

## President's Message – January 2016

Colleagues,

South African human rights activist Desmond Tutu once said: “We inhabit a universe that is characterized by diversity.”

That is the beauty and also the strength of the universe – its diversity. At the University of Regina, our world is diverse as well. Our students, faculty and staff represent many races, ethnicities and cultures, and are of varying genders, ages, sexual orientations, abilities, and religious and political beliefs.

As we usher in a new year together, it is the perfect time to take note of the beauty and strength that this diversity brings to our University. Let's remind ourselves not to take diversity for granted; we must remember that it thrives only when it is embraced and celebrated within a nurturing environment.

Two of the values embedded in our strategic plan, *peyak aski kikawinaw*, are inclusivity and diversity. As stated in the plan: “We recognize and support the diversity of our students' needs, and are inclusive of our Aboriginal, new Canadian, and international students, employees and partners. We aim to be accessible to all who wish to learn with us. We welcome the world to our campuses.”

As I look around, I see a great deal of effort being put into welcoming a world of diversities to our campuses. Approximately two years ago, for example, we installed footbaths so our Muslim students, staff and faculty could more easily observe *wudu*, the ritual ablution Muslims perform before prayer.

Another example of the inclusive nature of our campus is the LGBT pride flag that is on permanent display in the Riddell Centre. Unveiled earlier this year, the rainbow flag consists of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet stripes to represent the diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender social movements. Together with URFA Chair Dr. Dennis Fitzpatrick, this past June I was very pleased to raise this flag with which many of our students, faculty and staff identify.

An important initiative that begins this month is Project of Heart – an innovative educational toolkit designed to engage Canadians in a deeper exploration of Indigenous traditions in Canada and help them understand the history and legacy of the Indian Residential School system. Originally created by University of Regina graduate student Sylvia Smith, the program, which follows upon the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, runs throughout January and February at Luther College. For more information or to register, I encourage you to contact Jenna Tickell at [JennaTickell@hotmail.ca](mailto:JennaTickell@hotmail.ca).

Also this month, we have the opportunity once again to take part in one of the Harassment, Discrimination Prevention and Conflict Resolution office's workshops on Respectful University. The workshop serves as an introduction to the Respectful University policy and will cover such

topics as the benefits of a respectful workplace. The workshop will address proper uses of social media and email, cultural differences in the workplace, and the role that language plays in harassment and discrimination. The sessions are being offered on January 8 and January 18. For more information or to register, please visit the Human Resources Training, Events and Deadlines web page [here](#).

In recent months we have all been witness to many instances of intolerance, harassment and racism around the world. Although it sometimes may feel like we will never see an end to discrimination in all its forms, it is important to remember that change starts with each one of us. If we strive every day to live our life respectful of each other's differences, then we are doing our part to make the world a fair and just place.

Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons  
President and Vice-Chancellor