

**Report to the Board of Governors
For the period 1 December 2020 - 23 February 2021
Thomas Chase, Interim President and Vice-Chancellor**

In keeping with the University of Regina's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation as articulated in our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan entitled *All Our Relations - kahkiyaw kiwâhkomâkâninawak*, I begin this report by acknowledging that the University is situated on Treaty 4 territory, with a presence in Treaty 6. This is the ancestral territory of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota and Nakoda people, and the traditional homeland of the Métis nation.

Per the objectives guiding my work through the 2020-2021 academic year, the primary focus of this report is the stability and sustainability of the University's operations during the pandemic. Once the new president is announced, work will begin to facilitate the transition to new leadership.

The report also contains updates on areas of particular interest to the Board, including the student experience, student mental health, Indigenization of the curriculum, microcredentialing, and notable achievements by members of the University community.

Should the Board require any additional information, I will provide it either at or following the March meeting.

Objective 1: Ensure that the teaching and learning functions of the University continue in the most academically fulfilling way possible for the Spring/Summer 2020, Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 terms.

- With strict COVID-19 health and safety protocols in place, the Fall 2020 term was completed successfully. Nearly 80 in-person labs and studios took place for a total of approximately 600 students (out of a total headcount exceeding 16,000). Throughout the term, there were no verified cases of on-campus COVID-19 transmission between students.
- On 21 December, a UR Courses capacity issue disrupted a number of final exams. Information Services quickly resolved the issue and most exams were completed that day. Only one had to be rescheduled; it took place in early January.
- The Winter 2021 term is well under way, guided by the University's [2020-2021 Framework for Teaching and Learning](#). The framework allows for a measured increase in on-campus courses, with approximately 1,500 students (less than 10% of the overall student population) now participating in approximately 200 in-person courses and course components. The list of approved in-person courses taking place may be found [here](#). The bulk of teaching and learning for this term continues to take place remotely.
- The Associate Vice-President (Academic) is overseeing a number of initiatives to enhance the teaching and learning experience for Winter 2021. Remote teaching and learning websites were updated and reorganized, and the Centre for Teaching and

Learning (CTL) and the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) hold regular sessions on strategies for remote teaching and learning. The CTL and CCE also developed the [Welcome to My Remote Course series](#) in which instructors demonstrate some of the innovations they use in their remote courses. The CTL is hiring an educational developer to support and expand its programming, and in March the Associate Vice-President (Academic) and the CTL Director will conduct surveys of students and instructors that will guide future teaching and learning initiatives.

- Preparations for the 2021-2022 academic year are also under way. For Spring/Summer 2021, the Academic Incremental Restoration working group (AIR) developed a preliminary [2021-2022 Framework for Teaching and Learning](#) that calls for a Spring/Summer term similar to Winter 2021, with most coursework to be delivered remotely.
- Per the framework, in January the In-Person Course Assessment Team (IPCAT) provided the Deans with revised in-person course criteria for Spring/Summer 2021. Based on submissions received to date, approximately 350 students will take in-person coursework on the University and federated college campuses during Spring/Summer. The finalized list of in-person courses offered for the term will be announced shortly.
- The sector approach to Fall 2021 has yet to be determined. In the meantime, AIR is currently updating the *2021-2022 Framework for Teaching and Learning* so work can begin quickly to prepare for Fall once the trajectory of the pandemic is clearer and a sector approach is determined.
- Pandemic permitting, the University hopes to increase the volume of in-person coursework and other on-campus activity for Fall 2021 and even more so for Winter 2022. To that end, AIR is tentatively planning for up to 5,000 students (30% of the total student population) to participate in low-density in-person coursework for Fall 2021. Any additional in-person activity will be undertaken cautiously, however. Recognizing that the trajectory of the pandemic is uncertain, that vaccines may not be widely available, and that herd immunity is unlikely to have been attained, at this point we anticipate remote delivery of the majority of coursework for Fall 2021 at least.

Objective 2: Ensure that the University's research enterprise is disrupted as little as possible over the next year.

- Since early September 2020 the University has continued to operate under Phase 3 of the [Return to Research Plan](#), which sees all University buildings once again eligible to host research activity according to strict COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Occupancy levels in labs and studios have reached a "steady state" as some existing on-campus research projects wrap up and new ones begin.
- The most recent survey of researchers indicated general satisfaction with existing Phase 3 COVID-19 research protocols. The Office of the Vice-President (Research) continues to monitor the situation and make adjustments as necessary to the risk assessment evaluation process conducted by the Risk Assessment Committee. For example, the December research town hall included discussion of the 2021 field season. Since then, researchers have been encouraged to submit their fieldwork risk assessments as soon as possible so they and their students can make early preparations for Spring/Summer field

research. Planning is under way to conduct a targeted survey of field and community researchers in late summer.

- The Research Office continues working with researchers applying for forthcoming funding deadlines, and supporting new initiatives in sustainability and agriculture research.
- The University will continue in Phase 3 of the *Return to Research Plan* for the foreseeable future.

Objective 3: Ensure operational continuity and stability across the entire University.

- The Operations Recovery Committee (ORC) continues its oversight of pandemic-related facilities management, human resource, and health and safety operations. This includes: ensuring compliance with public health orders; regulating student, faculty, and staff access to campus facilities; following strict sanitization protocols; assessing space capacity and ventilation requirements; and advising the Registrar's Office on the optimal use of rooms for courses and course components.
- Other health and safety activities include: conducting risk assessments for in-person teaching, research, and return-to-work activities; overseeing a process for the safe arrival of international students; working with contractors and other outside agencies; supporting faculty, staff, and students who report COVID-like symptoms; and working on a campus vaccination strategy.
- The University Recovery Planning Group (URP-G) continues its visioning and advising from scientific, strategic, and risk management perspectives. Since the last Board meeting, URP-G has met four times, provided advice to the University Executive Team, and contributed to University decisions and updates related to campus activities and density, reopening student recreation services, virus variants and vaccinations, and Fall 2021 planning. Members also hosted an engagement session with alumni of the UR Leading program to gather feedback and recommendations that will inform ongoing pandemic recovery planning activities.
- Looking to the longer term, URP-G's four dedicated COVID-19 working groups continued their focused explorations of Financial Implications, Productivity and Anxiety, Brand and Identity, and Safety and Science. URP-G also began modelling multiple scenarios that consider different rates of increase in campus activities for 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024 as a mechanism to integrate diverse variables such as enrolments and use of physical space into long-term planning.
- With the recruitment of students so crucial to the University's long-term sustainability, the Enrolment Services area of Student Affairs is working hard to increase the number of applicants. Virtual events in the near future will include a half-price application weekend, an application event with First Nations University of Canada for band-funded students, and participation in several out-of-province recruitment and career fairs. Also planned for the coming months are applicant conversion events in conjunction with the Faculties, a calling campaign to accepted but as-yet-unregistered students, and a course registration event.

- Likewise, UR international is actively recruiting for future years – something that is of increasing importance given the pandemic-related decline in new international students. Continuing activities include virtual admission-on-the-spot events, training sessions with recruiting agents, and enrolment counselling sessions for prospective students.
- India, Vietnam, Nigeria, Pakistan, China, Kenya, and Bangladesh are just some of the countries where recruitment is taking place. UR International is also reaching out to universities in China and Mexico to identify and build strategic program partnerships, develop new agreements, and secure targeted student cohorts for customized short-term programs.

Objective 4: Launch the new strategic plan and begin implementing key aspects.

- Faculty/unit strategic plans are in development. When complete at the end of June, these will guide individual areas in their work toward implementing key aspects of the 2020-2025 institutional strategic plan, [*kahkiyaw kiwâhkômâkaninawak – All Our Relations*](#).
- The President’s Advisory Committee on Sustainability has endorsed a framework to guide the development of an *Action Plan on Sustainability* that will be congruent with the strategic plan.
- The Office of the Vice-President (Research) is engaged in stakeholder consultations, which will include an April 1 University town hall meeting. These consultations will help the Vice-President (Research) develop a *Research Action Plan* to be launched in September.

Student Experience

- In lieu of in-person appointments, the Student Success Centre is providing virtual academic advising via Zoom, telephone, and email. It is also conducting student success workshops virtually on topics such as writing and math supports, time management, and study skills.
- During the pandemic, the Co-operative Education and Internships program has placed Co-op students at 87% of pre-pandemic numbers, including 221 in the current term.
- The nitôncipâmin omâ Student Success Program continues to be delivered remotely for the 15-student cohort in the Winter term, with academic review sessions being hosted through Zoom.
- Housing Services has created a process for students to defer their residence booking to subsequent terms, developed an online orientation to help students adjust to living on campus during the pandemic, and organized more than 50 virtual events for students in residence.
- The Registrar’s Office is exploring a number of initiatives to make the registration process simpler for students. These include restructuring instructional method codes so they are more intuitive for students, adding new features to the visual schedule builder, and extending class waitlists by seven calendar days.

- To help reduce costs for students, the Open Educational Resources Publishing Program supports instructors who are developing or wishing to use open educational resources in their classes. Through its most recent call for proposals, the program will oversee the creation of two new open-access textbooks. For Winter 2021, nearly 70 Zero-Cost Material (ZCM) courses are being offered with no textbook costs for students. Of note is the fact that an instructor who replaces an \$80 conventional textbook with a free open-access text reduces the total cost of the course by an amount equivalent to a tuition reduction of roughly 10%. The list of ZCM courses may be found [here](#); see also the section on *Indigenization of the Curriculum* below.
- The new Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and research has embarked on a project to revitalize the Faculty and foster overall graduate student success. Activities under way include: reviewing student supports, services, and related administrative processes; launching the UR Grad Experience, an online hub offering a series of professional development workshops; drafting terms of reference for graduate supervision; developing new awards for student achievement; holding town halls and virtual “Coffee with the Dean” sessions; and updating terms of reference for Women in STEM and Indigenous graduate awards.
- UR International continued its work to enhance the experience of international students. This included: offering a virtual orientation session as well as Faculty-specific town halls; launching the Virtual Exchange Program for Winter 2021 and subsequent terms; hosting virtual cultural activities for international, exchange, and short-term students; offering bi-weekly international student town halls and daily Zoom drop-in sessions; and offering programming virtually through the Global Learning Centre and Confucius Institute.

Student Mental Health

- The Counselling Services team of five clinicians uses a Stepped Care delivery model whereby students are presented with counselling options that go beyond traditional one-to-one therapy (e.g. group sessions, on-line help, self-help, peer supports). This model takes a goal-oriented approach, with students in working through challenges based on the principles of Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT).
- As the pandemic took hold in April 2020, Counselling Services began using ZOOM Healthcare to provide confidential mental health support to students at a distance. Since then, the team has held more than 2,600 ZOOM Healthcare consultations with students, many of whom otherwise might not have been able to attend in-person appointments.
- Demand for services continues to grow, with an average of more than 80 individual Zoom Health Care sessions each week, and an incremental client load currently averaging approximately 30 new clients per week. Despite this volume, students are responded to on the same day they request assistance and receive a consultation within a week (or sooner if it is deemed urgent).
- A November 2020 report in the *Toronto Star* provided evidence of the University’s increased attention to student mental health in recent years. Of approximately 100 Canadian universities surveyed, the University of Regina placed second in terms of its

proportional investment in mental health services since 2015. This investment has included an increase from two to five full-time clinicians. In addition, the University is one of only four institutions that does not have a wait time for counselling support.

- Another key support for students is the Online Therapy Unit's five-week Uniwellbeing program. The program, which receives support from the provincial government and is open to all Saskatchewan postsecondary students, allows students to receive weekly support from an online therapist as they work through materials at a time that is convenient for them. To date, close to 300 students from across the province have enrolled in the Uniwellbeing course.
- On 4 February, the Faculty of Kinesiology & Health Studies and SaskTel hosted a virtual presentation by internationally renowned mental health advocate Kevin Hines. Approximately 200 members of the University community registered.
- The University is one of 19 institutions in the province that recently signed the Healthy Campus Saskatchewan Charter (HCSK). The HCSK makes a sector-wide commitment to collaboratively support the health and well-being of postsecondary students. As part of its commitment to the HCSK, the University is administering the Canadian Campus Well-being Survey to get a better understanding of further actions that may be taken to support students' mental and physical health.
- Although it cannot be fully measured, the overall impact of these and the University's other mental health supports for students is undoubtedly significant and far-reaching.

Indigenization of the Curriculum

- For the past several years the Faculty of Science has been working on ways to weave Indigenous world views, teachings, and ways of learning into classrooms and labs. Recognizing that relationships are key to this work, the Faculty has strengthened connections with colleagues at First Nations University of Canada to revitalize course to include Indigenous knowledge. The Faculty has also taken steps to build meaningful relationships within local communities, including through participation in the Treaty 4 Gathering and the 2020 signing of a formal, collaborative relationship with the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council.
- Within lectures and labs, instructors take a variety of approaches to incorporate Indigenous teaching and ways of knowing. For labs whose multiple sections make in-person visits from Elders impossible, audio and/or video recordings are included of Elders sharing their teachings. In some courses, readings from Indigenous authors are incorporated into assignments, allowing students to see another scientific approach than the Eurocentric teachings commonly taught. Individual academic staff members work with Elders and community members to ensure that Indigenous knowledge incorporated into these courses and labs is done in a respectful, accurate, and meaningful way.
- In some courses, team work is more heavily emphasized than the individual learning approach because students who work in teams learn that fostering positive relationships can result in shared work and a stronger end product. And recognizing that not all students excel in the same way, some instructors have introduced different

options for submitting assignments. Instead of a written assignment, for example, students could have the option of creating a video lesson – something that provides them the opportunity to showcase their skills in a different way to foster mental well-being and promote their success.

- In addition, many instructors are switching their textbooks and course/lab materials to open source materials that specifically incorporate Indigenous knowledge.
- Updates from other Faculties will be featured in subsequent reports.

Microcredentialing

- A microcredentialing working group has met regularly since September 2020. It currently consists of AVP (Academic) Dr Nilgün Önder, Centre for Continuing Education Director Christie Schultz, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Dean Dr Aziz Douai, Registrar James D'Arcy, and Faculty of Business Administration Associate Dean (Research and Graduate Programs) Dr Lisa Watson.
- Some members of the working group are members of the Ministry of Advanced Education's advisory council on microcredentials created to advise the Ministry on its forthcoming draft document on a sector-wide framework. Ms Schultz is also participating in a national microcredential group that includes representatives from eCampus Ontario, BCampus, and the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Advanced Education.
- Following a series of consultations as well as a literature review and research on microcredentialing at other postsecondary institutions, the working group has drafted a framework for non-credit and credit undergraduate micro-credentials. It is also examining the possibility of graduate-level microcredentials.
- The group is awaiting the development of a sector-wide microcredentialing framework before finalizing that of the University. In the meantime, CCE is planning a launch of "Professional Microcredentials" within its non-credit, career and professional development portfolio. The launch is anticipated for May or June, coinciding with the release of Fall/Winter course schedules.

Notable Accomplishments

Students, faculty, staff, and alumni have had many notable accomplishments since the last Board meeting. Here are some examples I have not previously shared via my weekly messages to campus:

- 91 members of the **University of Regina athletics teams** were named Academic All-Canadians for having maintained 80 percent grade point averages over the past year. This is the highest number in the University's history.
- Faculty of Business Administration student **Jordan Tholl**, who plays football with the Regina Thunder, was named the recipient of the Canadian Junior Football League's Past Commissioner's Community Service Award. In addition to coaching high school football and wrestling, he is one of the students whose involvement in the Sask Masks initiative raised \$50,000 for the Regina Food Bank, YWCA, and Carmichael Outreach.

- A group of **35 journalism students** from the University of Regina and First Nations University of Canada released the results of their year-long investigative report into water quality on First Nations in Canada. The website and documentary film may be found [here](#).
- Journalism alumnus **Sean O’Shea** received a 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Radio Television Digital News Association in recognition of his four-decade reporting career.
- Alumnus **John Hampton**, who holds a Bachelor of Arts in visual arts from the University, was named Executive Director and CEO of the MacKenzie Art Gallery.
- Computer Science alumnus **David Plummer**, who helped create the “Task Manager” feature for Microsoft while an employee with the company, delivered the inaugural lecture in a series by alumni and friends of the department.
- The **Archer Library** held a virtual celebration for the University authors who published books, sound recordings, musical scores or films over the past year. A full list of those honoured may be found [here](#).
- Geology professors **Dr Janis Dale** and **Dr Joyce McBeth**, geology lab instructors **Monica Cliveti** and **Dan Ferguson**, and physics lab instructors **Shaun Szymanski** and **Stamatios Katsaganis** were featured on CBC for their innovative approaches to remote learning. The article can be found [here](#).
- Three professors have recently been appointed to research centres and institutes at the University:
 - Associate professor of justice studies **Dr Nicholas Jones** is Executive Director of the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment (CIPSRT);
 - Professor of creative technologies **Dr Charity Marsh** is director of the Humanities Research Centre; and
 - Associate professor of industrial and process systems engineering **Dr Hussameldin Ibrahim** is director of the Clean Energy Technologies Research Institute.
- SaskPower Clean Energy Research Chair **Dr Raphael Idem** was named a Fellow of the International Association of Advance Materials.
- The peptide-related COVID-19 testing and treatment work of department of chemistry and biochemistry associate professor **Dr Mohan Babu** was featured nationally as a Canadian “project to watch” in the worldwide effort to overcome the pandemic.
- *Research Infosource* named the University of Regina “Research University of the Year” in our category.