

Brescia Alumnae Homecoming Lunch Florentine Strzelczyk remarks

Thank you, Shirley for your introduction. I am Florentine Strzelczyk, Provost and Vice-President Academic at Western University and I am delighted to join you and provide a warm and genuine welcome on behalf of the Western community.

Homecoming is always a special time, and this year's celebrations are particularly significant, as we welcome Brescia into the Western family.

We recognize the importance of Brescia's legacy in London and around the world and we are excited to establish new traditions together.

In navigating the integration of Brescia University College with Western University, I co-led much of the collaborative efforts alongside Brescia's President, Laretta Frederking.

Throughout those many months last year, I had the opportunity to connect with students and graduates who spoke of their connection to their alma mater.

What I heard was that your time at Brescia was transformative. You made this campus home. You made lifelong relationships. You studied and worked hard. And you created lasting memories that shaped the person you are today.

Recognizing the importance of this place in your lives, I wanted to take a moment today to share some updates on a few aspects of the integration that are intended to honour and preserve Brescia's rich academic and community history.

The \$25 million Legacy Fund, to support scholarships, bursaries and programming for underrepresented or disadvantaged groups, will carry on the legacy of the Ursuline mission.

The Fund has been set up as an endowment and, as part of the currently underway budget planning process, Western will review our financial aid program and incorporate the Brescia Legacy Fund beginning next year.

Western is also moving ahead with the creation of the Brescia Museum and Ursuline Archives, to be housed in the deconsecrated chapel.

Eventually housing artifacts and archives related to Brescia's history, I am pleased to report that Nicholson Sheffield Architects have been retained, and planning meetings kicked off just last week. We will focus our preliminary work on the main floor with particular emphasis on accessibility, as well as mechanical and electrical considerations.

Additionally, Western's new Chief Librarian has identified an Archivist to work with us to ensure the success of this important project.

With respect to the most important aspect of this historic integration – the people – I am pleased to share that we warmly welcomed the 700 incoming students to Western earlier this month, including more than 400 who joined the newly established Brescia School of Food and Nutritional Sciences.

Earlier this summer we were delighted to welcome 35 new faculty and 80 staff colleagues, who have all settled in wonderfully within the Western community.

And along with these staff, students and faculty, I want to warmly welcome the Brescia network of alumnae, who together are more than 8,000 women strong.

You have now joined the greater Western alumni community, and we look forward to maintaining strong connections with you as part of this community.

This year, we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of Western Homecoming! Although traditions have evolved over the years, one thing remains constant: the support of our alumni community that shows unwavering passion for their alma mater.

Western remains committed to honouring the legacy and work of the Brescia community as we move forward in this new chapter together.

Before I conclude, I want to take a brief moment to acknowledge the volunteers whose efforts made today's luncheon such a success:

- Shirley Gelinis
- Michelle Devos
- Marcia Gibson
- Theresa Klachan
- Holly Little

Thank you, and I hope you enjoy today's celebrations!