

Dezso J. Horvath: Celebrating the career of a pioneer in management education

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He turned Schulich School of Business into a global business school and expanded its reach and influence around the world, earning him an International Dean of the Year award. He spearheaded the development of first-of-their-kind management degrees and programs, and helped make Schulich a world leader in the field of responsible business.



Dezso J. Horváth

Dezso J. Horváth, who will step down June 30 after 32 years as dean of York University's business school, has left a lasting legacy in management education. His tenure makes him the longest-serving dean of any major business school in the world – a remarkable feat.

His most significant achievement was transforming Schulich into a truly global business school by making it one of the earliest to focus on international business and expanding its global footprint. He extended the school's global reach and influence through the establishment of satellite centres in India, China, South Korea, Mexico and Brazil, and fostered academic exchange agreements with more than 80 leading international business schools in close to 40 countries. Under his leadership, Schulich became the first leading international business school from outside India to deliver an MBA degree in that country, and in 2014, it opened a new campus in Hyderabad. For his achievements in this regard, the Governor General's office awarded Horváth the Order of Canada, one of the country's highest civilian honours, and proclaimed his pivotal role in cementing "the school's reputation as one of the leading educational institutions in the world."

During Horváth's tenure, Schulich created a number of pioneering programs, including Canada's first International MBA and International BBA degrees, as well as North America's first-ever cross-border Executive MBA degree, the Kellogg-Schulich Executive MBA, which was ranked as the No. 1 EMBA program in the world in 2015 by *The Economist* magazine. Claiming that innovation was part of Schulich's DNA, Horváth also oversaw the launch of numerous ground-breaking specializations and programs, including one of the world's first-ever specializations in global mining management, as well as degrees such as the Master of Business Analytics and the Master of Real Estate and Infrastructure.



In 2014, Schulich opened a new campus in Hyderabad

The school became a trailblazer in the field of responsible business, as one of the first business schools in the world to incorporate business ethics and environmental sustainability into its curriculum and programs. Under Horváth's leadership, Schulich attracted funding to establish a Chair in business sustainability and a professorship in business ethics at a time, during the early 1990s, when responsible business was not considered mainstream business practice.

Nearly a decade later, in 2003, Hewlett-Packard endowed a Chair in Corporate Social Responsibility at Schulich. The endowment was announced by then CEO **Carly Fiorina**, who stated: "This Chair represents our profound belief that many of the great ideas for the next generation of corporate social responsibility will come from within the four walls of this school." Another Chair in corporate governance was added later that decade, firmly establishing the school's leadership in a field that was rapidly growing in importance, particularly following the economic meltdown of 2008.

When Schulich was ranked No. 1 in the world in Responsible Business in 2009 by the Aspen Institute, a Washington-D.C.-based think tank, it was universal recognition of the school's cutting-edge leadership in teaching and research in this area. That global leadership led to Schulich's collaboration with McKinsey & Company years later on the publication of the book *Re-Imagining Capitalism*. The book explored innovative new ideas and best practices of responsible business from international business leaders, and top academics in the field.

The dean also transformed the school's research culture, using corporate funds and endowments to create research Chairs. He created a number of Centres of Excellence in areas where the Schulich was considered a world leader – global business, responsible business and real estate and infrastructure, for instance – as well as new and emerging areas such as business analytics and artificial intelligence, where the school was an early leader in curriculum, research and teaching.

During his time as dean, Horváth attracted international business leaders – including **Ratan Tata** – to join his advisory boards. **Marshall (Mickey) Cohen**, a former president and CEO of The Molson Companies Limited and former Chair of the Board of Governors at York for nearly a decade, helped Horváth assemble the first Dean's Advisory Council in the late 1980s. Cohen, who currently serves as Chair of the Advisory Council for The Hennick Centre for Business and Law at York, was on the search committee that recommended the appointment of Horváth as dean in 1988; he also became the founding Chair of Schulich's Advisory Council, established a year later.

As time went on, these advisory boards became a destination for accomplished business leaders that were also Schulich alumni – individuals such as **Kathleen Taylor** (MBA/LLB '84, Hon LLD '14), Chair of the Royal Bank of Canada; **Bharat Masrani** (BBA '78, MBA '79, Hon LLD '17), group president and CEO of TD Bank; and **Tom Jenkins** (MBA '87, Hon LLD '15), Chair of OpenText.



Dezső J. Horváth during the 1980s

“I have watched with awe as Schulich evolved from a good, locally focused business school into one of the leading international business schools in the world,” said Cohen. “From the overall University’s perspective, the school has been one of the pillars of York’s growth.

“I don’t believe any of this would have come to pass without Dezső Horváth’s leadership. Thirty years ago, he had a vision and he has scaled the heights of that vision,” added Cohen. “Both the school and York have been beyond fortunate to have had Dezső as the dean of Schulich.”

According to Horváth, one of his proudest accomplishments is the success of Schulich’s graduates. The school has more than 32,000 alumni living and working in more than 90 countries, as senior managers, CEOs and Chairs, as well as entrepreneurs and heads of organizations in fields including government, health, the arts and the non-profit sector – many based here in Toronto.

For all his accomplishments and contributions, Horváth was selected by the *Toronto Star* in 2014 as one of the 180 most important people, past and present, who helped shape the City of Toronto. He was also recognized as a great contributor to Canada, in 2012, with a Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal.

John Hunkin (MBA '69, Hon LLD '04), one of the school's earliest graduates and also one of its most successful, rose to the position of Chair and CEO of one of Canada's largest banks, CIBC. Over the years he maintained strong ties to his alma mater. He has chaired the school's Dean's Advisory Council for the past 25 years in addition to serving on York's Board of Governors. Hunkin believes that Horváth fits the mold of a great leader.

"Dezső Horváth has demonstrated his leadership skills and strategic effectiveness for the past thirty years," said Hunkin. "Great leaders recognize change and act on the 'new reality' to create competitive advantage. The challenge is to make the right changes quickly and relentlessly and with confidence. This takes a strong leader with strong teams operating in a culture of change."

And this, says Hunkin, is what Horváth did at Schulich while building a foundation of "first-class physical infrastructure, outstanding faculty, leading-edge courses reflecting today's new reality, and a domestic and global network of people of influence who believe in what has been built and who believe in Schulich's next 30 years."



Dean Dezső J. Horváth with Cheryl and Rob McEwen

One of Horváth's most significant recent accomplishments was overseeing the school's Leading Change Campaign, which launched in 2016 – the year of Schulich's 50th anniversary. It was the largest and most ambitious fundraising initiative in the school's history, with a goal of raising \$50 million. As the campaign prepared to wind down last week, the Schulich announced that it had not only met its fundraising target, but had far surpassed it – bringing in more than \$65 million. One of the campaign's highlights was the opening last year of the award-winning Rob and Cheryl McEwen Graduate Study & Research Building. Horváth said what he found most gratifying about the Leading Change Campaign was that it could never have succeeded without the generous

financial assistance provided by more than 2,500 of the school's own alumni. He called it a "truly inspirational show of support for their alma mater."

York University President and Vice-Chancellor **Rhonda L. Lenton** paid tribute to Schulich's outgoing dean when she addressed the school's faculty and staff in the following message: "For three decades, Dezsö has exemplified our shared commitment to creating positive change and has encouraged and inspired thousands of graduates to go out and make a better world through community-engaged, ethical and transformative business leadership. For the past 32 years, the Schulich School of Business, York University, our city and the world have benefited from his visionary leadership."

Horváth, meanwhile, is about to begin a two-and-a-half year sabbatical, during which he plans to work on several books, including a history of the school during his time as dean.



Dezsö J. Horváth, 1970s

For the one-time visiting professor from Sweden, it's been a long and incredible journey – one that saw him take the helm at Schulich and lead the School into a position of global prominence and renown. In one of his final messages to the Schulich community, Horváth gave heartfelt thanks to the faculty and staff, the students and alumni, and the many advisors and friends within the community, saying his time as dean was the "most enjoyable, rewarding and fulfilling period of my professional life," and concluding by reminding everyone that together, they built a world-class school.

"I am very proud of what we have accomplished together, proud to have known you, and proud to have worked alongside you over the past four decades," he said.