

**Report to the Board of Governors
For the period 24 February - 20 April 2021
Thomas Chase, Interim President and Vice-Chancellor**

In keeping with our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation as articulated in [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, this document reports on several key areas: the stability and sustainability of the University's teaching and learning, research, and facilities management operations during the pandemic; the implementation of the strategic plan; and the transition of the incoming President into his new role for 1 July.

Like previous reports, it also contains updates on areas of particular interest to the Board: 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 be pleased to provide it either at or after the May 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.

- As of 20 April, the Winter 2021 term is nearly complete. Coursework finished on 15 April, and final examinations take place remotely until 30 April.
- Per the University's [2020-2021 Framework for Teaching and Learning](#), Winter 2021 took place mainly through remote delivery, with a limited number of in-person course components. Approximately 600 students participated in 170 in-person course components. Many of these students took multiple in-person courses, with an overall total of 1,500 in-person registrations for the term.
- Due to COVID-19 variants of concern and the current rate of infection in Regina and area, effective 29 March all in-person teaching and learning was moved to remote delivery for the remainder of the Winter 2021 term. The transition to remote teaching and learning was less complicated for instructors and students than the sudden and unexpected transition at the same time last year.
- Throughout Winter 2021, the Associate Vice-President (Academic) oversaw work to enhance the teaching and learning experience. The remote teaching and learning websites were kept up-to-date with the assistance of Information Services and University Advancement & Communication (UAC). The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) shared remote teaching and learning strategies, as did the Centre for Continuing

Education (CCE). In March and April the Associate Vice-President (Academic) and the CTL Director launched surveys on remote teaching and learning experience. Survey results will be shared to inform teaching practices for the Fall term. The CTL is also recruiting an educational developer to expand its programming, and creating best practices in different modalities of teaching for Fall 2021 and beyond.

- Information Services (IS) worked with CCE and the University Library to ensure student and instructor supports were aligned with needs, continued the laptop lending program for students, and provided one-on-one examination design support to instructors. IS, CCE, and the Library are working with CTL to design and implement an institutional teaching and learning website to replace individual unit-specific sites. IS has also formed an E-Proctoring Advisory Committee to help the Interim Provost consider the University's long-term remote proctoring needs and strategy. In May, a working group of this committee will survey all course instructors who have used Proctortrack.
- Under the leadership of the Interim Provost, preparations continued for the 2021-2022 academic year. Most coursework for Spring-Summer 2021 will take place remotely. Safety permitting, a limited number of low-density in-person courses will also be offered, and the In-Person Course Assessment Team (IPCAT) oversaw the process by which more than 20 in-person courses (listed [here](#)) were approved for approximately 350 students. Given the current state of the pandemic in the province, plans are in place should the term, which begins 3 May, need to begin remotely.
- In mid-April, the Ministry of Advanced Education provided sector-developed guidelines that allowed the Academic Incremental Restoration Working Group to update and publicly share its [2021-2022 Framework for Teaching and Learning](#) with an eye to Fall 2021. Per the framework (and depending on the trajectory of the pandemic over the summer), Fall 2021 will be a transitional term that sees a carefully managed re-opening of the University. The University is planning for an increased volume of in-person course offerings, but with masking and some level of physical distancing still in place, and many courses still taught remotely. Determining what in-person courses will be offered for the term is now the responsibility of the Deans.
- UAC is implementing a comprehensive communications plan to ensure that the University and wider community are aware of current plans coming terms.
- At this point, it is anticipated that a full re-opening of the University to a pre-pandemic state will take place for Winter 2022. Because of the flexibility they afford for students and instructors and in light of the enhanced infrastructure now in place, remote and hybrid courses are expected to make up a larger proportion of course offerings than they did before the pandemic.

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

- For most of the Winter 2021 term, the University continued under Phase 3 (Yellow) of the [Return to Research Plan](#), in which all University buildings were eligible to host research activity, and in-person research in the community was permitted according to strict COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

- In light of public health measures for Regina and area announced on 24 March, and in alignment with the decision to suspend face-to-face delivery of classes, the Vice-President (Research) announced a temporary return to Phase 1 (Red) research restrictions effective 29 March. The rationale and implications of the decision were further discussed with the University community at a 1 April town hall.
- To minimize disruptions to research, the recently implemented return to Phase 1 differs slightly from that enacted in May 2020. There are no restrictions on which University buildings may host research, and one individual per “Principal Investigator-assigned lab space” is permitted. All other Phase 1 restrictions are in effect. In addition, COVID-19 and animal-related research projects are considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Associate Vice-President (Research).
- The temporary Phase 1 research restrictions are in place until 26 April and will be reassessed at that time. The University plans to return to Phase 3 as soon as possible, guided by provincial government health and safety regulations.
- The Research Office continued supporting researchers in advance of forthcoming external research funding deadlines. In addition, UAC is collaborating with the Office of the Vice-President (Research) on a strategy to promote researchers nationally. That work has included promoting research with media, facilitating submissions to *The Conversation Canada* (whose readers have now accessed University of Regina research stories 1.7 million times), and partnering with the Lifelong Learning Centre to offer a forthcoming series featuring University researchers.
- The Office of the Vice-President (Research) is working with IS to formalize the governance of a Researching Information Technology Support Group that will be housed in IS for the coming academic year.
- Given the increasing complexity of research conducted at the University of Regina, an external review of the Research Ethics Board (REB) is under way. The review will help the REB improve processes for the benefit of University researchers.

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

- While continuing the wide variety of facilities management, human resource, and health and safety activities noted in the last report, the Operations Recovery Committee oversaw other key pandemic-related initiatives. These included: supporting Faculties and units as they prepare for an eventual return to the workplace; providing risk assessments for on-campus summer youth camps and off-campus research field work; launching an on-campus vaccination clinic in partnership with the SHA; and working with the SHA on a possible COVID-19 rapid testing program on campus.
- The University Recovery Planning Group met four times during the reporting period and continued to advise the University Executive Team on issues such as in-person campus activities, the impact of virus variants, and the efficacy of vaccinations. Members also met with the Vice-President (Research) to identify specific challenges ahead and strategic goals for research activities on campus.
- Information Services continued its regular capital upgrades to wireless equipment and servers. In addition, the unit worked on several other continuity-related initiatives.

These included: developing a three-year strategic plan; creating a proposal for an Academic Information Technology Governance Committee; working with Human Resources to advance new security standards for home computers used by employees working remotely; and contemplating an amendment to the desktop computing program to enhance laptop access for employees working remotely.

- Recruitment of domestic and international students remains a very high priority. Work in Enrolment Services included: participating in the Strategic Enrolment Management project led by Ruffalo Noel Levitz; holding the annual Spring Open House, a guidance counsellor update, and a variety of admissions and scholarship workshops; assisting with Faculty conversion events; participating in virtual recruitment fairs; consulting with Faculties to ensure consistency in admission requirements; and collaborating with UAC on marketing initiatives. UR International continued its virtual recruitment initiatives in select countries as outlined in the previous report, and hosted an International Exchange forum that was attended by approximately 100 institutions from 50 countries.
- UAC is working closely with Ruffalo Noel Levitz as well as the Faculties and units to develop the structure and content for the new institutional website. In addition, UAC has completed consultations with the Faculties and units regarding the case for support of the Board-approved fundraising campaign.

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

- Although the majority of Faculty/unit plans will be completed by the end of June, some of the larger, more complex Faculties (Arts, for example) expect to submit their strategic plans by September. These plans will guide individual areas in implementing [kahkiyaw kiwâhkômâkaninawak – All Our Relations](#). The Interim Provost has committed to post the Faculty/unit strategic plans on the University's website.
- As noted previously, the President's Advisory Committee on Sustainability (PACS) has endorsed a framework to guide the development of an *Action Plan on Sustainability* that will be congruent with the strategic plan. Since then, PACS has been working with the Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Association to conduct a student survey on sustainability priorities. Student perspectives will be incorporated into the plan.
- A [summary report of achievements](#) from the 2015-2020 *Sustainability Strategic Plan* was shared with campus on 20 April, together with an invitation to join the thematic sustainability working groups. These working groups will identify potential actions to be incorporated into the *Action Plan on Sustainability*.
- Consultations intended to help the Vice-President (Research) develop a *Research Action Plan* to be launched in September have been delayed due to the temporary return to Phase 1 research restrictions. Additional consultation sessions are scheduled for May.

Objective 5: Help the next full-term President transition into the role.

- With the announcement of Dr Keshen's appointment, I commenced meeting with him regularly via Zoom to discuss the University's operations and challenges, and provide additional information. Dr Keshen regularly joins University Executive Team and Senior Leadership Team meetings, is consulted on decisions that will impact him as he takes up

the presidency, and is included in all correspondence on matters for which he will have responsibility beginning in July. My goal is as seamless a transition as possible.

Enhancing the Student Experience

- Student Affairs continued offering a full suite of remote academic advising and supports, student success workshops, student engagement programs, and career education sessions. From January through March 2021, advisors fielded more than 4,300 email inquiries from students – more than double the number from last year.
- The Registrar’s Office is enhancing services for students. Initiatives include: implementing a new platform by which students can send their official, digitized transcripts or other documents electronically to other institutions anywhere and at any time; piloting a transfer credit project to expedite credit assessments and save money for students transferring here from other institutions; developing a comprehensive Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion policy for students; reviewing instructional methods and scheduling codes so students can make better-informed decisions on course selection; and developing a new class scheduling system that will allow academic units and faculty members to designate Zero-Cost Materials courses so students can more easily register in them to reduce their textbook costs.
- Information Services now provides live Proctortrack support to instructors and students during the first hour of each exam sitting to troubleshoot any issues and thereby help reduce exam stress and anxiety.
- The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research is developing a strategic plan focused on graduate student success. In addition, the Dean intends to revise the existing mandatory Academic Integrity course to include other essential skills as part of a new Grad THRIVE Plus course that will help students transition both into and from graduate school.
- In addition to continuing the student support initiatives noted previously, UR International has assisted 260 new international students who have arrived in the country. This has included informing them of travel restrictions and self-quarantine guidelines, and facilitating pre-departure and post-arrival support sessions.

Supporting Student Mental Health

- A key student mental health initiative mentioned in the previous report is our participation in the Healthy Campus Saskatchewan Charter (HCSK), which has garnered funding to administer the Canadian Campus Well-Being Survey (CCWS). Approximately 1,500 students responded to the CCWS survey. The complete report, expected soon, will inform the University’s development of mental wellness supports.
- The University also received a “Bell Let’s Talk” Postsecondary Fund Kickoff grant. In coming months these funds will be used to align the University’s mental health supports with the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s recently developed national standard for mental health and wellbeing for postsecondary students.

Indigenization of the Curriculum

- The Faculty of Education has committed to Indigenizing its processes, practices, and curricula. To fulfill this commitment, the Faculty created the Chair of Indigenization position to provide leadership in establishing policy and practice related to Indigenization. The Chair supports the work of elders and knowledge keepers. Faculty and staff also benefit from the Education Indigenous Circle, a space in which issues, ideas and perspectives are shared and explored.
- Students participate in local Indigenous community activities, such as serving as helpers for Treaty 4 Days. Other opportunities for students include a Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) student group, an annual Indigenous Research Forum, and a welcome tea for Indigenous Graduate students.
- In affiliation with the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Faculty will soon deliver a new community-based master's degree and a new Northern Saskatchewan Indigenous Teacher Education Program in La Ronge. Another new development is the recent approval of a Gabriel Dumont Research Chair in Michif/Métis Education, the first of its kind in Canada.
- Efforts are under way to develop an equity-based admission target for the undergraduate program. Additionally, an Indigenous scholar recruitment and retention policy has been introduced.
- Other areas in which the Faculty of Education has Indigenized its programming and curriculum include:
 - Master of Indigenous Language Education and Indigenous Education programs;
 - Master of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership program, which requires a minimum of one Indigenous/anti-oppressive course. As a result, roughly 80% of graduate students will be required to have at least one course in this area;
 - 19 graduate courses focused on Indigenous education issues as seen from a variety of perspectives;
 - Indigenous scholarship and literature introduced into course teachings and readings; and
 - Creation of the Nanatawihowikamik Healing Lodge - a classroom space developed alongside Indigenous Faculty members and Elders to Indigenize the Educational Counselling Psychology program.
- Updates from other Faculties will be included in subsequent reports.

Microcredentialing

- The Working Group on Microcredentials (whose membership and work were described in the previous report) submitted its comments and recommendations on the draft sector-wide framework for microcredentials to the Ministry of Advanced Education.
- The Working Group also finalized the University's non-credit and undergraduate for-credit microcredentials framework and is currently working on the graduate-level framework. A proposal for undergraduate for-credit microcredentials has been

submitted to the Council Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and Studies (CCUAS) for discussion and approval. If approved by CCUAS, the undergraduate for-credit microcredential proposal will proceed to Executive Council and then Senate for consideration in coming months.

- CCE continues preparing for a May/June launch of non-credit career and professional development microcredentials.

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:

- Some key administrative appointments took place:
 - Dr Douglas Farenick was appointed to a second term as Dean of the Faculty of Science effective 1 July 2022;
 - Dr Cheryl Pollard of MacEwan University was appointed Dean of Nursing effective 1 July 2021.
 - Alumna Lori Campbell was appointed the University's first Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Engagement) effective 1 June 2021.
- Dr Garth Huber and his student research team from the department of physics are contributing to the design and construction of one of the world's most powerful particle detectors, the Solenoidal Large Intensity Device, or SoLID. SoLID will be built between 2022 and 2025 and housed at the Jefferson Lab in Virginia.
- Campion College assistant professor of astronomy Dr Samantha Lawler worked with UAC to submit an English/French article titled "Previously thought to be science fiction, a planet in a triple-star system has been discovered" and "Ce n'est pas de la science-fiction : une planète a bel et bien été découverte dans un système à trois étoiles" to *The Conversation Canada*. The article has been read more than 475,000 times.
- Instructor Mark Taylor of the school of journalism provided photography to *Maclean's* magazine for its feature story on Dr Saqib Shahab, Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer.
- In late March, Faculty of Science alumnus Larry Matthies of NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab delivered a virtual lecture on robotic exploration of Mars. Mr Matthies who was a key contributor to the technology used as part of the most recent Mars landing,
- Alumnus and former Luther College associate professor of psychology Regan Shercliffe is part of the World Food Programme team that was awarded the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize.
- Alumna and former employee Dr Bianca Hatin, now a lecturer in psychology at the University of the West of Scotland, was interviewed by *Nature Partner Journals* about her innovative ways of teaching cognitive neuroscience.
- Alumnus Ralph Goodale, former Member of Parliament for the constituency of Regina Wascana, was appointed High Commissioner for Canada to the United Kingdom.