

President's Message – December 2013

As 2013 draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the many positive aspects of the past year at the University of Regina.

It was on the very first day of 2013 that 10 students arrived from Brazil to begin their studies at the University of Regina as part of the Science Without Borders program. While most Canadians would not be alarmed by the -6 C temperature that day, for students from subtropical Brazil, it was climate shock, to say the least.

These students are among the 65 from Brazil – and approximately 1,700 from more than 60 other countries – who are undertaking their undergraduate, graduate and English as an Additional Language studies at the University this year. International students now represent approximately 12 per cent of our total student population, and they are truly helping to make our campus a global village.

In March, popular performer, activist, educator and honorary degree recipient Dr. Buffy Sainte-Marie delivered our fifth annual Forward Together lecture. Dr. Sainte-Marie's powerful presentation, entitled "Detoxifying Aboriginal Self-Identity," was a fitting way to highlight and explore the University and the federated colleges' shared commitment to a common academic and social purpose that promotes inclusiveness, understanding, social justice, and human rights.

Inspired by Dr. Sainte-Marie's example, we continued listening to and addressing the needs of Aboriginal learners. April saw the completion of the expanded Aboriginal Student Centre, as well as the creation of the "Honouring Our Future" program, which awards a \$1,000 entrance bursary annually to one student from each of Saskatchewan's 74 First Nations. These and other efforts to indigenize our campus are having a tremendous impact on our University. Students of Aboriginal descent now represent approximately 11 per cent of the total student body – something that is good news for First Nations and Métis peoples in Saskatchewan, and for our province as a whole.

April also saw the beginning of construction on a new campus residence project that will create an additional 605 beds on campus, 90 day care spaces, and 150 underground parking stalls. The new residence will allow us to attract even more domestic and international students, and increase retention rates because students who live on campus in the early part of their academic careers are more likely to stay enrolled than those who live off campus.

In May we announced that our collaborative Nursing program with SIAST would be delivered in Swift Current in partnership with Great Plains College and Cypress Health Region. This fall, the first cohort of eight students began the program in their home community – a great example of how our University is making a positive impact across the province more than at any other time in its history.

In June, Dr. Jim Tomkins was elected the eighth Chancellor of the University of Regina. A distinguished academic and administrator who has served as head of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics as well as President and Vice-Chancellor, Chancellor Tomkins has a

history of service to our University dating back four decades. It is a pleasure to have him back on campus in a formal capacity, and I look forward to the contributions he will continue making to the academic life of our University. Dr. Tomkins was formally installed as Chancellor at Fall Convocation in October.

The Spring and Fall Convocations were highlights of the year for other reasons. At Spring Convocation in June, a total of 1,875 students received their degrees, diplomas and certificates – the largest graduating class in our University’s history. Fall Convocation was also a milestone, as it was the 40th Fall Convocation since the University of Regina became an autonomous institution in 1974.

October also saw the launch of the public phase of *Building Knowledge – The College Avenue Campus Renewal Project*, which is our priority capital fundraising campaign. To this point, we have raised more than \$4 million of our \$10 million fundraising goal. More than \$800,000 of that total has come from the University family – faculty, staff, alumni, members of the Board of Governors, Senate, Crown Trustees and retirees. I would like to thank all of you for the commitment you have made to revitalize our historic College Avenue campus for future generations of learners.

One of the biggest events of the year took place in Regina late last month as the Saskatchewan Roughriders were victorious over Hamilton in the 101st Grey Cup. We should be proud that a number of our alumni and former University of Regina Rams players contributed to this historic win – not the least of whom was receiver Chris Getzlaf (BBA '07), who was voted the game’s most outstanding Canadian player.

These are just a few of the many things that made 2013 special, but they are all a testament to the great work done by members of our University community over the past year. Thank you for the commitment you have shown – and continue to show – to the University of Regina, its academic mission, and above all, its students. The past year may have provided many challenges for us to face together, but it has also given us many reasons to celebrate.

I wish you all the best for the holiday season, and for the coming year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor