Thank you, and thank you for joining us today to see for yourself the future of learning at Curtin!

I joined Curtin as the Vice Chancellor just four weeks ago, moving back to Western Australia after more than 20 years at the University of Queensland. One of the first questions people ask is why Curtin?

There are many answers to that question, but what we are focusing on today was key!

Curtin has a well-established reputation as an international university that is bold, future-focussed and innovative. It is the foundation on which this university was conceived, and this commitment, along with its academic strength, has enabled Curtin to grow to become not only the largest university in WA, and importantly, the most sought after destination among school leavers.

As Jon said, our vision is to be a recognised international leader in research and education. A bold vision indeed for a comparatively young university - however we already have a strong global focus.

In 2013, Curtin had 64,000 students, including 17,000 international students from 120 countries. This is the third largest international student population of any Australian university. While most attended our Bentley campus, many were enrolled at one of Curtin’s other six campuses in Australia, Singapore and Malaysia, or through our partners in Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong.

Our student population is very diverse: school leavers, mature age students – who make up 50 percent of our enrolments – and both undergraduate students and an increasing number of PhD students. Our student body includes students from non-English speaking backgrounds, those who are first in their family to attend university, and many who are dealing with the challenges of living away from home, having coming from all corners of the globe, including many rural and remote communities in WA.

Curtin ranked 25 in the world’s top 50 universities under 50 years old in the QS World University Ranking in 2013, one of only 9 Australian universities, and the only Western Australian University to rank. Curtin was also ranked by prestigious the prestigious Academic Ranking of World Universities – or the Shanghai Jiao Tong rankings – in the top 500 universities globally, which effectively puts Curtin among the top 5% of world universities, and recently was ranked in the top 50 in the world in two broad subject areas, namely earth and marine sciences and education. More school leavers, in fact 45% of them in 2014, selected Curtin as their preferred destination. Moreover, each year, for the past three years, Curtin has attracted a higher proportion of the school leavers with ATARs greater than 95.
And again in 2013 we had approximately 30,000 enrolments in the 50-plus courses offered through Curtin on-line and Curtin Open Universities Australia – some of which were established over a decade ago, and which are still unique in the world.

And that’s just the beginning.

Education globally, like so many industries, is facing dramatic change. Emerging technologies are overwhelming traditional models of education, redefining long held concepts of how best to teach and engage students.

The challenge for universities is how they embrace that technological change while still remaining relevant as places of higher learning, able to attract, inspire, retain and provide students with the skills and attributes that they need to be successful as graduates.

One reflection of the seismic shift that we are seeing in education came was the recent advent of MOOCs - Massive Online Open Courses. MOOCs, in and of themselves are not the story. The real story is what the MOOC development signals in terms of the capacity for technology to revolutionalise the accessibility and impact of education.

This was probably most eloquently captured by Thomas Friedman in the NYTimes, in January 2013, a quote that has been used by university leaders all over the world to convince governing boards and staff, alike, of the revolutionary potential of MOOCs. In Friedman’s words:

*Nothing has more potential to lift more people out of poverty — by providing them an affordable education to get a job or improve in the job they have. Nothing has more potential to unlock a billion more brains to solve the world’s biggest problems.*

These courses, pioneered by the likes of Harvard, MIT and Stanford Universities, have allowed people to learn on their own terms; for anywhere in the world; and for free.

And the students have embraced the new opportunities: Within months of the launch, 160,000 students worldwide had signed on for Stanford University's first MOOC in Artificial Intelligence

The place of MOOCs in higher education is evolving as universities grapple with issues of financial viability, long-term sustainability, assessment and authenticity. And while they are not the death knell for higher education predicted by some in 2012, they have certainly impacted the future of learning.

Curtin understands only too well the need to experiment with MOOCs. We launched our first MOOC in 2013 in partnership with the OUA platform Open2Study. The Astronomy MOOC produced some excellent results, both in terms of take-up and completion rates and continues to be offered on a four week rotation.
Late last year we launched our Australia China Trade MOOC which is now offered in Chinese as well as English and just last week we announced our latest MOOC, aimed at education students, teachers and parents, called Participating in the Digital Age.

Alongside the capacity of MOOCs to revolutionise access to knowledge and education, is the need to engage with the more complex question of what MOOCs and technology-enabled learning opportunities mean for on-campus teaching and learning.

Again to quote Thomas Friedman in the NY Times: “Institutions of higher learning must move, as the historian Walter Russell Mead puts it, from a model of “time served” to a model of “stuff learned.” Because increasingly the world does not care what you know. Everything is on Google. The world only cares, and will only pay for, what you can do with what you know.”

Given this imperative, I was delighted to find that Curtin is committed to ensuring the value add of the campus experience, by focusing on the so-called flipped classrooms. Essentially, what this means is that classes focus not on the delivery of information – which can now largely be done online – but on active strategies that engage students with the core material, through collaboration, debate, and problem-solving.

And, furthermore, through our industry partnerships we are seeking to meet graduate outcomes with the changing expectations of employers, by incorporating leadership development opportunities and work integrated learning experiences for all students at Curtin.

MOOCs and a focus on the re-conceptualising the on-campus learning environment are two core components of the learning transformation that is taking place at Curtin – the third is the commitment to meeting the needs of students however and whenever they choose Curtin’s courses—on one of our global campuses, or from anywhere in the globe.

In 2013 Curtin students accessed 1.5million online i-lectures and of the more than 6 million logins to Blackboard in 2013, our student learning system, more than a quarter of those were from a mobile device – a phone, ipad or other tablet - evidence of how much students are embracing technology.

Just as businesses must meet the expectations of their customers, educational institutions must be focused on the needs and demands of their students.

This is the future of learning at Curtin.

In the 1800s, theatre shows and carnivals tricked audiences into believing they were seeing a ghost by using mirrors to reflect a life-like image from the floor of the stage into the air.
Today an evolution of this same technique is being used in telepresence conferencing – allowing people, seemingly, to be in two or more places at once, anywhere in the world.

High end video conferencing, three-dimensional simulations and blended realities will compliment traditional online learning to encourage collaboration and enhance the learning experience for all Curtin students whether they attend classes at one of our campuses or study from elsewhere in the world.

By 2017 we plan to engage one million learners globally – all accessing a high quality, innovative learning experience through Curtin University from wherever they choose, and on their own terms!

It is this commitment to embracing creativity, innovation and the potential of technology that will ensure that we meet our goal of being a recognised international leader in education. I look forward to working with you all to implement this vision.

Thank you.