President’s message – May 2015

A popular saying attributed to an African proverb is “It takes a village to raise a child.” If we adapt it to apply to the University of Regina, it may read: “It takes a community to support a student.”

Supporting students is one of the most important activities we undertake at the University and we do it in a multitude of ways.

We understand that in order to succeed, students need access to the necessary supports, services, and skill-development opportunities that will help them put their best foot forward. First and foremost, faculty members at our University work directly with students to help them succeed in their studies, through teaching, mentorship, and supervision. Our researchers are also actively engaged in training the next generation of scholars and scientists, providing guidance and mentorship throughout the research process.

In addition, there are many academic supports available to students like writing seminars, student success workshops and math skills tutorials. We also facilitate support to help students gain the skills they need for employment with such initiatives as resume writing, interview skills training, career counselling and networking opportunities.

We also support our students’ physical and mental health through programs and services offered by our Fitness and Lifestyle Centre and Counselling Services, where students can meet with a registered psychologist who can help them resolve the effects of stress or emotional and psychological difficulties.

But we don’t conduct all our student support activities in isolation. Take for instance the financial support that funds bursaries, academic awards and scholarships. For those, we depend on the kindness of others.

Almost two weeks ago, about 400 people gathered for the annual fundraising event that was known as the President’s Gala. This year, we chose to take a decidedly more casual approach. April 25 marked the first Prairie Kitchen Party, a Saskatchewan take on a Maritime tradition – the kitchen party.

The evening consisted of live music (including our very own Darke Hall 5), dancing, silent auction, and, of course, a feast of maritime lobster. By the time the night was over, everyone had enjoyed an exceptional evening of fun with family and friends. And while we all had a great time, the real benefactors of the night were our students - all the proceeds raised from the event will go towards scholarships, bursaries and awards that will find their way into the hands of our deserving students.

Student support is vital to the success of our University. So much so, that it is one of the three pillars of our strategic plan, peyak aski kikawinaw, our institutional guide for the next five years. Financially supporting students not only increases the accessibility of post-secondary education, but it also improves retention rates and helps more students both start and finish university.
Easing the stress of students’ financial burden pays other dividends as well. Rather than having to work part-time or casual jobs, students can spend more time focusing on their academics, volunteerism and building community. And that is good for all of us.

I know first-hand the struggles many of our students face. I was one of six children in our family who attended university. We were from modest means and there was no way my parents could cover the costs for us to go to university. I was fortunate enough to secure scholarships that greatly helped me earn my undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees.

I know that the same is true for many of our faculty and staff. Without the assistance of scholarships, helping them pay for their education, attending university would have been much more difficult. Many, I am proud to say, continue to “pay it forward” and are supporting our students today through donations.

Another outstanding example of paying it forward can be found among our students. Over the past year, our students have taken the lead on numerous important fundraising initiatives including 5 Days for the Homeless and Relay for Life. Our students have also given back to our institution through their efforts, and this says a lot about our University community. In recent years, I know that students have donated things like lab equipment and I know a first-year student, Olivia Arnal, who donated to our College Avenue Campus revitalization project.

While the College Avenue project doesn’t directly support scholarships, capital projects benefit our students in the form of upgraded classrooms, technology and affordable student housing.

The true impact of student support cannot be easily measured. How can we put a dollar value on the discovery, freedom and inspiration that our students experience through education?

We do know, though, that education is priceless, and I am grateful to the many people who share our vision for the future and have helped make a difference through their donations. Please consider paying it forward by making a donation online at www.uregina.ca/external/donor-relations.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice Chancellor