

VISION STATEMENT

Dr. Nilgün Önder,

Associate Vice-President Academic

The current and future vision and goals I have adopted and would like to pursue in the Associate Vice-President Academic's office are grounded in the University of Regina's core values. These core values are: "mutual respect, integrity, and honesty; equity, diversity, and inclusion; Indigenous ways of knowing and being; and community and social responsibility" (Strategic Plan 2020-2025: All Our Relations *kahkiyaw kiwâhkômâkaninawak*). These values are also the foundation for the objectives, initiatives, and activities I pursue as well as the relations I build and maintain with colleagues, faculty members, students, staff, and community members in the role of Associate Vice-President Academic (AVPA). The University's core values are woven into the fabric of my initiatives and activities as demonstrated in the summary of my accomplishments submitted for the renewal review. I practice and pursue these values in my role as AVPA not only because they are the core values adopted by University but also because I have long integrated them into my life-philosophy, professional activities, and every-day practices. They will continue to guide my perspective, goals, and behaviour.

My second term in the AVPA position will build on the initiatives accomplished during my first term as well as the ongoing projects that require follow-up. My summary of accomplishments report indicates the direction I plan to take over the next several years. This direction aligns well with the goals of the University's Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan's Area of Focus 1 "Discovery" includes the objective of "supporting and valuing excellence in teaching". To this end, I will continue my efforts to enhance the capacity of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in a way that it can provide the pedagogical resources, tools, and professional development opportunities required by faculty. It is especially important to develop and deliver appropriate learning opportunities and resources for faculty to gain experiences in decolonizing pedagogies and curricula as called for by the Strategic Plan. High-quality "inclusive" teaching is crucial to enhancing student success, retention, and graduation. I will continue to support the CTL and academic units in working towards the realization of these goals. I also see synergy between the CTL and the new Centre for Experiential and Service Learning. I will encourage and support cooperation between the two Centres in creating resources and professional development opportunities for instructors to integrate experiential learning in their teaching and curriculum.

Related to these teaching and learning focused goals are the recommendations by the university-wide Task Force on the Future of Technology Infrastructure Supporting Teaching, Learning, and the Academic Mission of the University. As explained in my summary of accomplishments report, Created by the Provost and myself in September 2021, the Task Force set out to develop a vision

for the University's academic technology infrastructure and related supports for faculty and students. The Task Force has just completed its work and endorsed a series of recommendations. These recommendations are aimed primarily at improving the experiences of students and faculty in all modalities of teaching and learning offered at the University as well as enhancing academic technology and teaching supports. Working with the Provost and relevant units, I wish to pursue the Task Force's recommendations related to the AVPA's portfolio and also support other units taking the lead on other recommendations over the next several years.

In alignment with the Strategic Plan's call for specific strategies for increasing the rates of student retention and graduation (Area of Focus 1 (b)), I will continue to follow up on the action plans that resulted from the retention strategy development I led during the last two years. Related to this objective is also a set of strategies and concrete actions that were recommended in the two reports on Indigenous and newcomer students' successful transitions to university which I had initiated earlier. While some of the recommendations in these reports have been put into implementation, some others require ongoing follow-up because they are longer-term in nature (see my summary of accomplishments report for further information).

The AVPA is responsible for overseeing the University's academic relations with the Federated Colleges, affiliated post-secondary education institutions, and the Saskatchewan regional colleges. The position also provides support and advice to Faculties and academic units seeking academic partnerships with other education institutions in Canada (such as joint academic programs and articulation agreements). As outlined in my accomplishments summary, I have built excellent working relations with the three Federated Colleges and Gabriel Dumont Institute (an affiliate) since I came to the AVPA position. I led or contributed to a number of collaborative initiatives between the University and these institutions. For example, recently, I led the review and renewal of the agreement that governs academic relations between the University and the Luther and Campion Colleges. Throughout this process, I worked closely with the Deans of the two Colleges and the Deans of Arts, MAP, and Science. As mutually agreed, the VP (Academic) and Associate Deans of FNUniv and I are about to start drafting an academic relationship agreement the main purpose of which is to develop clear processes and procedures regarding academic relations between the University and FNUniv. I believe this agreement will further strengthen the two institutions' good relations.

Over the last two years, I have also made significant contributions to building closer relations between the University and the regional colleges. Through the High School to University Transitions Committee, I also collaborated with the Regina area school divisions on several important projects related to high school students' transitions to university. I will strive to further enhance these relationships, including creating partnerships with Saskatchewan school divisions to provide dual credit and accelerated course opportunities to high school students.

During my second term in the AVPA's office, I would like to focus more attention on identifying and creating new opportunities for collaborations with post-secondary institutions in and outside of the province in the areas of academic programming, course offerings, transfer credits etc., while continuing to further enhance existing partnerships. New and enhanced educational partnerships

could be leveraged to increase educational opportunities for Indigenous peoples and rural communities in northern and remote regions of the province, to recruit students from other post-secondary institutions to appropriate laddering programs at the University (e.g., through articulation agreements); and to create new learning and research opportunities for our faculty and students. A recently created Academic Program and Articulation Officer position will support me in this endeavour. Relying on the Academic Program and Articulation Officer and in collaboration with the Enrolment and Recruitment Office and the UAC, I will also make sure that we have a specific strategy for promoting our new and existing academic partnerships internally and externally to help recruit students as well as to enhance the University's good reputation.

Sincerely

Dr. Nilgün Önder

2 May 2022

A SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Dr. Nilgün Önder, Associate Vice-President (Academic)

1 July 2018-present

Dear Colleagues

I am honoured to be considered for the Associate Vice-President Academic position (AVPA) for the second-term. It has been a pleasure to serve the University in this role for the past four years. During my first term, the AVPA's portfolio has evolved to include a range of new responsibilities. The nature of this portfolio allowed me to initiate a number of major projects that I identified as priority based on the University's Strategic Plan objectives (the 2015-2020 and 2020-2025 Strategic Plans). This report focuses on bigger projects I initiated or led rather than summarizing all my accomplishments and activities during my first term. I realize that this report is somewhat lengthy for a "summary of accomplishments". The reason for this is that in my view, it is important to provide adequate background information for the projects included in this report and to explain their objectives and outcomes, and the relevant context.

The AVPA's portfolio requires collaboration with many units and colleagues at the University including the Federated Colleges and engagement with a number of external institutions such as the high education institutions affiliated with the University and the Saskatchewan regional colleges. In the process of initiating, carrying out, and completing my projects and activities, I worked with many colleagues and units across the University and beyond. It is not possible to acknowledge all my collaborators and those who contributed to my accomplishments in a variety of ways. Without their support and contributions, I could not have accomplished what I have accomplished in my role as AVPA. I thank them all at the outset.

This report is organized into three major sections according to the focus of my activities. The first section "Teaching, Learning, and Academic Supports" explains my major projects aimed primarily at enhancing and supporting the teaching and learning vocation of the University and my initiatives to create resources and tools for academic units, academic administrators, and faculty (but not exclusively). The second section "Student Retention, Success, and Experiences" focuses on initiatives and activities that seek to improve student retention and graduation through enhancing student success and experiences. The third section is a summary of my accomplishments concerning the University's relations with the Federated Colleges, Gabriel Dumont Institute (affiliate), and the Saskatchewan regional colleges. The final section is a supplementary part that briefly outlines some of my "emergency" activities in the pandemic situation of 2020 and 2021. These activities were mostly concerned with the creation and provision of resources, guidelines, and supports needed by faculty, students, and staff in the pandemic situation.

It is important to note that all these initiatives and projects are connected to each other in important ways. They often build on or complement each other.

TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ACADEMIC SUPPORTS

Centre for Teaching and Learning

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) has been one of my main areas of focus since my appointment as AVPA. Teaching is at the core of the University's vocation and quality teaching is key to student success. To enhance and support the quality of instruction and teaching innovation, it is important to provide faculty with the necessary pedagogical resources, tools, and professional development opportunities. Therefore, building the CTL became a high priority for me.

When I began my position, the CTL had been on hold for about one and half years while undergoing a review. It existed in name only; it had no staff, no budget, and no office space. While I continued university-wide consultations on the CTL Review Report and its recommendations, which had been released in 2018, to get the Centre off the ground, I appointed an interim CTL Coordinator and obtained some funding and an office space for the Centre. As the Centre was getting ready to start functioning again, I regularly met with the CTL Steering Committee to get advice and input. I consistently provided support and guidance for the CTL Coordinator with regard to CTL programming and activities. As AVPA, I also had the oversight of the CTL budget and was responsible for preparing its annual budget request. Based on the CTL Review Report and my consultations, my first CTL budget request (2019-20) included a full-time Director position, an Educational Developer position, and a half-time administrative assistant position. The requested positions were approved subsequent to the University budget process. The Center thus received its first full-time Director position (to my knowledge), an Educational Developer position (first such position in the CTL), and a half-time administrative assistant position.

There was an interregnum in my role as the out-of-scope supervisor of the CTL from August 2020 to May 2021. This was as a result of the transfer of the CTL to the portfolio of a new AVP position called AVP Teaching and Student Analytics. During this period, I supported and advised the new AVP colleague with regard to the CTL. Following the discontinuation of the AVP TSA position, the CTL was transferred back to the AVPA portfolio as of May 2020. At the time of this transfer, the Centre did not have a director and any other staff. I resumed my efforts to build the Centre so that it could provide the teaching supports required by faculty; the sudden switch to remote teaching in the context of the pandemic further highlighted the importance of pedagogical as well as academic technology supports for instructors. I launched an internal search for the Director position and the search resulted in the appointment of Dr. Alec Couros effective 1 September 2020. Dr. Couros is Professor of Education and an internationally renowned scholar in the area of digital educational technologies. The Educational Developer position was also filled in June 2021 following a national search. A search for another Educational Developer position (designated for Indigenous candidates) is under way. This new position was created based on the recommendations of the student retention plan which I led as outlined later in this report. The Indigenous Educational Developer will support and advise faculty members in integrating

Indigenous ways of knowing into curriculum and teaching; the incumbent will also design teaching and learning supports targeted at Indigenous learners.

I continue to support the CTL to ensure that the Centre is a robust institution offering quality programming, teaching development opportunities, and curriculum design supports to faculty members and academic units . With the support of President Keshen and Provost Gregory, the CTL will soon get a place of its own in a location that is visible and accessible to faculty and students.

Open Education and Publishing Program (originally Open Textbook Publishing Program)

The Open Textbook Publishing (OTP) program was created in 2015 through a multi-year provincial grant. While the AVPA had the oversight of the program, it was being managed by the UR Press with the support of a contracted consultant. When I inherited the program, it had become to a large extent inactive because of the capacity constraints faced by the UR Press at that time. With the consent of all the parties concerned, I assumed direct responsibility for running the program with support from the consultant, who was excellent. The primary purpose of the program was to provide funding and relevant supports to faculty members wishing to create or adapt open textbooks or supplementary teaching resources for use in U of R and Federated College courses. The goal was to provide students with quality textbooks free of any cost to them. The awarding of funding was (is) based on a competitive process. In Winter 2019, I relaunched the program through a new round of call for proposals and instituted a clear and adjudicated process for the funding competition. As the program became active again with new open textbook projects funded through the program, it became necessary to hire a manager instead of relying on the services of a consultant contracted on an hourly fee. In fact, since the consultant quit in February 2020, I had to manage the program on my own for several months until the hiring of a part-time program manager in June 2020. Under the skilled and passionate management of the Program Manager, Isaac Mulolani, the OTP program grew and became more robust. As the government funding also continued, the OTP program became the Open Education and Publishing program (OEP). In addition to providing funding for the creation or adaptation of open textbooks and other types of open educational resources used in teaching, the program offers workshops, one-on-one consultations, and technical support to academic staff wanting to use the Pressbooks (a major open educational resource (OER) publishing platform subscribed by the OEP). The OEP also started creating and supporting various opportunities for higher-level undergraduate and graduate students to participate in creating OERs under the supervision of a faculty member. This open pedagogy approach that encourages students' direct involvement in the development of OERs is gaining ground across many higher education institutions as a form of experiential learning. It is also important to note that the OEP Manager collaborates with similar programs at other Canadian universities and with the Archer Library, thus helping to disseminate and promote the OERs created by the U of R OEP program. I am proud to note that the open textbooks created through the OEP program funding and support are being adopted at other education institutions in Canada and abroad.

I transferred the OEP program to the CTL in May 2021 to take advantage of the synergies between the two. Working closely with the OEP Manager and the CTL Director, I oversee the program and provide advice and support toward the realization of the program goals.

(<https://www.uregina.ca/oer-publishing/open-textbook-program.html>)

Creation of a Microcredentials Framework

One year into my appointment as AVPA, as I became more aware of the growing role of microcredentials at many education institutions in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, I started doing research on the topic. This included finding and reviewing recent studies, reports, and microcredential offerings at other education institutions in Canada and abroad. My initial purpose was to explore potential benefits and challenges with respect to developing and offering microcredentials at the University of Regina. This work was soon tied into my initiative on student retention and my subsequent role in the University's strategic enrolment planning (outlined later in this report). In the process of leading the initiative to develop an evidence-based and data informed report and recommendations on student retention and graduation, the benefits of shorter and smaller credentials laddering to a degree became clearer to me. Furthermore, the University's new Strategic Plan (2020-2025) called for "enhance[ing] flexibility of learning through the development of micro- and meso- credentialing options" (Area of Focus Area 5, Social Impact (c)). Accordingly, I created a working group on microcredentials in July 2020. I also served as the group chair. The purpose of the working group was to develop an institutional framework for microcredentials that would define microcredentials, establish the credential requirements, and clarify the relationship between microcredentials and other credentials that are smaller than a degree (such as certificates and diplomas). At this time, this initiative also aligned well with the Registrar's continuing work on creating a comprehensive framework for all undergraduate credentials conferred by the University, which aimed to ensure consistency, transparency, and clarity. A clear framework for both credit and professional development types of microcredentials would also aid the CCE's goal of creating microcredentials to serve the needs of mid-career professionals with regard to upgrading, upskilling, or upgrading their knowledge and skills. The coincidence of several colleagues' and units' objectives and initiatives was an asset; it significantly facilitated the development of a microcredentials framework by the working group, which also included the Registrar and the CCE Director. The working group completed drafting the microcredentials framework in April 2021. We presented the framework to the Deans' Council, CCAM, CCUAS, the FGSR Council, and finally Executive of Council. The framework received very positive feedback. The undergraduate for-credit microcredentials section of the microcredentials framework was incorporated into the Registrar's credentials framework that was formally approved by the Executive of Council and the Senate. Currently, based on the microcredentials framework, several academic units are working on developing stackable or laddering type of for-credit microcredentials. Based on the findings and recommendations of the Retention and Graduation Report of July 2020, I believe such microcredentials will support student retention and success as well as recruitment.

I would like to note that I am currently exploring the idea of laddering microcredentials as a pathway to the University's degree programs for Grade 11 & 12 high school students taking the University's dual credit / high school accelerated courses (explained later in this report).

As a final note on this topic, after completing its mandate, the microcredentials working group became the microcredentials advisory group; this advisory group's role is to keep abreast of new developments in the rapidly evolving area of microcredentials, to update the microcredentials framework when necessary, and to provide advice. I chair the group and my office provides administrative support.

Academic Technologies, Governance, and Supports for Faculty

As I have immersed myself more in issues involving academic technologies and academic technology governance over the past several years, I identified an important gap. The University Information Technology Steering Committee, the main decision making body on the adoption and upgrading of information technologies, made its decisions based on the recommendations and assessments of technology-related requests offered by a committee called General Administrative Systems and Processes (GASP). In the absence of an academic-technology focused committee with academic unit representatives as members, GASP also took on the task of reviewing requests and making recommendations regarding academic technologies including core technologies such as the learning management system. Based on the principle that input from faculty and academic staff into decision-making on academic technologies is crucial to the selection, adoption, and upgrading of academic technologies, I initiated conversations on creating a standing committee on academic technologies that would include academic representatives from Faculties and academic units. Following consultations with stakeholders including the Deans' Council, the Governance Committee for Academic Technologies (GCAT) was officially created with the approval of UITSC in April 2021. Like GASP, GCAT reports to UITSC. The overall purpose of GCAT is to identify the academic technology needs of faculty and students and to ensure that these needs are systematically integrated into institutional decision-making related to academic technologies. In my role as AVPA, I co-chair this committee with the AVP Information Services. GCAT had its first meeting in November 2021 and normally meets four times a year. GCAT is poised to play a major role in the governance of academic technologies. Working together with GCAT and heads of relevant units (specifically IS, CCE, the Archer Library, and CTL), I will continue my efforts to contribute to developing an academic technology governance system that is transparent, consistent, and representative of core stakeholders and an accompanying process that systematically gathers and evaluates input from faculty, students, and other stakeholders regarding academic technology needs. The overall objective is to make the best possible decisions concerning the technology infrastructure supporting the academic mission of the University and related supports for students and faculty, and academic staff.

Academic Analytics /Academic Programming, Teaching, and Student Success

Another area where I have become quite active over the last three years is data and data analytics as related to teaching, learning, and student success. This interest was initially driven by my data needs involving various projects, such as retention planning, transitions of newcomer and Indigenous students to university, the fit & gap analysis and situational analysis reports of the Strategic Enrolment Planning (SEP) Academic Group which I led (2020-21) and a series of action plans that came out of the SEP and retention planning. In the process, I became more cognizant of our institutional strengths, challenges, and gaps in this area. Subsequently, one of the action plans that were born out of the SEP Academic Situational Analysis report I prepared in consultation with the SEP Academic Group was the creation of an academic analytics and data hub. The objective is to systematically collect and analyze institutional data related to course offerings, class scheduling, student course needs, student experiences, student learning activities etc. and to use the data and data analytics to inform academic units' and administrators' decisions and actions in related areas (such as curriculum planning, student retention and degree completion etc.). The goal is to provide academic units and academic administrators with the tools needed for making evidence-based and data-informed decisions in serving the academic mission of the University in the best possible way. To this end, I have been working with the Office Institutional Research (OIR) to build an academic analytics and data hub. An immediate outcome of this collaboration was a test subscription to a labour market trends analytics platform in June 2021. This platform's data analytics includes knowledges, competencies, and skills required for careers in different fields. Some Faculties and units have started using this platform in reviewing their academic programming and creating new credentials. In late April 2022, the OIR Director and I also submitted a proposal for funding from the University's multiyear provincial funding allocation to support the building of the data hub in the most cost efficient way possible. (At the time of writing, decision on the proposal is pending). Mindful of the University's current fiscal situation, our funding proposal was focused on building capacity for generating predictive data concerning which courses are needed by how many students each semester. The intent is to provide the academic units with the predictive data to aid them in planning course offerings, number of class sections and number of seats in class sections; the desired outcome is to make sure that students can take the courses they need for progression and graduation in a timely fashion. I will continue my efforts, in collaboration with my colleagues in the relevant units (more particularly OIR and Information Services), to build an academic analytics hub. I believe that this data hub could serve as an important resource or tool for the University to better serve our students. This objective is also embedded in the mandate and proposed recommendations of the Task Force on the Future of Technology Infrastructure Supporting Teaching, Learning, and the Academic Mission of the University as outlined in the section that follows.

The Task Force on the Future of Technology Infrastructure Supporting Teaching, Learning, and the Academic Mission of the University

The University of Regina has gained new experiences and insights from the predominantly remote and online teaching of the first one and a half years of the pandemic. This overall experience also

helped us to more clearly see both gaps and strengths of the University's technology infrastructure supporting teaching and learning. In September 2021, to take opportunity of the University community's new know-how and competencies, Provost Dr. Gregory and I created the Task Force on the Future of Technology Infrastructure Supporting Teaching, Learning, and the Academic Mission of the University. The Task Force's mandate was to develop a vision for the University's academic technology infrastructure and related supports for faculty and students; it would also propose recommendations aimed at realizing this vision and addressing challenges over the next five years. It would consult widely and provide opportunities for input from students, faculty, and staff throughout this process. Its recommendations would be informed by relevant data and studies. The Provost and I co-chaired the Task Force while I took the administrative lead. The Task Force was facilitated by a team of three Deloitte Consultants. Based on relevant data gathered, environmental scanning, and university-wide consultations as well as discussions and numerous brain storming exercises at the Task Force's monthly meetings, I drafted a report including a series of recommendations for the Task Force's consideration. The report received the Task Force's support at its meeting of April 22, 2022. The next step is to develop an implementation plan for the recommendations based on the prioritization suggested by the Task Force and in accordance with available resources. The report will be disseminated soon. I believe this undertaking will make a huge contribution to improving the experiences of students, faculty, and academic staff in all modalities of teaching and learning (including in-person teaching) as well as with regard to teaching and technology supports and services.

Academic Unit Reviews

At the time of my appointment to the position of AVPA, the AVPA's role did not include any responsibilities for the academic unit review (AUR) process. The Provost was entirely responsible for overseeing this process. Recognizing that this responsibility could often be quite taxing on the Provost's time and that it could fit well with the AVPA's portfolio, the Provost and I agreed to transfer the administrative lead role to the AVPA's portfolio as of January 2020. This role includes appointing the members of the AUR team from a list of nominees recommended by the unit being reviewed, advising the unit with respect to the AUR process, ensuring that both the unit and the AUR team have the necessary information and data needed for the self-study report and the AUR report respectively. I have served as the administrative lead for part of the 2019-20 AUR cycle and the full 2020-21 and 2021-2022 AUR cycles. Since the 2020-21 AURs took place in the midst of a pandemic, the AUR teams' site visits were held virtually via Zoom. This was the first ever virtual site visit by an AUR team. To introduce the relevant campus facilities to the external reviewers, I decided to create a campus video and also an introduction video of each unit being reviewed in collaboration with the units themselves. The videos were appreciated by the external reviewers. We continued the virtual site visit format for the 2021-22 AURs except for the AUR of the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies. All the site visits were completed successfully and the review teams were appreciative of all the supports provided by my office.

Based on my last two years of experience overseeing the AUR process, I have identified some gaps in the AUR process. The AUR Policy also needs to be updated. In consultation with the

Provost and the Council Committee on Academic Mission (CCAM), I have recently drafted an updated policy. The proposed revisions will be presented to the Deans' Council at the May 11 meeting for consultation. It will then be submitted to CCAM for approval.

PD Workshops for Department and Program Heads

Having noticed that at the University, there were only very limited professional development opportunities specially designed for academic department and program heads, I initiated a series of workshops for department/program heads in collaboration with Sue Mitten (Human Resources). The overall objective was to provide department/ program heads with important relevant resources and tools. The program was composed of 6 workshops that run from late August to February 2022; each workshop was led by one or two facilitators from a relevant unit at the University. The program was launched as a pilot program to be evaluated at the end before deciding to offer it again. Based on the overall positive results of a survey of the participants, I plan to offer the program again with some modifications as suggested by the survey participants.

Academic Contracts

Soon after assuming the role of AVPA, it became clear to me that there was an urgent need to develop a process guide for the preparation and approval of academic agreements with institutions in Canada. There were varying practices across academic units with regard to academic contract templates and approval processes. Although my predecessor had initiated a conversation about the idea of a University guide, there was still a lot of work to be done. To do the groundwork, I studied different categories of agreements and a sample of agreements from different Faculties as well as relevant University policies; I also did consultations, including with the Deans' Council, the University Secretary, and the University's legal counsel. Based on the results of my investigations and consultations, I developed an Academic Contracts Guide that explains the process and procedures to be followed by contract initiators and approval authorities. In addition, the Guide includes contract templates for several categories of academic agreements (academic program, articulation, educational placement, and educational service agreements); these templates were drafted by the University's legal counsel with substantial input from me. The Guide and the contract templates not only created clarity and consistency with respect to academic contract development and approval process but also significantly facilitated academic units' and administrators' work related to academic contract development and contract writing. I also regularly provide support and advice, including help with the drafting of academic contracts.

(The Guide and the academic contract templates are found here:

https://ursource.uregina.ca/executive/Academic_Resources/Academic-Contracts.html)

STUDENT RETENTION, SUCCESS, AND EXPERIENCES

Retention Strategy Development

One of my first major projects was to develop a strategy for improving student retention and graduation in alignment with the University Strategic Plan (2015-2020)'s emphasis on student success. Student retention and success is also a major area of focus in the current Strategic Plan (2020-2025). To this end, in June 2019, I created two committees: the Advisory Council on Retention and Graduation and the Working Group on Retention and Graduation. The former was a University-wide body that included representatives from Faculties, Student Affairs, URI, and the Office of Institutional Research (OIR). The Working Group was a subcommittee of the Advisory Council and responsible for identifying and investigating student retention-related issues and then developing recommendations for improving the University's retention and degree completion rates. I chaired both committees; my office provided administrative support.

The Working Group conducted data gathering, data analysis, a survey of early leavers and dropouts, and focus groups with volunteer participants who had taken the survey. I worked with several members of the Working Group in preparing the retention report based on the findings of our research and consultations. The report identified the main reasons for students leaving the University without completing their programs and proposed a set of practical recommendations to address these reasons. After the report received the Advisory Council's support, it was released in August 2020. Subsequently, I presented the report's findings and recommendations at various forums, including the President's Town Hall. I am pleased to say that these findings and recommendations informed and continue to inform relevant decisions and actions by various units and groups at the University. (The report is found at https://ursource.uregina.ca/executive/assets/docs/pdf/AVP-Academic/Report_Retention_and_Recommendations_Final_August_2020.pdf)

In addition to initiating and leading the retention project outlined above, I took on the lead responsibility for the retention planning part of the University's Strategic Enrolment Planning (SEP). Facilitated by the RNL Higher Education Consulting firm, the SEP project was launched in January 2020. It is important to acknowledge that the SEP was initiated by AVP Student Affairs. With the agreement of all the units involved, I became the University lead for the retention planning component of the SEP. My role as the SEP/retention lead built on my retention and graduation project. The two projects complemented each other well. While the SEP/retention planning involved the development of a predictive retention model by the RNL specifically for the University of Regina, the findings and recommendations of the Retention and Graduation Report of August 2020 informed the SEP/retention planning. The SEP/retention planning process involved the creation of several working groups as well as consultations across the University. With several months of delay due to the pandemic, the SEP/retention planning was completed in May 2021 and led to five-action plans in the following areas: 1) faculty engagement in retention and CTL's role; 2) instruction and design of introductory courses; 3) creation of an introduction to university course; 3) enhancing academic advising; and 4) student orientation redesign. Since then, important steps have been taken to realize the objectives of these action plans.

As part of the ongoing retention planning, I led the creation of a standing Retention Advisory Committee, which was officially launched in September 2021. Its role is to oversee implementation of the retention action plans and other retention related activities and initiatives at the University and to support and encourage strategies, initiatives, and measures that enhance student retention and timely degree completion. The AVP (Academic) is the executive sponsor of the Committee and shares the chair seat with a committee member. The Retention Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the Deans' Council.

To implement the retention action plans, I worked with a RAC subcommittee to develop a proposal to receive funding through the University's special multi-year provincial fund. This proposal titled "UR University Ready" focused on improving retention through enhancing first-year student experiences in four main areas: quality instruction of introductory courses; supports for faculty and students with respect to Indigenous ways of knowing and academic supports for Indigenous students; academic advising; and student orientation. The first two of the proposed action plans were awarded funding. Subsequently, the action plan for improving the quality of instruction in introductory courses led to the launching of the UR² Fellows program by the CTL in April 2022. The program is a three-year pilot that aims to provide a cohort of faculty members with professional development opportunities to adopt best teaching practices in introductory courses; the UR² Fellows program also seeks to improve the value of teaching introduction-level courses. The outcome of this pilot will be assessed towards the end of the third year. The second funded action plan is the creation of an Educational Developer (Indigenous) position in the CTL.

Student retention and success will continue to be a major area of focus for my activities. My continuing activities and initiatives in this area align well with the University Strategic Plan's emphasis on supporting and enhancing student success, including improving supports for Indigenous students (Area of Focus 1 (b) and Area of Focus 2 (a)).

During 2020-2022, I was also involved in the RNL-facilitated SEP project. I served on the SEP Steering Committee. I also provided leadership for the SEP Academic Group (one of the five SEP working groups). The Academic Group met regularly and frequently during September-December 2020. In consultation with the group, I prepared the Academic Situational Analysis Report (31 single-space pages). My work for this report included finding and analyzing relevant internal and external data (including Statistics Canada's statistics on labour market trends and post-secondary education in Canada) and synthesising the Academic Group discussions and ideas. Based on the Academic Situational Analysis Report, the Academic Group identified six areas for SEP action plans: academic analytics and data; curriculum streamlining; stackable/laddering credentials; academic program and articulation agreements; academic technologies; and stakeholder engagement. I chaired the Curriculum Streamlining and Stackable Credentials action group and joined the Academic Analytics and Data action group as a member. I also advised the other academic action groups. The action plans were presented to the SEP Steering Committee and VPs in April 2021.

I have undertaken or led a series of activities towards the realization of several of these action plans: academic analytics and data; stackable/laddering credentials (more specifically microcredentials); and academic program and articulation agreements. I have outlined my main activities regarding the first two areas earlier in this report. With respect to the last action plan, it is important to note that as the AVPA, I am responsible for providing advice and support to academic units during the process of developing academic agreements with other education institutions in Canada; I also review and approve such agreements before they are signed by the Provost as the institutional signing authority. As recommended by the academic program and articulation agreements action plan, a new academic program and articulation agreements officer position was created through funding from the University's special multi-year provincial grant. This two-year term position reports to the AVPA. I launched a search for the position a week ago. I expect that the Academic Program and Articulation Agreements officer will make a significant contribution to identifying and developing opportunities for new partnerships with other high education institutions and support student recruitment through articulation agreements laddering to a degree at the University of Regina. To this end, the officer will collaborate closely with Faculties, the Registrar's Office, and Enrolment and Recruitment Services.

Indigenous and Newcomer Students' Transitions to University

The High School to University Transitions Committee (HSUTC) has been an important part of my initiatives. This committee is composed of the superintendents and several other representatives of the four school divisions in Regina and the Regina area and representatives from various units at the University and the Federated Colleges. In my role as AVPA, I co-chair it together with a school division superintendent. The AVPA's office provides administrative support. When I first became the co-chair of the HSUTC, the committee was in search of a vision and direction for its role. On the advice of the committee, I initiated some changes in its terms of reference and composition. This also allowed me to propose the creation of two ad hoc subcommittees: the Subcommittee on the Transitions of Indigenous Students and the Subcommittee on the Transitions of Newcomer Students. The purpose of the two subcommittees would be to identify the main challenges faced by Indigenous students and newcomer students when transitioning from high school to university and develop recommendations aimed at supporting and facilitating Indigenous and newcomer students' successful transitions. I assumed the leadership role for both subcommittees. These subcommittees were composed of members with relevant expertise and experiences from several relevant units of the University and relevant senior representatives from the school divisions (mostly members who were not on the HSUTC). With the approval of the HSUTC, I invited the Senior Indigenous Advisors of the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education to join the Subcommittee on the Transitions of Indigenous Students and they accepted the invite. The two subcommittees met regularly from September 2019 to July 2020. In addition to researching relevant literature, reports, and data, we conducted a series of semi-structured focus groups with high school students from the participating school divisions as well as a group of University of Regina students. (Students were selected based on a particular sampling method and voluntary participation).

Based on the findings of our research and the results of discussions in the committees, I authored two reports. These reports provide the findings of our research, offer an analysis of these findings, and propose a set of recommendations based on the research results and committee discussions. It is important to note that the two subcommittees agreed that the recommendations would be of practical and feasible nature; and they are. The recommendations fall into three categories according to the allocation of responsibilities for their implementation: 1) recommendations for high schools; 2) recommendations for the University; and 3) recommendations that require joint actions by participating high schools and the University. The two reports were endorsed by the HSUTC; subsequently, they were released in July 2020 and widely disseminated.

(These reports are located here: https://ursource.uregina.ca/executive/assets/docs/pdf/AVP-Academic/Recommendations_Indigenous_Students_Transition.pdf

https://ursource.uregina.ca/executive/assets/docs/pdf/AVP-Academic/Report_Newcomer_Students_Transition_July_2020.pdf)

While the implementation of some of the recommendations was delayed due to the pandemic, my co-chair and I keep the recommendations on the HSUTC's agenda and follow up on their implementation. At the April 2022 meeting of the HSUTC, the school division representatives confirmed that their school divisions included the recommendations relevant to high schools in their plans or strategies. On the University's side, several developments over the past two years directly contribute to achieving the objectives set by some of the recommendations for the University. These include the appointment of an AVP Indigenous Engagement, the creation of an Educational Developer (Indigenous) position in the CTL, and enhanced collaboration between the U of R and FNUniv with respect to Indigenous student supports and services. In consultation with the HSUTC and acting on the recommendations of the Report on Indigenous Students' Transitions to University, the U of R Enrolment and Recruitment Services Office developed a multi-year plan for bringing a cohort of Indigenous students from Grade 9 to 11 to the University campus. The purpose is to provide Indigenous high school students with opportunities to experience university life under a plan designed specially for Indigenous students. In alignment with the recommendations of both the Reports on Newcomer and Indigenous Students' Transitions, I am currently working on a two-day writing camp for incoming students. The plan is to offer the camp in a hybrid format (remote and in-person) in August. A summer writing camp had also been recommended in the 2018 report of the University Writing Skills Task Force which I had chaired prior to my AVPA appointment. I am leading the ongoing work on the writing camp plan in collaboration with the Writing Supports Coordination Committee of which I am the executive sponsor.

Zero-Cost Material (ZCM) Courses

Working with the Registrar and in collaboration with several Deans and URSU, I launched the Zero-Cost Material Courses (ZCM) initiative in the Winter 2020 semester. ZCM courses are

courses that use easily accessible textbooks and/or other teaching materials available to students free of any cost. In this way, the ZCM project supports accessibility to post-secondary education by reducing the education costs for students. By providing cost-free textbook options, the Open Education and Publishing Program and the Library make excellent contributions to this initiative.

The list of ZCM courses has been growing as can be seen in the table below.

Semester	Courses	Enrolment
Fall 2020	65	2,917
Winter 2021	66	2,985
Spring/Summer 2021	18	618
Fall 2021	81	3,756

Currently, the list is prepared manually following a call for ZCM courses before the start of each semester. Thanks to the Registrar’s Office, starting in the Winter 2023 semester, instructors will be able to designate a course as ZCM in the Banner system at the time of class scheduling on a voluntary basis.

Dual Credit and High School Accelerated Courses

A more recent area of focus for my work is dual credit and high school accelerated (HSXL) courses offered by the University through CCE. This activity started with a brief analytical report on dual credit/HSXL courses I prepared for President Keshen in November 2021. My ongoing efforts to enhance the University’s relationships with high schools and regional colleges in Saskatchewan has aligned well with the President’s vision to develop the University’s dual credit course program as a recruitment strategy. Following a high-level University visit to Campus Regina Public in December 2021, I drafted an MOU to create a collaborative dual credit/HSXL programming for the Regina Public School Division. The MOU will be finalized soon.

Working with CCE, I initiated a consultation meeting with high school principals and guidance counsellors from across Saskatchewan to discuss opportunities as well as challenges regarding Grades 11/12 students’ enrolment in dual credit courses. The meeting, which was held on 23 March 2022 and also attended by the President and the Provost, was very productive and generated significant ideas. I also brought the matter to the April 2022 meeting of the High School to University Transitions Committee. The committee discussions led to the creation of a working group composed of high school and university representatives. As the chair of this working group, I am currently preparing the first meeting of the group. This working group will focus on developing a strategy for promoting and facilitating access to dual credit and HSXL courses. My goal is also to create pathways to University programs for high school students who complete several of these courses. The pathways may possibly include microcredentials as well. Thus, based on the input from school divisions, the goal is to offer a greater variety of dual credit / HSXL

courses to high school students to support their transition to university and specifically to the University of Regina.

RELATIONS WITH THE FEDERATED COLLEGES, AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS, AND SASKATCHEWAN REGIONAL COLLEGES

The Federated Colleges (Luther, Campion, and FNUniv)

The AVPA is responsible for maintaining good academic relations between the University and the Federated Colleges. I have taken this responsibility very seriously from the beginning of my appointment as AVPA. I developed cordial working relationships with the Deans of Luther and Campion and the Vice President (Academic) of FNUniv. I meet with these colleagues regularly; our monthly meetings are important occasions for informing each other of new important developments at our respective institutions, consulting each other, and seeking advice from each other on common matters. For example, I regularly provide support to FNUniv in developing academic program agreements with other education institutions (many of which are community-based program agreements); this support also includes assistance with the drafting of these agreements within the framework of the University-FNUniv federation agreement. In doing so, I work closely with FNUniv's Associate Dean of Community, Research, and Graduate Programs.

The University's academic relationship with Luther and Campion is governed by the Guidelines for a Working Academic Relationship (GWAR) agreement, which deals with many academic matters within the overall framework of the federation agreements and the Senate Bylaws. This agreement is reviewed every five years. It came up for a review in April 2021. While working closely with the Deans of Luther and Campion and the Deans of the Faculties of Arts, MAP, and Science, I led the review. The review resulted in some important updates and revisions that improved the agreement for all the parties in significant ways. The renewed agreement was signed by the Presidents of the three institutions and came into force on 17 March 2022.

Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI)

During my term in the AVPA position, I developed close working relationships with the GDI Executive and Program Coordinators. My first major task regarding GDI's affiliation with the University was to lead the development of a new affiliation agreement since the Affiliation Agreement in force then was about to expire. The new Affiliation Agreement was approved by the Senate in June 2019 and came into force in September 2019 for a five-year term. Under the terms of the Affiliation Agreement, working with GDI, I created the UR-GDI Joint Relations Committee. The overall purpose of this committee is to enhance cooperation between the two institutions and identify new opportunities for academic collaboration. In accordance with the Affiliation Agreement, I worked with the AVP Research and the Research Office in creating a Métis Research Fund funded through GDI's affiliation with the University. The objective of this Fund is to support Métis community-focused research and Métis researchers. The inaugural call

for proposals was issued in October 2020. The adjudication committee, which is co-chaired by the AVP Research and myself, selected two projects for funding. Since the 2021 call did not receive any applications, going forward, the parties concerned agreed to expand the Fund eligibility to Métis graduate students. A new call for proposals will be issued shortly.

Over the past several years, through the affiliation, the University and GDI created new joint community-based programs to serve First Nations and Métis communities in the North; several existing programs were also renewed. In my role as AVPA, I provided support for the drafting of the agreements on these joint academic programs. Enhancing and expanding the University's collaboration with GDI in serving Indigenous communities has been an important priority for me.

Regional Colleges

The University regularly offers courses at the Saskatchewan regional colleges through CCE. In collaboration with CCE, the AVPA oversees the University's relationship with the regional colleges. To improve the University's relations with the colleges, I organized a series of meetings with their senior leaders in the past two years. These meetings were also attended by the Provost and the CCE Director. To my knowledge, this was the first time (at least in a long time) that such high level meetings with the regional colleges were held. The meetings were very helpful to all the participants especially in the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. I plan to continue to organize such high-level meetings not only to maintain good relations with regional college colleagues but also to develop further post-secondary education opportunities for local communities through collaboration between the University and the regional colleges (e.g., creating clear pathways for students from the regional colleges to the University). This objective aligns well with the University Strategic Plan's emphasis on "strengthening connections with communities" (Area of Focus 5 Impact and Identity).

EXTRAORDINARY ACTIONS IN THE PANDEMIC CONTEXT

I would like to briefly outline the range of my "emergency" activities in the context of the pandemic throughout 2020 and early 2021 without going into details. This is to better contextualize my accomplishments with regard to the bigger projects and initiatives I led as explained in detail earlier. I led or completed many of these bigger projects amidst the pandemic and in spite of a large variety of additional responsibilities I took upon myself to support faculty, students, and staff. It is important to note that the list of my pandemic related actions is not meant to be an exhaustive list but only a sample.

As a consequence of the switch to remote teaching imposed by the pandemic in March 2020, the value of professionally developed online courses increased significantly. As the Chair of the Distance and Distributed Learning Committee, I worked with the then CCE Director, Dr. Harvey King, to prioritize the previously approved online courses and identify new courses for online development and delivery for the Fall 2020 semester. We had to sort out various complications,

above all contractual issues. But in the end, we were able to create a good list of priority courses for express online development and delivery with our focus on first-year gateway courses.

To provide remote-learning supports needed by students, in consultations with the Provost, I created and chaired the Working Group on Student Supports. Some of the initiatives by this working group included the creation of a central student supports webpage; a laptop computer lending program; enhanced tutoring for incoming new students in two foundational Science courses; and a guide for academic advisors to consult regarding pandemic-related issues.

Subsequent to the cancellation of face-to-face teaching in March 2020, I scheduled weekly check-in meetings with the Associate Deans (Academic) Group (ADA) in order to identify and resolve emerging issues. As the ADAs appreciated these check-in meetings, I continued them during the summer of 2020. The meetings were very helpful with respect to developing some guidelines and policies required by the pandemic situation.

I led or contributed to the creation of a number of guidelines and resource documents in collaboration with relevant committees and colleagues (e.g., Academic Considerations on Proctortrack; Guidelines on Third-Party Teaching and Learning Platforms; Guidelines on Zoom recordings, Zoom Etiquette for Students etc.)

Working with relevant colleagues, I created a guide on in-person practicum / internship placements for the pandemic era and I initiated a special student placement contract template to be used during the pandemic. I also held regular check-in meetings with practicum / internship coordinators from Faculties.

To collect data on student and faculty experiences with remote teaching and learning in the context of the pandemic, CTL Director Dr. Alec Couros and I conducted two sets of faculty and student surveys on remote teaching and learning; the first survey was done in August 2020 and the follow-up survey was in April 2021. We analyzed the survey responses and shared the results with the University Executive Team and Deans. The surveys were quite helpful especially for identifying the supports needed by faculty and students.

Sincerely

Dr. Nilgün Önder, Associate Vice-President Academic