

July 14 – August 31, 2021

During the six weeks since the last Board meeting, my activities have centred primarily around four areas: COVID-19 recovery; engagement with the University community; engagement with the wider community; and planning for the next year and beyond. This report outlines some of the major activities in these areas. Should the Board require additional information, I would be happy to provide it either at the September 14 meeting or as follow-up.

COVID-19 recovery:

As the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic waned in early summer, the University made preliminary plans to relax on-campus masking and physical distancing requirements. With the highly transmissible Delta variant helping drive what appears to be a fourth wave, however, and with staff members returning in full to on-campus work effective August 16, these plans were by necessity changed.

While monitoring of designated entry points to campus ceased effective August 1 and two-way traffic was reinstated in select areas, appropriate physical distancing is still required in public areas, classrooms, meeting rooms, and individual work spaces when more than one individual is present. The mask mandate remains in place as it has for the past year.

A vaccination requirement was implemented for select groups of students who will have sustained levels of close interaction with each other this year, including student-athletes and students in residence. In mid-August, that requirement was extended more broadly. A vaccination requirement (with rapid antigen testing as a substitute for those who are unvaccinated) will be in place effective October 1 for all students, faculty, and staff who will be on campus. The process through which proof of vaccination will be collected, and through which testing will be undertaken for those who do not provide proof of vaccination, is currently under development in anticipation of October 1.

The Fall term officially began on August 30, with just over 20 percent of coursework taking place in-person for approximately 5,000 of the University's more than 16,000 students. Enrolment for the Fall term is down slightly compared to last year, in part because of COVID-related limitations exacerbated by the University's early registration process. With that in mind, the University is considering registration changes to better serve students in coming years. This includes exploring the implementation of full-year registration, which has had a demonstrably positive effect on retention at other institutions.

The process is underway by which the University will use the two-year, \$11 million funding provided by the provincial government to help with efficiencies and revenue generation as we emerge from the pandemic. The first round of project proposals will be presented to the Senior Leadership Team and members of the Council Committee on Budget in October. After discussion with these groups, the Vice-Presidents will develop recommendations for me to consider for implementation. This process will be repeated approximately every six weeks as new proposals come forward.

Engagement with the University community:

Engagement with members of the University community was a priority throughout the reporting period. I continued regular meetings with the Board Chair and Vice-Chair, the Federated College Presidents, my direct reports (including the University Executive Team), and representatives from URFA, CUPE, and the University of Regina Students' Union (URSU). I participated in several Faculty councils and departmental/unit meetings to familiarize myself with faculty and staff members' work and address any concerns they might have, and met with a number of individuals including active alumni to hear their perspectives on the University's operations. These meetings will continue through the Fall term and beyond.

I continued the practice of regularly hosting town halls and sending monthly update messages to the University community. A Zoom town hall for all campuses (including the College Avenue and Saskatoon campuses) as well as the Federated Colleges was held in early August to discuss the University's COVID-19 protocols and provide a general update leading into the Fall term, for example. Another town hall is being planned for September. In addition, I sent a message to campus on August 30 to welcome students, faculty, and staff to the new academic year and encourage members of the University community to be fully vaccinated by October 1. I will continue my monthly messages throughout the year.

I worked with University Advancement & Communications (UAC) on a variety of targeted initiatives to connect with the University community. More than 200 people registered for the "Fall Fuel-Up" event at which I had the opportunity to meet faculty and staff in person. UAC also implemented a communications plan leading into the Fall term that included messaging to campus and a social media campaign to supplement other social media posts through which they have promoted my activities on behalf of the University in recent months.

Other outreach activities on our campuses have included meetings with those associated with the University's athletics programs. I attended a Rams practice to meet the coaches and players, met approximately 70 Rams parents at "Parents' Night," and engaged with members of the Rams Board. I have also visited various Cougar teams, and plan to attend as many athletics events as possible once Canada West competition begins.

In early August I visited the Cypress Hills Research Station – the first visit there by a University of Regina President in more than 15 years. In late August I met with the Faculties of Nursing and Social Work at the Saskatoon campus. I also participated in tours of Campion College and First Nations University, and a tour of Luther College is being scheduled for the fall.

In late August I participated in orientation activities (some virtual and some in person) for new undergraduate and graduate students, as well as orientation for new faculty and staff members.

Engagement with the wider community:

Engagement with the community beyond the University itself was also a priority. On the advice of the Presidential Transition Advisory committee, on August 18 I participated in a Faculty of Business Administration event for members of its Leaders Council and other business and community leaders. With members of the Development team I also met with several key donors and perspective donors. I

spoke with the CEOs of the Regina and District and Saskatchewan Chambers of Commerce about addressing their organizations in the future, and I began attending regular meetings of a group planning a future Truth and Reconciliation event at Mosaic Stadium.

I now have monthly meetings with Her Worship Sandra Masters, Mayor of Regina, to discuss areas where the City of Regina and the University can work more closely together. In addition, I have had introductory meetings with His Honour Russ Mirasty, Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan, representatives from SaskPower, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, and Innovation Place, as well as members of several other business and community groups.

While in the Swift Current/Maple Creek area in early August to visit the Cypress Hills Field Station with The Honourable Gene Makowsky, Minister of Advanced Education, I met with several reeves from the region, Indigenous leaders, and other stakeholders interested in pursuing a health care-related educational partnership.

My numerous meetings with elected and other municipal, provincial, and federal government officials over the past month and a half also included a visit to the University's main campus by Minister Makowsky. He and his Chief of Staff toured two labs on campus, met with members of the Rams, and discussed areas where the University is contributing to government priorities in areas such as health research and clean energy.

While in Saskatoon to visit the Faculties of Nursing and Social Work, I took the opportunity to meet with both President Stoicheff of the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Polytechnic CEO Larry Rosia to discuss our educational partnerships and other areas of mutual interest.

Discussions continued with members of the wider community about operating Darke Hall through a non-profit partnership.

With the Fall term beginning, local media demonstrated a great deal of interest in the University's operations, so I conducted a number of interviews to promote the University and its efforts to provide a safe and engaging educational experience for our students.

Planning for the next year and beyond:

Other of my activities included planning for the coming year. The University Executive Team had its annual planning retreat, for example, and the Associate Vice-Presidents of Indigenous Engagement, Human Resources, and Student Affairs have been added to the group to provide their insights.

The annual Senior Leadership Team retreat, facilitated in late August by Dr. Brian McQuinn of the Department of Politics and International Studies and Lin Gallagher of the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, began with a frank discussion of the University's performance and reputation in rankings such as *Maclean's*, as well as the need to address budgetary shortfalls.

In this context, SLT members explored four key themes: international and domestic student enrolment and retention; identity and reputation; Reconciliation and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI); and enhancing Tri-Agency research success. In four separate working groups, participants discussed concrete actions such as: developing a strong University identity grounded in place; better centralizing and co-

ordinating student advising; enhancing the registration process for international students; developing new thesis-based graduate programming; and improving research administrative supports to allow faculty members to better focus on their research.

Based on these focused discussions at the retreat, each working group is preparing a “white paper” action plan to inform SLT’s work over the next year and help move the institution forward in these areas.

Some new initiatives in the areas of Reconciliation and EDI warrant particular mention. Together with First Nations University of Canada and under the leadership of Lori Campbell, Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Engagement), the University has submitted an expression of intent to host the 7th annual “Building Reconciliation” forum, slated to take place in 2022. This forum brings together leaders from Canadian universities, colleges, and Indigenous communities to advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s “Calls to Action” relative to the post-secondary sector.

In addition, the University is forming an advisory committee on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Oppression to guide the institution as we address issues such as racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, and religious discrimination on our campuses. On a related note, the University is exploring with URSU the possibility of creating a jointly funded EDI student advocate position.

I have begun work with members of the Senior Leadership Team to create an inventory of existing and planned teaching, research, and other activities that demonstrably contribute to the goals outlined in the *Saskatchewan Growth Plan*. Once complete this fall, this inventory will provide me with information I may use when advocating for the University with government and other sectors.

Future reports to the Board of Governors

Based on feedback received at the July meeting, for the Board’s consideration I have submitted an adjusted set of my proposed 2021-22 objectives. Once approved, these objectives and their measurables, which are aligned with the 2020-2025 strategic plan, will form the basis for my forthcoming reports to the Board.