

Message from the President – December 2009

University of Regina people are everywhere across Saskatchewan. I had the great opportunity to meet many of them during my first Community Connections Tour this fall when I visited North Battleford, Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Estevan, Weyburn, Yorkton, Kawacatoose First Nation, and Prince Albert. I talked with students and instructors engaged in our programs beyond our Regina campus and with alumni who are making careers in their communities. As I met with high school teachers, counsellors and community leaders, I learned a great deal about Saskatchewan and the role of our University in the province.

Above all, I came away absolutely inspired by the experience. It is clear that our people and programs have a significant impact on the social, economic and cultural fabric of Saskatchewan. I also heard many good ideas that we will follow up on to ensure we continue to grow as a provincial university.

On our tour, I was reminded over and over again that the U of R community is broad and extends outside of Regina. It includes instructors who deliver our courses through the regional college network or satellite campuses, and students who are learning closer to their homes. No matter where our students happen to be studying, they are students of the University of Regina. We will be looking for ways to improve and build on these important relationships in the future.

The leaders I met in each community were very welcoming and pleased with the impact the University of Regina has locally – in providing increased educational opportunities for their young people who can begin their university education at home, and in helping make their communities a more attractive place to live and work.

I also met with many alumni on the tour – alumni who are engaged in every aspect of leadership in our province. Swift Current Comprehensive High School principal Bryan Braun is among them. As someone who knows our university, he provides a valuable perspective when he says he believes that the perception of the University of Regina is changing, and people are realizing it is a provincial university.

The reach of our University into the province is indeed extensive. For example, the Faculty of Education has a community-based Master of Education program that allows educators in locations like Meadow Lake, North Battleford and La Ronge to link theory to local educational issues and practice. The Faculty of Social Work makes its program available in more than two dozen locations in our province in addition to our Regina and Saskatoon campuses.

In fact, both of these faculties offer their programs outside of the province as well. The successful Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) are offered through the Nunavut Arctic College in Iqaluit and Yukon College in Whitehorse, while University of Regina Faculty of Social Work programs are also offered through Yukon College and Aurora College in Yellowknife. We are proud to call the grads of these programs and the instructors and administrators who make them available locally, “U of R people.”

Like many of our academic programs, our research also has provincial impact. For example, important community-based research is taking place in the Prince Albert area through our partnership in the Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU). Through SPHERU, researchers from our Faculty of Social Work are studying the social factors that contribute to well-being to help us better understand what it means to have a healthy community.

Similarly, our research on carbon capture and storage has an impact in the province – and around the world – as our researchers seek new ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our environment. In Estevan, I toured the University's carbon capture pilot plant at Boundary Dam. And in the Weyburn-Midale area, people were familiar with the gas monitoring and storage project that is underway, a project led by our researchers in partnership with industry and government.

I am grateful to have broadened my own perspective on our University's impact on our province during this trip, and I look forward to visiting other communities soon to learn more. It was a highlight of a busy and productive fall that also included: the launch of the UR Guarantee program, which has attracted national attention; a visit to China by a University of Regina delegation to connect with our longest-standing global partner; and the launch of the first steps in a five-year strategic plan.

As we come to the end of 2009, I want to wish all of our University of Regina students – wherever you may be studying – success in your final assignments and exams. Best wishes to all of our U of R people – our students, alumni, faculty and staff – for an enjoyable holiday break sharing time with those you love. We will connect again in 2010!