

Message from the President – December 2008

I was recently invited to the semester-end “Great Debate” by senior students in our English-as-a-Second-Language program. As I spoke to the students and their instructors after the debate, I was once again reminded how very close we are on our campus to every part of the world, and how fortunate we are to have these connections.

There are just over 300 students in ESL at the University of Regina, from countries as far away as China, Taiwan, Thailand, Russia, Mexico and Saudi Arabia – just to name a few! With more than 1,000 international undergraduate and graduate students registered for programs, and dozens of visiting scholars and guests who come here every year, it’s clear that our University is a highly internationalized environment. Students, faculty and staff from all cultures come here to study, learn, conduct research, teach and exchange knowledge. Walk down the hallways on any given day and you are certain to hear a multitude of languages.

This rich environment provides us with a unique opportunity to learn from and share with each other at every turn, and develop a truly international perspective. This is critical if we are to educate leaders who can envision solutions to complex world issues – issues that sometimes seem remote yet at other times touch our daily lives. The global economic downturn is only the latest evidence that we are interconnected in every way.

When we talk about developing an international perspective in education, it’s important that our curriculum reflect global knowledge that is constantly changing. Our International Studies Degree is a good example. This interdisciplinary program combines courses from the various departments in the Faculty of Arts. Through their studies, students are provided with skills to understand global processes and structures that connect and affect countries and regions of the world. The program also enables students to situate different regions in the broader context of these global processes and structures.

The opportunity to develop a world view is found not only in the classroom or through formal programs. More and more, we come to know about the concerns and lives of those who live outside our borders through our daily experiences with each other. The recent situation in Mumbai shows us that members of our own local community are personally affected by global events. The world is in our own neighborhood, and we need only open our eyes, ears, hearts and minds to experience and engage with it.

Our international perspective is also developed and nurtured through partnership agreements that the University of Regina has with other educational institutions around the world. We have 135 agreements with 25 countries, making it possible for our students, faculty, researchers and staff to learn, work, visit and teach outside of Canada and for people from other countries to experience all that the University of Regina has to offer. This semester, 23 of our students left on international educational exchanges and in the coming winter months, another 13 students will depart. In addition, programs such as BUS 408 in the Faculty of Business Administration include an international class study tour, allowing students to examine concepts and current practices related to doing business in an international environment.

We need to find more opportunities such as these for our students to have an international experience while studying here. The University is committed to expanding these over the coming years as an important part of our international offerings.

As 2008 comes to a close, let's take time to reflect on our connections as a community of learners that is global in its outlook and is tied to the world by many threads. Let's celebrate these relationships, not only because they enrich our lives through a greater understanding and appreciation of experience and culture, but because they are essential to learning how each one of us can contribute to our world.

I wish everyone a peaceful time during the semester break, a time of rejuvenation spent with friends and family, and all the best in the coming year.