

CONTEXT

Over the past few months, I have devoted a great deal of effort to getting to know the University of Regina community through introductory meetings with individuals, Faculties, and units across the institution. At the same time, much initial outreach has taken place with all levels of government, Indigenous leadership, and other stakeholders.

These meetings have helped me learn about the University culture, understand many of the challenges and opportunities we face together, and understand people's broader perceptions of and aspirations for the University. For example, I am increasingly familiar with major areas of research, teaching innovation, and several pertinent issues including budgets, major projects, labour relations, the restoration of in-person University activities, and revenue generation.

Given that these matters will inform much of my normal day-to-day work, I don't view acclimatization to the University as a unique objective for the next year. Nor do I view ensuring a smooth transition, continuing effective stewardship, and working effectively with the leadership team as primary objectives on which I should report to the Board.

Rather, I want to ensure that my objectives to be reported on for the Board are related to key areas of focus for the University as a whole, and that every year this focus should factor into my individual reports and annual performance. If approved by the Board, the following draft objectives – developed in concert with the University Executive Team and based on meetings I have had with other members of the University community – will also inform strategic leadership retreats scheduled for late August.

In forming these objectives (some of which may be multi-year ones, but all of which have measurable activities for the coming year), I am operating under the assumption that we will continue in an environment of fiscal restraint precluding the likelihood of major new infrastructure – especially since the post-COVID new normal may see more permanent online interactions, teaching, and work, all requiring less physical space.

Objective 1: Restore campuses back to full pre-pandemic operations

- As the COVID-19 pandemic abates, it is imperative over the next year that the University safely resume operations at pre-pandemic levels. This restoration of operations will take place through a transitional Fall term as well as a Winter term that is anticipated to see a full return to the usual volume of in-person activities on our campuses. Measures of success over the year will include: the relaxation and eventual elimination of physical distancing and masking requirements; the return of the majority of in-person courses (recognizing that hybrid or online courses may make up a larger percentage of courses than before); the resumption of public events on campus including athletics events and public lectures; and a full return to research.

Objective 2: Develop and approve detailed business plans for initiatives designed to foster long-term financial sustainability

- With the Government of Saskatchewan providing \$11 million over the next two years for the University to develop initiatives that will contribute to the institution's long-term financial stability, it will be crucial to move these initiatives forward in a timely manner. The major indicator of progress over the course of the year will be that proposals for revenue generation and finding efficiencies are submitted to the Senior Leadership Team, carefully considered, adjusted and approved as appropriate, and developed to include detailed business plans.

Objective 3: Advance Truth and Reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization at the University

- For the first time in its history, the University has an Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Engagement) – something which affords a tremendous opportunity to move the process of Truth and Reconciliation forward at the institution over the coming year and into the future. As the University works to advance Truth and Reconciliation, key measurables for the year will be to take a full inventory of the institution's Indigenization and decolonization initiatives, and develop recommendations to address key gaps.

Objective 4: Implement strategies to restore undergraduate and graduate international enrolments to pre-pandemic levels

- It will be imperative to continue work this year on what will be a multi-year process of building international student enrolments back to pre-pandemic levels. Last year, UR International and the Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research developed recruitment and enrolment strategies to attract international students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. One measurable for this year will be refining these existing strategies as circumstances dictate and implementing them. Another will be developing and implementing new strategies as necessary. Interim progress will also be measured by targeting a 10% overall year-over-year increase in the number of new international students (April 2022 compared to April 2021).

Objective 5: Continue the University's website re-design with an eye to enhancing student recruitment

- At a time when domestic and international enrolment are key priorities, the ongoing re-design of the University website will have significant implications for the institution's recruitment of students. For this reason, a key measure of success will be launching Phase 1 (all landing pages) of the re-design by December 31, 2021, ensuring that the institution is more competitive in the market with a mobile-friendly, search engine optimized (SEO) website aimed at prospective students. Another indicator for the year will be the development of a strategy to capture and use enhanced analytics from the new website to better inform marketing and recruitment decisions and activities.

Objective 6: Finalize the priorities and launch the “quiet phase” (Phase 1) of a multi-year Comprehensive Fundraising Campaign that will support the University’s operations in multiple areas

- Growth in the University’s fundraising capabilities and results will be key to achieving long-term financial sustainability, and the seven-year Comprehensive Fundraising Campaign currently in development will be an important means of building this capacity. For 2021-22, measures of success will be refocusing and gaining internal alignment on the strategic priorities of the campaign, testing external interest in the priorities, and launching the quiet phase of the campaign process. This will set the stage for building and maintaining a strong donor base in the future.

Objective 7: Enhance the University’s efforts toward environmental sustainability and climate action

- Environmental sustainability and climate action are important aspects of the 2020-2025 strategic plan, so it is imperative to make meaningful progress toward them. For the coming year, key measurables will be completing the Sustainability Action Plan, creating an Office of Sustainability that over time will increase efficiencies and monitor and meet climate targets, and participating in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings to set a baseline that will help gauge our progress in relation to other institutions over the long term.

Objective 8: Create and grow a research innovation eco-system and entrepreneurial strategy that will help position the University as the leading entrepreneurial post-secondary institution in western Canada

- Innovation is an increasingly important contribution that the University makes to our province, because a dynamic and entrepreneurial research enterprise attracts talented faculty and student researchers whose work supports industry, business, all levels of government, the public sector, and our communities. In recent months, the University has made considerable progress in developing a multi-faceted approach to building a research innovation ecosystem. Over the next year, continuing progress in this regard will be measured through: the creation of a Commercialization and Technology Transfer Unit; the creation of a Centre for Entrepreneurship and Graduate Development in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research; and the development of programming to help graduate students refine essential research career skills.

Objective 9: Advance Equity, Diversity and Inclusion on our campuses

- Advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) at the University will be a long-term endeavour, but the opportunity exists this year to set the stage for future activities. For this reason, the primary measurable activity for the year is to engage BIPOC faculty, staff, students, and community members to create an EDI committee that can identify areas for improvement, develop priorities for action, and help execute EDI-related teaching, learning, research, and operational initiatives for the future.