

President's Report to the Board

For the period from July 1, 2015 – April 20, 2016

Submitted to the Board of Governors

Submitted by Dr. Vianne Timmons, President and Vice-Chancellor

In keeping with the University of Regina's commitment to Indigenization, I would like to begin this report by acknowledging that the University is located on Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 lands – something which has been an important part of our history, and which will be equally significant for our future.

In July 2015, the Board of Governors approved my performance objectives for the 2015-2016 academic year. This set of measurable objectives, developed in consultation with the University Executive Team, was designed both to advance key priorities and overarching themes from the University's strategic plan, and to provide a means to assist the Board in evaluating my performance over the course of the year.

These objectives are:

1. **Student Success: Sustain enrolment at 2014-2015 levels per the performance management framework, with particular emphasis on enhancing diversity among the student population;**
2. **Student Success: Identify and begin implementing specific initiatives designed to increase first-to-second-year retention rates to 80% per the University's performance measurement framework;**
3. **Research Impact: Highlight and publicly profile four research initiatives (including one related to Indigenous research) that clearly demonstrate the tangible local impact of our work;**
4. **Commitment to Our Communities: Ensure that the newly restructured Alumni Relations and Community Outreach unit develops a comprehensive long-term plan for its operations; and**
5. **Commitment to Our Communities: Implement the key recommendations from the review of the University's donor relations functions in order to enhance relationships with donors and build the University's capacity for fundraising.**

A great deal of progress has been made toward these strategic objectives thus far over the 2015-16 academic year, helping the University move forward in a number of areas. This report outlines that progress.

As I submit this report, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the faculty and staff of the University of Regina, without whose strong commitment to our University and its students these accomplishments would not have been possible. I would also like to acknowledge the Board of Governors, whose leadership is crucial to the success of our University. The Board has been supportive of my work over the past year, and I look forward to the input of its members as they evaluate my performance as President and help determine my priorities for the coming year.

Respectfully,



Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor

Objective 1: Student Success – Sustain enrolment at 2014-15 levels per the performance management framework, with particular emphasis on enhancing diversity among the student population

The recruitment and enrolment of new students – especially those from outside our traditional demographic and geographic catchment areas – is an important means of ensuring the financial and programmatic sustainability of the University of Regina. With that in mind, a key objective for the year has been to ensure that initiatives are undertaken to sustain student enrolment at last year's levels, and if possible enhance enrolment in diversity areas to help offset anticipated declines in the number of high school graduates in the province. In addition to supporting the strategic plan's priority of student success, this objective relates also to the plan's overarching themes of sustainability and Indigenization of the University.

This enrolment objective was met and in fact exceeded in all three semesters of the 2015-2016 academic year. Given that student enrolments in one academic year are highly dependent on recruitment efforts from the previous one, increased student numbers for 2015-2016 are in large part a testament to the work done last year.

These increased enrolments were evident right from the start of the 2015-2016 academic year. In the Spring/Summer 2015 semester, for example, overall enrolment was 6.3% higher than Spring/Summer 2014, and the number of credit hours taught saw a year-over-year increase of 7.3%.

This trend continued in the Fall 2015 semester, during which headcount enrolments and the number of credit hours taught remained ahead of target. By the end of the fourth week of classes, the number of students enrolled across the University of Regina system was up 3.3% compared to Fall 2014, and the number of credit hours being taught was up 2.8%. A total of 14,360 students were enrolled University-wide for Fall 2015, marking

the seventh consecutive year of increased enrolments, and the fifth consecutive year of record enrolments. By semester's end, a total of 14,192 students remained registered at the University – an increase of 3.5% over last year.

It is of particular note that 1,748 graduate students were registered at the University for 2015-16, an increase of 5.3% over Fall 2014. This success demonstrates the appeal of new offerings such as the Master of Health Administration degree, as well as the increasing attractiveness of research-based graduate degrees generated by strong graduate supervision and increased financial support of graduate students.

To gain insight into where new undergraduate students are choosing to study, for Fall 2015 the Office of Resource Planning conducted additional research into the number of "first-time" students in different faculties – students who are in their first term of their first year of studies in their program. Overall, there was a 5% increase in this category of students at the University for the Fall semester, with notable increases of 19% in Business Administration, 9% in Arts, 6% in Science, and 13% in Media, Art and Performance (formerly Fine Arts).

This is a strong indication that the University is attracting new students in the liberal arts as well as professional programs. These increases reflect a number of factors, including: the effort being made by faculties to attract and retain students through innovative new curricula such as the Creative Technologies program in MAP and the Hill Legacy program in Business Administration; and the continuing boosts in enrolments in areas such as Biology, Chemistry, and Physics occasioned by sustained high registrations in our Engineering and Nursing programs.

Further analysis of the Fall 2015 enrolment statistics shows that students from certain demographic groups have helped drive the overall increase in student numbers, and as a result, the University's student body is more diverse than ever before. International enrolments increased by 8.5% over last year, for example, and now total 13.7% of the student body. The number of Aboriginal students is up 5.8% over last year, and now represents 11.6% of all students. Enhancing enrolment in these demographic areas is consistent with the strategic plan's emphasis on diversity and Indigenization, and will be increasingly important in the years to come given current projections of the number of graduating high school students in Saskatchewan.

Enrolment remained strong to begin the Winter 2016 semester. By the end of the fourth week of classes, 13,481 students were enrolled across the University system, an increase of 2.9% over the same point in January 2015. Areas of notable headcount increase for Winter 2016 were Engineering (6.1%), Graduate Studies (5.3%), (Kinesiology (5%), Science (5.2%), and Social Work (7.7%). Overall credit hours being taught were up 1.4% compared to January 2015, with significant increases in Arts (5.1%), Science (6.5%), and Social Work (8.4%).

This positive trend continued throughout the semester. As of the last day of classes in early April, 13,398 students were enrolled at the University and Federated Colleges. This was up 3.1% compared to the same time last year, with the number of credit hours being taught totalling 1.8% more than Winter 2015. It is also significant that as of April 2016, there were 12% more international students enrolled at the University than in April 2015.

In the context of a contracting Saskatchewan high-school graduating cohort, this sustained increasing enrolment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels is evidence that:

1. The University of Regina is the first choice of an increasing number of students in Saskatchewan, in part due to the continuing evolution of its academic programs;
2. The investments we have made in out-of-province advertising and recruitment are paying off, especially in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario;
3. The strategic approach to international recruitment and retention by UR International continues to generate strong international enrolments and retention in an increasingly competitive context; and
4. Enhanced efforts to retain students are working.

As noted earlier, enrolment numbers in one year are heavily reliant on the previous year's recruitment activities. For that reason, in preparation for future years a great deal of work has taken place throughout 2015-16 to engage with prospective students, their families, and guidance counsellors. Approximately 1,100 prospective students and their families attended the annual Fall Open House, for example. At the event, more than 250 students were admitted "on the spot," and more than 80 other applications were accepted.

Three other "on the spot" admissions sessions were held in the province – two in Regina and one in Moose Jaw. These sessions provided instant admission to students who have their high school transcript, and also encouraged local grade 12 students to consider the University of Regina as their university of choice months before they actually finish high school.

A great deal of positive feedback has been received from high school counsellors, teachers, parents and students about the level of service provided at these "on the spot" admission events. To build on this momentum as well as the progress made through the placement of a full-time recruiter in Calgary for Fall 2015, the recruitment team travelled to Calgary and area in March to hold admission events in high schools there. It is also of note that planning has taken place for the May UR Beginning event, which will help new students register for classes and make connections with their home faculties.

Throughout the year, the University continued to strengthen its outreach to high school guidance counsellors. The annual UR Update event, for example, attracted 91 counsellors, including six from Alberta and one from BC. The University also began distributing information “cheat sheets” that provide concise updates for counsellors and their students on things such as scholarships, student awards, open houses and application deadlines. In addition, the University had representation at a counsellor event in North Vancouver, presenting to counsellors from 21 schools from the area. The counsellors have requested that the University visit their schools regularly.

UR International has been working closely with different faculties to strengthen and diversify the base of international student enrolments for the future. The Faculty of Media, Art and Performance participated in a recruitment trip to Mexico that featured the new Creative Technologies program, for example, and the Faculty of Arts is working to bring more students from Germany to study here. In addition, UR International was instrumental in getting the University of Regina approved to accept funded graduate students from Mexico – something that stands to increase and further diversify the University’s graduate student population.

Individual faculties have also undertaken a variety of other recruitment initiatives to prepare for the future. The Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science has begun fundraising to create scholarships for Aboriginal high school students, for example, and the Faculty of Nursing is working to fill vacant upper-level seats with Licensed Practical Nurses who wish to become Registered Nurses. Also in the Faculty of Nursing, each Aboriginal applicant to the program has been contacted to see if he or she requires any application assistance.

The Faculty of Arts is developing “course clusters” to help narrow down course selection options for students, and the Faculty of Social Work has hired additional academic advisors to help both new and returning students at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The Faculty of Education began exploring the possibility of beginning a new cohort of students for the community-based B.Ed. program. In addition, in mid-April the Faculty of Education hosted 1,500 students from 50 Saskatchewan schools for “Walking Together – A Day of Education for Reconciliation.” This day-long event for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students alike was a means of introducing students to the University, but more importantly, demonstrating how the University is committed to Indigenization and being a welcoming place for all students.

In recent years, it has become apparent that as part of the University’s enrolment strategy, we need to begin the recruitment process earlier than ever in a prospective undergraduate high school student’s career. To this end, the University launched its new future student website at urconnected.uregina.ca, and for the first time, held an event specifically developed for grade 11 students.

This is only a sampling of the recruitment-related initiatives that have been undertaken over the past year, but they demonstrate that the University is working very hard to

position itself well to attract students from Saskatchewan and beyond in the years to come.

Objective 2: Student Success – Identify and begin implementing specific initiatives designed to increase first-to-second-year retention rates to 80% per the University’s performance measurement framework

In the coming years, it will not be enough simply to recruit and enroll new students. Just as important is student retention – particularly the retention of students from their first to second years of study, and the retention of Aboriginal students who have historically faced a unique set of barriers at university. For that reason, one of my objectives over this academic year has been to oversee the identification and early-stage implementation of a number of specific initiatives and supports to improve retention rate – an objective that over the long term will contribute to student success, sustainability, and the Indigenization of our University.

This objective was met in two ways – in the percentage of first-year full-time undergraduate students retained year-over-year, and in the identification and development of initiatives to enhance retention for the future.

In terms of percentage of students retained, analysis by the Office of Resource Planning indicates that first-to-second-year undergraduate student retention from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 was 85.0%. This represents a significant increase over Fall 2014’s retention rate of 79.6%, and far exceeds this year’s target.

As with student enrolment, current retention numbers are in large part a reflection of work done in previous years across the University. Intensified retention efforts in the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science over the past couple of years, for example, seem to be having a positive effect, as is the entry of large cohorts of students into areas that traditionally have had high rates of retention such as the Faculty Engineering and Applied Science. Looking forward, these improved retention statistics indicate a positive overall trend, and one that is increasingly important in light of demographic projections over the next few years.

To build on this success, the University focused on a number of retention initiatives throughout the year. This began prior to the school year with summer orientation sessions that were attended by a record 450 students, and continued with a full slate of orientation sessions in early September to help new students learn to manage the academic expectations they will face in their university careers. A record number of students also attended these September sessions.

September also saw the launch of the University’s “Official App for Students,” which allows easy and instant access to grades, class schedules and other aspects of students’ academic work. This application provides one more tool to help students organize

remain engaged with their academic schedules – something that is crucial to their success.

For Fall 2015, the number of students participating in the UR Guarantee grew to more than 1,700. Over the course of the year, these students received additional academic counselling, participated in various organized campus activities, and undertook training in areas such as resume writing and interview skills, all with the goal of keeping them engaged with their programs and helping prepare them for life after graduation.

2015 also saw new cohorts of students undertake two other key retention programs – the Academic Recovery Program and the Arts Transition Program. The Academic Recovery Program, a two-semester program which began in Fall 2013 to help students who have experienced difficulties in their studies, saw its largest intake ever, with 14 students beginning in Spring/Summer and another 67 beginning in Fall 2015. Also in the fall, the Arts Transition Program began its initial year of operation, providing another 40 students who did not meet the requirements of specific faculties with the opportunity to re-start their academic careers through a supported transition into the Faculty of Arts. Overall, students in both programs have shown improvement throughout the year.

Another focus for the year has been how life in residence can have a positive effect on retention. The opening of the University's newest residence complex, Kīšik Towers, was part of a long-term strategy, since student retention, especially from year one to year two, increases substantially among those living in on-campus accommodation. Providing such accommodation has become increasingly important as the proportion of our student body from outside the city and province increases. Initial projections for occupancy of Kīšik Towers were met or exceeded for the year, and when full, the complex will be home to more than 600 students, as well as a 90-space day care.

The opening of Kīšik Towers provided the opportunity to pilot a program in which “Living-Learning Communities” – essentially cohorts of students with similar academic and personal interests – are co-located in residence. The goal is to help these students foster a stronger sense of belonging to and engagement with their peers, their faculties, and their University.

Over the course of the year, more than 40 students lived in four different Living-Learning Communities: Engineering, Health and Wellness, Social Justice and Leadership (focused on Campion College) and Global Citizen/Perspectives. These students participated in a number of organized educational and recreational activities together and in partnership with other groups on campus. In addition, they attended workshops on topics such as effective note-taking, time management, and study skills. Based on its success this year, the program will be expanded for 2016-17 as part of continuing efforts to engage students and foster their success. Three new Living-Learning Communities will be added for the fall, each accepting 30 students. One will be a partnership with the Aboriginal Student Centre, one a partnership with La Cité, and one with the Paul J. Hill School of Business.

The University implemented key policy changes during the year to make the University an even more safe and welcoming place for students. In September, for example, a policy was adopted allowing undergraduate applicants to declare preferred gender and/or a preferred name. This change was made in direct response to requests from students to change their gender identity and/or to use a preferred name. Such requests had been made at a number of different service areas, including the Registrar's Office, Information Services Help Desk, Admissions, and UR International. In some cases, students had expressed a genuine concern that their safety and comfort on campus was in jeopardy. The new policy, which has been very well-received, will help address that concern for students.

In October, the University announced its new sexual assault-and-violence policy. This is another initiative intended to make our campus a safe and welcoming place for all, and a place at which students wish to remain and complete their studies.

Understanding that academic advising is critical to student success, the University continued moving ahead steadily with improvements in this area. This included the selection and continuing implementation of degree audit software that is expected to be rolled out to first- and second-year students for Fall 2016, and third- and fourth-year students for Fall 2017.

In addition, a two-person central advising unit was created in the Office of Student Affairs. This unit has been tasked specifically with addressing the needs of students in transition from high school, students in transition from faculty to faculty, and students struggling with academic difficulties. This small unit will complement the more specialized advising available in the line faculties, and will pay for itself within a short time by boosting the retention rates of first-year students who may be at risk in their programs.

The University's Academic Advising Professionals (URAAP) subcommittees undertook a number of other advising initiatives throughout the year, including:

- Holding an advising fair designed for undeclared and exploring students who may not otherwise have seen an academic advisor;
- Developing branding and a visual identity for academic advisors that rests on the metaphor of advising as navigation;
- Exploring how best to use the University's website to help make academic advisors more visible and accessible to students;
- Creating a skill development series for advisors to establish a common set of best practices for working with at-risk and transitional students across the University's campuses and faculties;

- Determining how best to define and identify at-risk students in order to make suggestions regarding policy and process, thereby paving the way for the development of targeted strategies for increasing students' success in the first semester; and
- Developing a survey to elicit feedback from our students on needs and values in terms of advising services on campus.

A great deal of attention was also paid during the year to specialized academic support and advising for international, new Canadian, permanent resident and refugee students, who form a larger proportion of the student body than ever before. The UR International – Student Services office developed and successfully implemented the UR International Peer Advisor Program, in which new students are connected with current students to assist with their successful transition to the University of Regina. More than 30 International Peer Advisors now meet at least twice a week with close to 100 International Student Advisees in the Global Learning Centre.

Other programming in the Global Learning Centre has been enhanced through the Study Assistance program in areas such as Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering, Kinesiology and Health Studies, Mathematics, Physics, and Math and Statistics. Hours of English-language coaching for students were also expanded throughout the year.

With such programs in place, retention numbers for undergraduate international students continued to increase. The Winter 2016 term saw a 10% increase compared to Winter 2015 in the number of returning international undergraduate students – a clear indication of the effectiveness of support services for international students.

To complement University-wide initiatives, individual faculties undertook a wide variety of retention activities. These included:

- The Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science divided large classes into smaller section staggered between semesters. This ensures manageable class sizes while ensuring that students have immediate access to remedial courses rather than having to wait for an entire year;
- The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research began providing line faculties with the names of graduate students who have failed a class so that faculties can follow up and ensure that these students have the supports they need;
- The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research also launched an Academic and Professional Skills program. The signature event is a three-day “Thesis Boot Camp” that was so popular that plans are underway to hold it again in the near future;

- The Faculty of Education is working to implement an Integrated Student Support Centre for Spring 2017. In the meantime, the faculty is providing more support than ever before for distance students, and holds program area meetings to identify and plan supports for struggling students; and
- The Faculty of Nursing has operated a “Nursing Boot Camp” in Regina, Saskatoon and Swift Current to provide additional academic support to students in a number of areas.

It is also of note that throughout the year, the Office of Resource Planning completed an updated environmental scan of best practices in retention at Canadian, American and British universities. Based on the findings, a follow-up report was produced focusing on the early detection and referral of at-risk students. The recommendations from this report may form the basis for future University-wide initiatives to support students who are struggling in the early stages of their academic programs.

Objective 3: Research Impact – Highlight and publicly profile four research initiatives (including one related to Indigenous research) that clearly demonstrate the tangible local impact of our work

Research impact and commitment to community are two of the key priorities in the strategic plan, and there is good reason for this. Demonstrating research impact to members of the larger provincial community is increasingly important as the University competes for funding with other institutions and seeks to build on its unique reputation as an institution that is both sensitive and responsive to the needs of our communities. To help advance these objectives, over the past year the University made a special effort to publicly profile four research initiatives – including projects of particular interest to First Nations communities – that are having a tangible impact on our city and province.

This objective was exceeded through the active promotion of a wide variety of specific research projects via means such as the University website, social media, advertising, and the *Degrees* alumni magazine.

To begin the academic year, the Communications and Marketing unit devoted particular attention to promoting research successes during the summer months, a time when a great deal of faculty and student research takes place often unbeknownst to the general public. This resulted in increased local media coverage of the University’s research over that time period, and set the stage for a more concerted effort throughout the Fall and Winter semesters to profile four locally relevant projects in a way that went beyond our traditional means of highlighting University research.

In the fall, the plan to profile the tangible local impact of four select projects was developed, and it was carried out over the next few months. The first featured initiative was the work of Dr. Carrie Bourassa, Professor of Indigenous Health Studies at the First Nations University of Canada. Funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Dr. Bourassa is conducting research into the development of a model for culturally appropriate health care that meets the needs of Indigenous women infected with HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C. This research was selected because it is an initiative with significant relevance to one of the most serious health problems facing Saskatchewan's Aboriginal population.

Dr. Bourassa's work, which involves 330 interviews with Indigenous women and the creation of an educational video for health care providers, was specially highlighted in several ways. For example, it was publicized on the University's website and in the publication *Research Info\$ource* (which is distributed via *The National Post*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *The Hill Times*, and *Progress* magazine). In addition, advertisements were placed in *University Affairs* and *First Nations Drum*, a publication distributed nationally to First Nations, Friendship Centres, Tribal Councils, schools, colleges and universities, as well as various Aboriginal businesses and organizations. Targeted promotion of this work and its relevance has already gotten results. In mid-April, the Federal government announced additional funding support of more than \$200,000 for Dr. Bourassa's research.

The second project targeted for promotion due to its local impact was that of Psychology professor Dr. Gordon Asmundson and doctoral candidate Holly Parkerson. Dr. Asmundson and Ms. Parkerson are working to address the fact that Saskatchewan has the highest smoking rate among all provinces by pilot-testing an online stop-smoking intervention (www.guidetounquit.ca) that offers individualized information and a structured quit plan to support people as they quit smoking.

National Non-Smoking Week took place in January, so during that week and throughout the month, the University supported a major media campaign that garnered local and national profile of this initiative. The campaign – featured in *University Affairs*, the *Regina Leader-Post*, and on CBC, CTV and CHAB – was designed to create awareness of the research and seek participants for the online program. Thanks in part to the additional media attention, during National Non-Smoking Week, an additional 150 participants made a commitment to quit smoking through the program.

The University continues working on a plan to promote the research of Dr. Wanda Lyons and Dr. Scott Thompson, professors in the Faculty of Education who are conducting a study on how inclusive educational practices can help overcome barriers that are often faced by marginalized groups, such as persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Although originally planned for this spring, this profile is now slated to take place through both paid and unpaid media in the next fiscal year.

With promotion of Dr. Thompson and Dr. Lyons' work now taking place next year – and in light of the objective to specifically profile the local research impact of four projects – a decision was made to profile two sustainability research projects during the year rather than the one that had been planned originally. The University has successfully marked Earth Day in the past two years by gaining significant profile for sustainability related research initiatives. To build on this success, by the time of the Board meeting the work of two researchers will have been specifically targeted for additional local and national promotion:

- Dr. Katherine Arbuthnott, a conservation psychologist at Campion College, is providing insight into human behaviour that is crucial for the implementation of climate change solutions. Her research focuses on the best way to influence people to act in more environmentally friendly ways, based on the idea that people's aversion to loss can be used as a way to motivate them to make more sustainable choices; and
- Dr. Andrew Cameron is working in collaboration with Dr. Chris Yost, Dr. Britt Hall, and their students in the Integrated Microbial Systems and Society laboratory in the Department of Biology. The team is looking at how different microbial communities work together to break down oil and other contaminants, with the goal of developing the perfect oil-eating microbial community.

To enhance public awareness of the University's commitment to sustainability and sustainable research, in conjunction with Earth Day these two projects will be profiled locally and nationally through paid and unpaid advertising and media, including the *Leader-Post* and *University Affairs*.

Throughout the year, communicating the growing impact and value of University of Regina research went well beyond the aforementioned projects. Two in-depth feature stories on research were prepared for the *Degrees* alumni magazine, for example. The first was about the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) research of Department of Psychology faculty members Dr. Gordon Asmundson and Dr. Nick Carleton, as it relates to first responders. The second was a feature on doctoral student Joanne Weber – the only Saskatchewan teacher of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing who is also herself deaf.

In recent months, the University made good use of other opportunities to profile research that stands to have a high impact locally, nationally, and even internationally:

- Because of its nationally recognized expertise in the area, in January the University was the site of a National Roundtable on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other operational stress injuries that disproportionately affect our public safety and military personnel;

- Members of Innovative Medicines Canada visited the University to discuss Dr. Heather Hadjistavropoulos' research in the Department of Psychology regarding the effectiveness of Internet-based Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for depression and anxiety;
- Dr. Mohan Babu, assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, published new research mapping out the DNA damage pathways in Escherichia coli, normally referred to as E.coli. The research is a step forward in finding new pathways to fight bacteria. Dr. Babu is the senior author of the research project which involved researchers from the University of Toronto, the Hospital for Sick Kids in Toronto and Harvard Medical School;
- Dr. Babu has also been participating in collaborative research project with researchers at Stanford University in California. This project, in which Dr. Babu and his colleagues are examining the molecular basis that leads to Autism Spectrum Disorder, attracted considerable media attention; and
- Dr. Shauneen Pete, the University's Executive Lead – Indigenization, was the inaugural Indigenous Scholar in Residence at Nipissing University from January 25-29. Dr. Pete was also invited to Brock University in early March to take part in that institution's Distinguished Speaker series to discuss the need to create and nurture pedagogically responsive and inclusive spaces for Indigenous knowledge systems. These two honours speak to the University of Regina's leadership role in the area of Indigenization – influenced in large part by Dr. Pete – which has gained a growing reputation across the country.

These are just a few of the projects that generated public attention throughout the year, but they serve to illustrate how the University has renewed its efforts to promote the ingenuity, importance and impact of its researchers. Throughout 2015, more than 100 research-related stories were published on the University's website – well over double the number of stories published over the course of 2014. A similar trend is continuing in early 2016, with 34 research-related stories having been produced in the first three months of the year. This pace will see the total number of stories produced in 2016 eclipse that of 2015, publicizing the University's research impact more than ever before.

Objective 4: Commitment to Our Communities – Ensure that the newly restructured Alumni Relations and Community Outreach unit develops a comprehensive long-term plan for its operations

The strategic plan calls on the University to “embrace our responsibilities to serve and engage our diverse peoples and communities in the pursuit of well-being and pride of place.” An important means of fulfilling this commitment to our communities is through the consistent, focused and effective operation over the long term of the newly restructured Alumni Relations and Community Outreach unit. For that reason, a key

objective over the course of this past academic year – and one that relates directly to the institution’s sustainability – was to ensure that the unit developed a comprehensive plan to engage with key alumni and other stakeholders in order to enhance public and private belief in and support of the University and its academic mission.

This objective was partially achieved. Although the comprehensive long-term plan for the activities of the Alumni Relations and Community Outreach unit was not completed, the reorganization of the area and hiring of a Director were significant achievements that have put the University in a strong position leading into the next year.

To begin the year, the External Relations unit was realigned into two new streams: 1) Communications and Marketing, and 2) Donor Relations, Alumni Relations and Community Outreach. The complete transition to the two streams and the development of a long-term operational plan for alumni relations and community outreach was scheduled to be completed upon the hiring of the new Director of Alumni and Community Outreach – a position that was approved in the 2015-2016 budget.

Over the next several months, External Relations worked with Facilities Management to ensure that there were adequate work spaces in the area to accommodate the realignment. At the same time, the job description for the Director of Alumni and Community Outreach was developed, and External Relations worked with Human Resources to have the position classified, approved and posted. The Executive of the University of Regina Alumni Association (URAA) was represented in the interview process, helping strengthen the relationship with the association. From a pool of more than 40 applicants from across Canada, Peggy MacDonald was selected as Director, and began in the position in April.

With the new Director in place, External Relations is now in a position to complete the transition of the Alumni Relations and Community Outreach staff to the Development Unit. In addition, the stage has now been set to develop a long-term comprehensive plan for the future of alumni relations and community outreach at the University – something that will strengthen the University’s ability to raise money, connect with alumni and donors, and build among key stakeholders. Other next steps will be to finalize the alignment of responsibilities, look for opportunities for growth, and forge a revised relationship with the URAA.

Although the long-term plan for alumni relations and community outreach could not be completed until the Director was in place, staff did a great deal of initial work on it throughout the year. Because the Joint Initiatives Agreement with the URAA is set to expire in June 2016, Alumni Relations staff began discussions with the URAA in the fall regarding the renewal of the agreement. The URAA indicated its desire to explore new strategic opportunities as a new relationship is developed, so the University and the URAA jointly hosted a consultation session with various alumni chapters and branches.

Following on this consultation, External Relations staff and the URAA Executive held a joint strategic planning session in February that helped set a direction for the revision of the Joint Initiatives Agreement. With the long-term alumni relations and outreach plan in development and a new agreement with the URAA forthcoming, the opportunity now exists to ensure that the alumni relations function of the University and the URAA's activities complement each other fully. This will maximize the University's capacity for community outreach in the years to come.

Over the year, the University worked in a variety of additional ways to better connect with alumni and other community members. An alumni event was held in Saskatoon, for example, and the second annual event for Chinese alumni in Regina took place. Planning is underway for other alumni events in New York and Washington set to take place in May, and discussions are underway to form an alumni network in China.

The 2015 Alumni Crowning Achievement Awards were presented in the fall, and the nomination process for the 2016 awards has already been undertaken, with a total of 39 nominees in five categories. In addition, the Alumni Association Faculty Awards for Excellence were presented in the spring to further demonstrate the support the University's alumni provide to the institution's academic mission.

In January, staff from the Alumni Relations and Community Outreach unit coordinated with the Regina Chamber of Commerce to present the second annual State of the University address. More than 300 members of the University and larger communities, including alumni, were in attendance for a presentation about an Economic Development Regina report that details the economic impact the University has on Regina and Saskatchewan.

In addition, a sponsorship package was developed that now links three of the University's most important outreach events – the Inspiring Leadership Forum, the Prairie Kitchen Party and the Alumni Crowning Achievement Awards. This is an example of how shared coordination and co-promotion of initiatives is becoming increasingly effective under External Relations' new organizational structure – something that will only increase over the next year.

Objective 5: Commitment to Our Communities – Implement the key recommendations from the review of the University's donor relations functions in order to enhance relationships with donors and build the University's capacity for fundraising

As the proportion of the University's operating budget provided by the provincial government decreases each year, it is becoming increasingly important for the institution to enhance its fundraising capacity in order to continue supporting our students at an appropriate level. Having received recommendations on how to build that fundraising

capacity, it was a priority over the past year to ensure that the appropriate ones were implemented so that the University can enhance its relationship with current and potential donors whose support is so crucial to the sustainability of our operations.

This objective was met during the year, with all key recommendations from the external review either completed or substantially completed.

In the past, the Donor Relations area has faced challenges because it has not had sufficient staff resources to raise additional funds that are increasingly necessary to support scholarships, research, and programming. A variety of steps were taken to address this throughout the year.

Foremost among these was the extension of Bruce Anderson's term as Associate Vice-President (Development) to June 30, 2018. This added stability to the Donor Relations team, and provided strong leadership and fundraising capacity.

Another important undertaking was the creation of a Director of Development position. With budget resources in place, a position description was created and classified, and a national search undertaken. The successful candidate, Nora Yeates, began in the position on April 1 and has already brought a professionalism that will be a tremendous asset to the University. In the short term, Ms. Yeates is working with her team to refine processes and plan for the coming year, and over the long term she will greatly enhance the University's ability to raise funds.

Other staffing-related initiatives designed to build fundraising capacity included:

- Hiring a half-time Prospect Researcher;
- Focusing one employee's duties exclusively on building relationships with major companies in Saskatchewan;
- Undertaking a search for an Annual Giving Co-ordinator who, when the position is filled, will build support from the University family (students, employees, and alumni) and develop a stronger leadership gift program for annual gifts of \$1000 or more; and
- Exploring the feasibility of extending term positions and converting some priority positions into permanent roles.

In addition to supporting the Associate Vice-President (Development) in this activity, I made a special effort to engage personally with key donors and potential donors. I personally took on a new portfolio of donor prospects as part of my priorities, for example, and used invitations to community and University events to create further opportunities for donor cultivation and stewardship. I also hosted a series of small dinners to engage prominent members of Saskatchewan's business community in support

of the College Avenue campus renewal. These efforts have been effective, as shown by recent meetings with prospective donors that have resulted in a promised donation of \$300,000.

Fostering community support for the College Avenue campus renewal remained my number one fundraising priority throughout the year. In September, I hosted a donor and community event to update stakeholders on the campaign and introduce them to the project architects and heritage consultant. After announcing a \$1 million anonymous donation to enhance accessibility at Darke Hall, I held a private recognition luncheon with the donor. I have also toured a number of potential donors through the facilities.

Throughout the year, I continued meeting with the Mayor, City Manager, and City Councillors to advocate for the City of Regina's support of the College Avenue campus renewal. A formal presentation was made to the City, and University of Regina and City of Regina staff are actively discussing how the City might contribute to the project.

As a result of these efforts, the College Avenue campus renewal is gaining momentum. Fundraising now exceeds \$7.2 million toward the \$10 million goal, and plans are in place to attract additional donors. There have been two very promising responses to the recently issued RFP for developing sites adjacent to the College Avenue campus. The University has also submitted two infrastructure funding requests to the federal government – one for Darke Hall, and one for the College Building.

In addition, several of the Darke Hall user groups have indicated a desire to support the campaign and engage their corporate sponsors, and in May we will be meeting with current donors at Darke Hall to discuss the progress that is being made. With Darke Hall temporarily closed for renovations and set to re-open in the fall, a strong signal has been sent to the community that the College Avenue Campus renewal is moving forward.

I played an active role in other fundraising activities throughout the year, including the President's Breakfast for Athletics and the planning for the second annual "Prairie Kitchen Party" set to take place in May. I also cultivated community support at events such as the President's Community Award and the Alumni Crowning Achievement Awards.

As a result of all of these efforts, the University's fundraising performance has improved significantly over the past year. Donations from May 1, 2015 to March 31 have totalled more than \$6.25 million, net of in-kind gifts and grants. This compares to \$3.03 million over the same period in 2014-15, representing an increase of more than 100%. There has also been an increase in the number of major gifts over \$25,000 – something that reflects the improvements that have been made in the University's donor relations function, as well as the growing public and private support upon which the University is well-positioned to build in the future.