President’s Message – April 2012

As many of you know, the Government of Saskatchewan tabled the provincial 2012/13 budget on March 21. Many elements contained in the budget have an impact on the University of Regina.

The Province is committed to continuing to fund the University’s nursing program. Additionally, the Province will forgive portions of Saskatchewan student loans for nurses working in specified Saskatchewan locales. Several budget elements will further our efforts to meet the needs of our students. The New Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, for instance, offers $500 a year (to a maximum of $2,000) to Grade 12 graduates who attend a Saskatchewan post-secondary institution. The Government also pledged $1 million to support planning for a 608-bed residence, two childcare facilities and a parkade on our campus.

This commitment to new facilities is a strong indication of Government interest in this important development project. In the 2010-2011 Campus Master Plan, we looked at things such as new enrolment projections, space and transportation needs, sustainable development and the revitalization of our historic College Avenue campus. This planning was another great step in the long-term development of a campus that will meet our growing needs. I look forward to working with Government to see the new student housing, childcare and parking project come to fruition.

With year-over-year enrolment increases taking place at the University of Regina, now more than ever we need to focus on fulfilling the needs of our students, whether through financial assistance or the development of on-campus facilities. The Government’s continuation of the scholarship matching fund is an excellent motivator for donors, and boosts University of Regina student aid so that we can continue to accommodate our students who are seeking financial assistance.

Though the provincial budget contained some very encouraging details, the less-than-expected increase in our operating budget funding will be challenging for us in the upcoming fiscal year. The University received a 1.86 per cent increase to its operating budget this year. To achieve a balanced budget we must find 3 per cent in savings, and we must do so at a time when we anticipate increased enrolments for the upcoming academic year.

In recent years we have made remarkable progress toward greater efficiency in many areas of campus operations. Initiatives such as the Academic Program Review – which is examining all credit programming across campus with a view to shifting resources, over time, to areas of growth, high demand, and labour market relevance – will result in sustainable academic programming that is responsive to the needs of our students and province.

Beyond programming, we are implementing initiatives such as offering employees the option to receive online pay stubs rather than paper pay stubs. Even seemingly small things like this have a positive impact.
One large impact on our bottom line is the work we are doing to ensure efficiencies throughout our buildings. From 1994 to 2011, our inventory of campus space increased by 86 per cent. Over the same period, because of careful conservation, new technologies, and better scheduling and use of teaching and research space, our overall energy consumption increased by only 5 per cent – saving the University millions of dollars.

These are just some of the ways that we are prudent and accountable to the Province and Saskatchewan’s taxpayers. Throughout the month of April, we will further demonstrate the ways we are adding value to our communities by releasing the President’s Community Report – a series of videos highlighting the University of Regina’s story.

The videos showcase the progress we are making in achieving the goals outlined in our strategic plan, entitled mâmawohkamâtowin: Our Work, Our People, Our Communities. The series of nine videos, which focus on such areas as sustainability, globalization, and innovation, will be launched throughout the coming weeks. I encourage you to watch for update notices in your University of Regina e-mail.

Through the President’s Community Report, we demonstrate the many ways the University of Regina contributes – through teaching, research and public service – to the high quality of life we enjoy in Saskatchewan. As the University of Regina’s leadership team works to arrive at a balanced budget following the 2012/13 provincial budget announcement, we will make every effort to ensure that we remain committed to our academic mission, maintain quality programming, and provide the right supports to meet the needs of our students.

Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor