no ambitions beyond completing my degree and finding employment that would afford us a comfortable standard of living.

I assumed when I left the University of Saskatchewan that my time in post-secondary education was complete. In reality, what I believed to be the end was simply the beginning. As I'm certain you are aware, life has a way of surprising us. While I was articling at Clarkson Gordon, one of the partners I worked with offered me some advice. He shared that over the course of my career, I would likely encounter four or five unique opportunities, opportunities that could change the trajectory of my life. He indicated that when these moments arrived, my instinct might be to say no, out of uncertainty, fear, or the belief that I wasn't ready. But he counseled me to resist that impulse and to seriously consider embracing the challenge.

One such opportunity presented in 2005, Nancy Hopkins, who was a member of the board at the time, approached me about the possibility of serving on the University of Saskatchewan's Board of Governors. My initial reaction was to say no. We have children in school. I'm busy at work. I'm already volunteering in my community. And really, what do I have to offer? As I deliberated on this unexpected call from Nancy, I remembered the advice of my colleague. If I had followed my first instinct and turned down the opportunity, I would have missed an experience that profoundly enriched my life. I agreed to serve. And in 2007, I was appointed to the Board of Governors. Serving on the board allowed me to reconnect with the University of Saskatchewan in ways I never anticipated. It was an extraordinary experience, challenging at times, but also deeply rewarding. I gained insight into the complexity of the institution, its size and significance.

And I developed a much deeper appreciation for the role our university plays in shaping our province. More importantly, I built relationships and friendships, connections that have enriched and fulfilled me. None of these would have happened if I made the easy choice and declined the invitation.

This brings me to the message I want to leave with you today. Opportunity is not reserved for a select few. Each of you will encounter pivotal moments in your life, some expected, others completely unexpected, where you'll be faced with an opportunity and a decision. These moments will shape the course of your life.

They may not be clearly evident. They might seem inconvenient or intimidating or even impossible at the time. But they will come. And when they do, I encourage you to pause, reflect, and consider saying yes. It's easy to remain comfortable where things are familiar and predictable. But growth doesn't always happen in places where we feel comfortable. It

happens when we step into the unknown, take risks, and challenge ourselves to stretch our capabilities. Be curious. Be brave. Trust that you are capable of more.

For each of you, my hope is that when those moments present themselves, you'll have the willingness to recognize them and the courage to embrace them. Whether it's a new job, a chance to move abroad, or an unexpected invitation to serve, these moments are open doors, sometimes the best decision is to walk through them.

In closing, I want to congratulate each of you. It is an honor to share this stage with you. You've reached a significant milestone today. But remember, it's only the beginning. All the best on your life's journey. Congratulations once again, and thank you.

(Applause) (Applause)

Thank you, Dr. Smith.