December 12, 2019

Members of the University of Regina community,

By now, many of you will have seen the message from Roger Brandvold, our Board Chair, announcing that I will be leaving the University of Regina to become President and Vice-Chancellor of Memorial University of Newfoundland, effective April 1, 2020.

My decision to leave the University of Regina was a difficult one, and one that I made after carefully considering many factors – both professional and personal. I believe it is important to share my reasons with you.

Going back to the province in which I grew up so I can be nearer to family – including my 86-year-old mother who still lives in Atlantic Canada – was an important personal factor in my decision. An equally important part of that consideration was the opportunity to be nearer to my new granddaughter. For me and for Stuart, who endured the loss of his own mother this year, it is an important time to reconnect with our Atlantic Canadian roots, and with our family who are such an important part of our lives.

That being said, the University of Regina has made a tremendous impact on our lives for more than a decade, and the personal friendships and professional relationships we have developed here simply cannot be replaced. The University, the city of Regina, and the province of Saskatchewan all welcomed us with open arms in 2008, and we do not regret for a moment our decision to come to this province. Being considered for and ultimately selected as President and Vice-Chancellor was an honour in 2008, and it has remained an honour throughout my time as President to lead – and most importantly, to serve – this wonderful institution and the people who make it so special.

I love everything about the University of Regina and the Federated Colleges. I love how compassionate and kind our faculty members and staff show themselves to be on a daily basis. I love how bright and enthusiastic our students are. I love how everyone continually challenges me to do what is best for this University and the communities it serves. I take pride in the quality of education we provide, the incredible research that our faculty members and students conduct, and the way we are helping develop the next generation of leaders for Saskatchewan and the world. And that only scratches the surface of my deep and enduring love of this place.

I also take a great deal of pride – as should every member of the University community – in our collective achievements over the past decade. Through a focus on Indigenization, we have dramatically increased the number of Indigenous students at our University, and made important steps forward in reconciliation through our efforts to Indigenize our educational environment. By continuing our long tradition of looking outward in the world, we have developed new international partnerships that have truly internationalized our campus and helped educate our students to be citizens of the world. Our focus on inclusion has made our campus more accessible for persons with disabilities, helping provide post-secondary opportunities for those who might otherwise not have had them. We have defied demographic projections for more than a decade through our enrolment growth, and have made our University a more diverse institution in the process.
We have also undertaken and completed many other significant projects together. We successfully saved the century-old College Building from demolition, and are well on the way to reopening Darke Hall to complete the College Avenue campus revitalization. We partnered with Saskatchewan Polytechnic to create an entirely new faculty – Nursing – which has been a tremendous addition to our educational offerings and has strengthened our ability to serve the larger community. We built a new residence and day care facility. We held a memorable Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences that showcased our University, city and province to a national and international audience. And things like our “Inspiring Leadership Forum,” which celebrated its tenth anniversary this year, have placed us at the forefront of Canadian universities in our efforts to support women in leadership roles.

Just as I was excited to work with you on these and many other projects, I am excited by the opportunity of taking on new challenges at Memorial – and I know that the experience I gained here will be a tremendous help as I and my new colleagues pursue those opportunities.

I believe I am leaving the University of Regina at a good time in its development. Through a great deal of hard work by many people, our budget has remained balanced for a quarter-century. Our student numbers are strong. We have made capital improvements that will have a positive impact here for decades to come. This year we hired the largest new faculty complement in many years, our research enterprise has continued to grow, and our supports for students – including the forthcoming Accommodations Test Centre – are being enhanced. With a community-developed strategic plan for the next five years well on its way to development, the time is right for a new President to act upon your collective vision. And I am confident that Dr. Thomas Chase, who has a more-than-four-decade history at our University, will provide strong and inspiring leadership in an interim capacity while the search for the next President takes place.

Most importantly, I hope that YOU believe I am leaving the University at a good time in its development. As individuals and as a community, you may not have agreed with every decision I made, or every initiative I encouraged us to undertake together. We have agreed on many things, disagreed on other issues, and I hope in most cases, found and implemented solutions that you found to be acceptable – and sometimes even ideal – for our University and its students. You may have second-guessed me, and I may at times have second-guessed myself, but it is my hope that at the end of the day – and at the end of my tenure on April 1 – you will never have had reason to doubt the sincerity and fierceness of my passion for this University. That is something I have never had reason to doubt in all of you.

In everything I have done as President, I hope I have struck the delicate balance of looking to the future while still upholding the traditions and respecting the proud history of this University. I hope that as you reflect on my time here, you will know that in every decision I made, my heart was in the right place. But I also want you to know that in the years to come, my heart will always be in TWO places – at my new institution, and here at the University of Regina.

In the meantime, however, we still have many things to accomplish together in the next few months. Over that time, you may be assured that the University of Regina will receive my full attention – and that in the months and years to come after I begin work at Memorial, the University of Regina will continue to receive all the support and advocacy I can provide.
Thank you for the time we have spent together – and for the time we will spend together over the next few months. It continues to be a wonderful gift for me and my family.

Sincerely yours, and with the utmost respect, love and appreciation,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor