

# President's welcome address déjà vu from last year

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News Staff

Hundreds of new first-year students joined forces with Guba, Patches, and volunteers in brightly coloured T-shirts on Tuesday night at Hawrelak Park to show off their new school spirit during the annual President's Address.

The event capped off a two-day orientation session for high-school and transition students, and featured welcoming speeches from both the President of the University, Indira Samarasekera, and Michael Janz, President of the Students' Union.

The program opened with remarks from the SU Vice-President (Student Life) Chris Le, who thanked the Orientation volunteers and invited everyone to choose their own WoW, the theme for this year's Week of Welcome.

"The WoW theme is Choose Your Own WoW," Le said. "At this point in your life, you get to choose your own adventure."

After a brief performance by the

U of A Cheer Team, Janz took the stage to discuss how education is the key to being able to make change in the world.

"At the end of the day, the difference between barbarism and peace comes down to one factor; education," Janz stated. "The problems that plague our world—disease, poverty, famine, global warming—these are the problems that education can solve."

Janz also encouraged students to follow their own path and get involved in the campus community.

"Take the degree that you want to take. Don't be afraid to try new classes or a new program. You will be enlightened by the subjects you had no conception of back in high school," Janz said.

A standing ovation greeted President Samarasekera, who took to the stage following Janz. She provided warm words of welcome to the new students on behalf of the U of A, and energized them to accept the changes that lie ahead. Her comments greatly

mirrored those that she made at the same time last year.

"This University of Alberta is going to change your life," Samarasekera said. "And you, every single one of you, are going to change the lives of everyone around you."

As she had done last year, Samarasekera called on students to realize their talents and potential, and to be proud of the qualities that could lead them on to success.

"Passionate students, raise your hand! Energetic students, raise your hand!" Samarasekera said. "Daring students, raise your hand! Courageous students, raise your hand!"

"I can see tomorrow's politicians, leaders, scientists, artists, and businessmen. I see students who know how to think."

Samarasekera passed on advice to students by touching on several different aspects of university life, including knowledge from classrooms and from peers. She also emphasized the importance of discovering oneself within the context



MIKEOTTO

**IT TOLD YOU SO** Samarasekera reiterated much of her message from last year.

of postsecondary education.

"The most important [thing is that]—you are here to learn about yourself," Samarasekera said. "I will make sure that you have the best professors and the best classrooms and the best libraries and the best student services possible. But you have to do your

part: find out who you are, where you fit in this big, crazy world."

The evening ended with a short performance by the University of Alberta Mixed Chorus and a candle lighting ceremony to represent the spirit and energy of the U of A campus.

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