

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.

At its May meeting, the Board of Governors approved a set of five objectives to guide my work over the next year until the completion of my term as Interim President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Regina.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its current impact on the University's operations, these objectives are strongly focused on the continuity and sustainability of the institution's teaching and learning, research, and overall operations. As the year progresses, I will devote increasing attention to the implementation of the new strategic plan, and prepare the transition to new leadership that will take place when the presidential search concludes next year.

What follows is a report on some of the many actions taken since late April - and perhaps more importantly, some of the many actions being taken now and into the near future - in these five key areas of focus.

One action - the creation of the University Recovery Planning Group (URP-G) - warrants particular mention. This forward-looking group of University of Regina specialists is advising the University Executive Team from scientific, strategic, and financial/risk management perspectives. URP-G's work, which encompasses long-term visioning in the key areas of teaching and learning, research, and overall operations, will be critical to the University over the next few years as the institution moves forward into a "new normal" created by the pandemic and its effects on all aspects of society.

It is also important to recognize that during these challenging times, students, faculty, staff and alumni have continued to have success in many areas of endeavour; for that reason, the final section of this report contains highlights of those successes.

**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.**

Since 2014-15, the number of University of Regina courses offered at a distance has more than doubled. In the current academic year, prior to the pandemic, more than 11% of undergraduate and graduate courses were being offered at a distance.

Even so, the decision to offer the Spring/Summer term completely at a distance has required the University to enhance its supports for remote delivery of coursework. As a result, a University-wide effort has taken place during the reporting period to ensure that students and teaching staff have the best possible experience in the current and coming terms.

**For Spring/Summer 2020:**

- Chaired by the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), the Academic Incremental Recovery Working Group (AIR) is responsible for planning and overseeing the overall delivery of coursework.
- To this end, three AIR working groups - Information Technology, Student Supports, and Instructor Supports - collaborated closely.
- The Information Services working group, chaired by the Associate Vice-President (Information Services), undertook a number of initiatives including:
  - Creating and maintaining the website infrastructure for University's "gateway to the Spring/Summer term," which may be found here: <https://www.uregina.ca/spring-summer/>;
  - Developing student and faculty technical support information for the gateway site;
  - Providing guidance as Information Services helped students and faculty with technical challenges encountered during the term; and
  - Creating a laptop computer loan program for students who otherwise might not have the computer access required for remote coursework.
- The Student Supports working group, chaired by the Associate Vice-President (Academic), developed solutions to students' academic, technological, and other challenges in the current remote teaching and learning environment, including:
  - Creating guides for students and academic advisors regarding particular issues arising from remote teaching and learning;
  - Collaborating with the Information Services working group on solutions for students' online connectivity challenges; and

- Developing student supports for remote learning.
- The Instructor Supports working group addressed challenges faced by teaching staff during Spring/Summer. That work included:
  - Preparing instructor support material for the “gateway to the Spring/Summer term” area of the website;
  - Updating a document to guide faculty members in arranging accommodations for students who require them; and
  - Collaborating with the Student Supports working group to solve issues common to both teaching staff and students.
- Many other units across the University contributed to enhancing the Spring/Summer teaching and learning experience:
  - Instructional designers in the Centre for Continuing Education helped teaching staff design their courses for remote delivery. They continue to support by creating helpful pages and videos, and hosting virtual drop-in sessions for instructors;
  - For their courses, some instructors used textbooks developed through our Open Textbook Program. This eliminated some textbook costs for students while enhancing accessibility. Likewise, library staff helped instructors identify other institutions’ open access textbooks that could be used for University of Regina courses;
  - In Student Affairs, academic advisors have played a strong role in support of the Faculties, in addition to being the primary advising resource for new, undecided and international students. Counselling Services began using Zoom Healthcare for counselling at a distance. The Centre for Student Accessibility has continued serving students at a distance by ensuring that accommodation needs are met. The ta-tawâw Student Centre continues to provide programming and support at a distance for Indigenous students;
  - The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research has held a series of virtual town halls to address student concerns, added support resources to its website, and provided registration accommodations for those affected by the pandemic; and
  - Financial Services, together with other areas, has taken measures to ease the financial burden on students during the term. These include disbursing more than \$300,000 in emergency funding, providing parking refunds, and not charging the Recreation and Athletics fee. The University has also arranged for 30 Co-operative Education student placements on campus.

### For Fall 2020 and beyond:

- AIR is completing the development of a framework for teaching and learning for the coming year that will, if public health guidelines permit, see a limited number of low-density in-person courses offered at the Regina campuses. AIR's newly created In-Person Course Assessment Team (IPCAT) assisted Faculties in determining what low-density courses, labs and studios could safely be offered on-campus.
- Because the vast majority of courses will not be offered in person, units across the University are working to enhance the experience of teaching and learning at a distance for the Fall and Winter terms:
  - CCE has hired four Co-operative Education students to assist teaching staff who need one-to-one support as they develop and deliver their forthcoming Zoom and online courses. Early emphasis is on assisting those teaching high-enrolment courses;
  - For the Fall term, CCE is offering a large number of previously developed online courses, which will ease the process of course development and delivery for some teaching staff; CCE is also expediting the online development of a number of high-enrolment introductory courses required by students across programs. This will help ensure the best possible online learning experience for these students who are near the beginning of their academic careers;
  - An exam "e-proctoring" pilot is underway in Spring/Summer so that teaching staff will have the ability to better monitor exam-taking at a distance;
  - AIR's Student Supports working group is ensuring that supplemental academic support is available if necessary for incoming students whose final term of high school was disrupted;
  - Enrolment Services working is closely with guidance counsellors as well as students and parents to ensure they are aware of the supports available to incoming students for the fall. In addition, the Orientation Committee has moved first-year orientation online, creating modules that students may complete on their own time during the summer prior to live virtual orientation events in late August and early September;
  - The University has hired a part-time manager for the Open Textbook Program. In the coming terms, the manager will support the creation of new open textbooks, promote their use, and help faculty members who choose to use them. This will ultimately reduce textbook costs and increase accessibility for students;

- The University has taken steps to reduce other costs for students and otherwise assist them for the Fall term and beyond. These include honouring scholarships for student-athletes whose athletic programs have been cancelled for the year, and cancelling financial holds and waiving late fees from the Winter 2020 term.
- It is important to note that work to enhance teaching and learning at a distance during the pandemic will have positive long-term effects for the University and its students. The process of implementing these measures has fostered stronger connections between units such as the Library, Information Services, and Flexible Learning. As a result, in future teaching staff will have more co-ordinated supports available to them when teaching at a distance.

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

Working with faculty and staff from across the University, the Vice-President (Research) has co-ordinated efforts to ensure that research continues, or is able to resume, where possible.

For Spring/Summer 2020:

- The University has maintained research continuity in part by supporting those who are able to conduct their research from home. To that end, the Office of the Vice-President (Research) has held a series of Virtual Research Town Halls to encourage research from home, communicate available supports, and address researchers' questions or concerns.
- Chaired by the Vice-President (Research), the Return to Research working group (which includes members of the Council Committee on Research) developed a four-phase *Return to Research Plan*. This plan aligns closely with the Province's *Re-Open Saskatchewan* plan, and allows for a graduated return to lab and studio work, field research, and research involving contact with human participants. It may be found here: <https://www.uregina.ca/research/policies-forms-top/Return-to-Research-Plan.pdf>.
- Following approval from the Province, Phase 1 of the plan was implemented on 25 May, allowing in-person research to resume in a limited number of locations on campus, with no undergraduate student involvement and no face-to-face interactions with human participants. Researchers completed a risk assessment form that was evaluated by the Risk Assessment Committee before proceeding to the Vice-President (Research) and applicable Dean for final approval.

- Phase 2 of the return to research was implemented on 8 June and remains in effect. It expands the number of available on-campus research locations, permits field work to resume in some circumstances, and allows undergraduate participation. Researchers may proceed only if their completed risk assessment form is approved.
- To date, 69 research projects have been approved to resume activities under Phases 1 and 2.
- Throughout, the Research Office has offered support to members of the University's research community. This has included creating research-related resources on the University website and communicating with researchers and funding agencies regarding any changes to internal or external application deadlines.

For Fall 2020 and beyond:

- Taking into account the state of the pandemic and the Province's response to it, the Council Committee on Research subcommittee that helped develop the University's *Return to Research Plan* will provide recommendations on the plan's continuing implementation.
- The Office of the Vice-President (Research) is collaborating with the University's research community to gauge the success of the research recovery initiative. A report is anticipated by the end of July. The purpose of the assessment is:
  - To guide near-term decisions regarding further relaxation of restrictions;
  - To ensure that the University is safely and responsibly managing the return to research;
  - To inform research recovery process reviews and subsequent improvements; and
  - To document successes and opportunities for improvement in the event of a future pandemic.

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

During the pandemic, the University's key functions of teaching, learning and research would grind to a halt without continuity in core operational areas such as Human Resources (including Health and Safety), Facilities Management, Financial Services, Information Services, Student Affairs, and University Advancement & Communications. A great deal of work has taken place to ensure that continuity and stability.

### For Spring/Summer 2020:

- Under the leadership of the Vice-President (Administration) and in close consultation with sector partners and government officials, the Operations Recovery Committee (ORC) has planned and overseen continuity in the University's core operations. The health and safety of students, faculty and staff have been paramount in this work. ORC's areas of focus for the term have been:
  - Assessing the University's physical spaces at all campuses and ensuring they are safe for the limited number of people who are on site. This includes evaluating and implementing changes to physical spaces (e.g., entries, exits, classrooms, labs, hallways, offices), updating and modifying floor plans and signage, and rethinking space capacity in light of the need for physical distancing. Expert external consultants from Stantec have assisted with this process;
  - Identifying and securing items needed to comply with increased cleaning needs;
  - Developing policies and resources for employees working remotely. This includes implementing new training and assessment tools for mental wellness and ergonomics, and ensuring that needs for technology are met;
  - Ensuring that residence, student health, counselling, food services, bookstore and other student needs are addressed;
  - Monitoring the University's financial health and adapting budget plans and projections as necessary; and
  - Evaluating and responding to event and campus access requests.
- University Advancement & Communications has continued to co-ordinate campus and public communications (including the website and social media) regarding the University's operations, and is responding to enquiries from members of the University and larger community.

### For Fall 2020 and beyond:

- Throughout the academic year, ORC will continually assess and oversee the operational measures noted above to ensure that the University can continue to meet its research and teaching obligations. This will include anticipating and preparing for a possible phased return to work for employees depending on the status of the pandemic.
- University Advancement & Communications is redesigning the University website, with a particular eye to ensuring that for Fall 2020, crucial information about the institution's operations is well-organized and readily available for students, faculty, staff, and the general public.

- Given that enrolment management is crucial for the University's long-term sustainability, in challenging circumstances Enrolment Services has done a tremendous amount of work in the area of recruitment. This has included:
  - Meeting virtually with Saskatchewan guidance counsellors to update them on plans for the fall term;
  - Communicating via Zoom, social media and/or telephone with prospective and new students and their parents;
  - Hosting virtual events such as an open house, a free registration session, and an adult learner session;
  - Creating an interactive online viewbook;
  - Coordinating a registration phone campaign; and
  - Making plans for this academic year to connect with Grade 12 students through their schools, attend virtual recruitment fairs, and participate in face-to-face events should that be possible. The University will also move forward virtually with its Strategic Enrolment Planning Project in partnership with Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

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

As noted in the last report, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting provincial restrictions on physical gatherings forced the University to postpone the planned April launch of the newly approved Strategic Plan. Since that time, the Strategic Plan Facilitation Team and University Advancement & Communications worked together to plan and hold a virtual launch to introduce *All Our Relations - kahkiyaw kiwâhkomâkâninawak* to the University community, key stakeholders, and the general public:

- The Facilitation Team completed final edits to the document and provided input as University Advancement & Communications oversaw the graphic design.
- The launch took place as a Zoom webinar on 18 June, with more than 260 people in attendance. I wish to extend particular thanks to Board Chair Roger Brandvold for hosting the event and outlining how important *All Our Relations - kahkiyaw kiwâhkomâkâninawak* is for the University.
- Several variations of the Strategic Plan - A PDF, an ebook, a flip book, and an "At a Glance" version - are now available on the University website, together with a recording of the launch.

- The University intends to hold a launch for students in fall to help familiarize them with the Strategic Plan. In the meantime, *All Our Relations - kahkiyaw kiwâhkomâkâninawak* will continue to be disseminated to the University community and beyond through social media campaigns.
- In the coming months, I will work with the Board to determine what progress indicators from the Strategic Plan may be included as annual targets in the University's Performance Measurement Framework. I will also discuss with other groups and individuals on campus what elements of the plan they would like to prioritize for implementation.

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

With the search for the next full-term president only just under way, reporting on this objective is premature. Once the successful candidate is announced, I will begin reporting on my transition work with them.

## **CELEBRATING OUR UNIVERSITY**

*This report highlights some faculty, staff and student successes as well as some other notable campus events since the last Board meeting.*

### **Faculty and staff success**

- Nine University researchers were awarded a total of more than \$1.2 million in funding through the National Science and Engineering Research Council's Discovery Grants program. They and their projects are:
  - Dr Kaila Bruer, Department of Psychology - Cognitive mechanisms underlying face recognition memory reports;
  - Dr Liming Dai, Faculty of Engineering - Solving and analyzing nonlinear multibody dynamic engineering systems with a piecewise linearization approach;
  - Dr Jennifer Gordon, Department of Psychology - Clarifying the mechanisms underlying Estradiol's effect on human behaviour;
  - Dr Chun-Hua Guo, Department of Mathematics and Statistics - Matrix equations and tensor problems;

- Dr Paul Laforge, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science - Surrogate based automated tuning of microwave devices and systems;
  - Dr Samantha Lawler, Department of Physics - Understanding the architecture of complete planetary systems;
  - Dr Donald Stanley, Department of Mathematics and Statistics - Functors in homotopy theory;
  - Dr Fernando Szechtman, Department of Mathematics and Statistics - Indecomposable Lie algebra representations; and
  - Dr Jinkai Xue, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science - Fundamental studies on dynamic membrane bioreactor-based processes for wastewater treatment in cold regions.
- Dr Tarun Katapally and Dr Ken Coates, faculty members in the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy's (JSGS) University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan campuses, have been awarded \$150K and \$250K respectively from Mitacs, a national not-for-profit innovation organization. The projects will introduce Indigenous and northern communities to digital technologies that can help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and provide additional economic and commercial opportunities for the region.
  - Dr Katapally also received the 2020 "One to Watch" award from the International Society of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity - an organization with more than 1,000 members in 44 countries.
  - Two members of the University of Regina community were recipients of the 2020 Saskatchewan Order of Merit, presented on 5 June by Saskatchewan's Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Russ Mirasty. Pamela Klein is the chancellor of the University and a former Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors. Dr Gordon Asmundson is a registered doctoral psychologist, professor of psychology, director of the Anxiety and Illness Behaviour Lab, and a Fellow of the Royal Society.
  - A team of University of Regina researchers led by University of Regina assistant professor of Engineering Dr Abdul Bais is currently working on a project that will help farmers reduce their environmental impact while maximizing their economic returns. The project will enhance farmers' ability to selectively apply herbicides to weeds in more efficient ways and reduce both crop and environmental damage.

## Student and alumni success

- The University developed a number of remote/virtual initiatives to help graduating students mark their academic accomplishments. They include:
  - A virtual yearbook for our 2020 Spring graduates. Students were invited to submit their photos, favourite memories, plans after graduation, and of course the degree or diploma earned. The searchable yearbook will be published digitally and all graduates will receive digital memory books;
  - A graduating package that includes a congratulatory letter from the University, a printed souvenir brochure listing all Spring 2020 graduates, and their University of Regina degree, certificate or diploma; and
  - A special video presentation. This video aired on Access Communications on Thursday 25 June, and has been posted on the University website and shared via social media.
- The first cohort of 21 students graduated from the Dene Teacher Education Program (DTEP). The University of Regina and First Nations University of Canada help deliver DTEP out of the Clearwater River Dene First Nation.
- In the last report, it was noted that through the Enactus program, four students from the Paul J. Hill School of Business launched a project in which they create and sell masks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. At that time, they had raised \$10,000 for Carmichael Outreach, the Regina YWCA, and the Regina Food Bank. They have now raised more than \$35,000 for these organizations.
- The University's Muslim Students' Association is working with the Regina Muslim Community Emergency Response to recruit volunteers who provide assistance such as grocery and medication pick-ups for those experiencing challenges due to the pandemic.
- During the pandemic, recent Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies graduate Darby Kraus has been offering free live-streamed home fitness classes for those unable to work out at public gyms.
- Former University of Regina doctoral candidate Jhonatan Oliveira of the Department of Computer Science received the Canadian Artificial Intelligence Association's 2020 Best Doctoral Dissertation Award for his dissertation entitled *On the Development of Deep Convolutional Sum-Product Networks*. This is the first time a University of Regina graduate has received this award since it was established nearly a decade ago.

- Abayomi Akintola, a University of Regina doctoral student in the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, has been awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship. His focus of study will provide a framework for the adoption and application of big data and big data analytics in the public sector.
- Merelda Fiddler-Potter, also a University of Regina doctoral student in the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, has been awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Centennial Aboriginal Scholarship. Her research will be a qualitative, comparative case study exploring how current storytelling in the media affects both media and policy agendas.
- The University of Regina Rams had two players selected in the 2020 CFL Draft - offensive lineman Theren Churchill, who was selected in the first round by the Toronto Argonauts, and offensive lineman Andrew Becker, who was selected in the sixth round by the Montréal Alouettes.

### **University events and announcements**

In light of the pandemic, the University held many virtual events throughout the reporting period that involved the campus and larger communities:

- In conjunction with Clean Air Day on 3 June, Great Plains Air Zone (GPAZ) and the Dr John Archer Library partnered to make air quality data openly accessible for education and research purposes. Stored in the Archer Library's Dataverse data repository, the datasets contain precise air quality measures from GPAZ's three air quality monitoring stations located in East Regina, Belle Plaine and Yorkton. The data will be beneficial to researchers and students interested in studying air quality in Saskatchewan.
- In early June, the Hill and Levene Schools of Business held a virtual event to release the findings of their first report as the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH) for Saskatchewan. WEKH's Report on Women's Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan was led by Dr Amber Fletcher, Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies, Christie Newton, Levene graduate student, and Dr Gina Grandy, Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration.
- The University Executive Team hosted a virtual town hall for faculty and staff on June 19 to discuss the University's timetable for a return to more normalized operations, including a return to on-site work and in-person teaching and learning.
- Through the Office of the Vice-President (Research), the University hosted two virtual town halls dedicated to the themes of racism and equity, diversity and inclusion at our University, in our city and province, and beyond.

- The Alumni Relations team, together with the Centre for Continuing Education, presented a free virtual lecture series comprising six research presentations through May and June. The online nature of the events allowed the University to reach alumni more easily beyond the Regina area.
- The Alumni Relations team has also created an online book club exclusively for alumni and friends. Book club members participate via a private forum where they can discuss the current book and connect with others around the globe. Funds from the purchase of the books being discussed go to the Student Emergency Fund.
- The Parking Lot 8 on the University's main campus will be serving as the location for public drive-in movie nights this summer. Put on by Summer Bash YQR, the first "Summer Bash Drive-In Theatre" movie night was held on 14 June.