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Franks receives honorary degree

The University added one more recognition to Paralympian Lisa Marie Franks' long list of accomplishments – an honorary degree – during Fall Convocation, Oct. 17.

Franks has been recognized around the world for her athleticism, ability to inspire and passion for sport. In 1996 she was afflicted with a very rare condition known as an Arteriovenous Malformation which damaged her spinal cord. An eight-hour operation, intensive occupational and physiotherapy and blinding determination helped her continue playing sports and ultimately become one of Canada's top wheelchair racers. She won two gold medals at the Athens 2004 Paralympic Games and four gold medals and a silver at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games. She is also an accomplished basketball player. In 2006 she became the first woman from Saskatchewan to be named to the Canadian Wheelchair Basketball Team and helped them earn a gold medal in the World Wheelchair Basketball Championships in Amsterdam.



Paralympian Lisa Marie Franks received an honorary degree during Fall Convocation, Oct. 17. She is one of Canada's top wheelchair racers and the first woman from Saskatchewan to be named to the Canadian Wheelchair Basketball Team.

Q. What has life in a wheelchair taught you that you don't think you would have learned otherwise?

A. I think the biggest thing I have learned from being in a wheelchair is how to adapt to the things life throws at you. If there is an activity I can't do, it's fun to try to come up with a creative solution so that I can participate. It forces you to

look at things from a different angle and to constantly be aware of the things around you.

Q. You wrote on your website that the hours you spent in the hospital helped you discover who the true 'Lisa Franks' is. Can you tell me a little about who that person is? Is she who you are now or who you strive to be?

A. The true Lisa Franks is someone I am continually striving to be. I want to help others, be passionate about what I do, and to be proud of the actions I take.

Q. What makes you laugh?

A. I take pleasure in subtle sarcasm and laughing at the things that come out of babes' mouths. That is...if I'm not too busy laughing at myself

and my general awkwardness.

Q. What got you through the tough moments in your training?

A. The tough moments in training are what I live for. I love a challenge. I know that in the long run hard work pays off and when you are passionate about what you believe in you can push yourself beyond what you thought possible.

Q. What has been your greatest success in either your work or personal life?

A. The realization that the joys and accomplishments of this life are only fulfilled when accompanied by true inner peace.

Q. What have you learned about the nature of people in your lifetime?

A. We're all very similar in nature. We want to lead a good life, and the greatest gift we can give one another is compassion.

Q. What do you know now that you wish you knew when you were younger?

A. I wish I had a better understanding of 'life balance' and how to appreciate the little things when I was younger.

Student expectations prompt employment guarantee

The launch of the UR Guarantee program has made headlines across North America. It has also raised the question of what students should expect from their post-secondary education.

The University made a big promise to students: Students who choose to come to the University of Regina and actively participate in the UR Guarantee program will have career-track employment within six months of graduation.

Students who are not employed within six months and have met the requirements of the program are eligible to take

up to 30 undergraduate credit hours covered by a tuition bursary.

This is the first time a Canadian post-secondary institution has done this.

Ken Steele sees the program as a response to the importance students place on careers.

Steele is the senior vice-president (Education Marketing) for Academica Group, Canada's largest research-based marketing consultancy that focuses exclusively on the higher education sector. He is also the creator and editor of Academica's Top Ten, a free daily news summary.

"As a liberal arts grad myself I believe that universities serve a number of purposes; one is certainly training up the next generation of scholars and another is to culture our society and make sure we have an educated electorate and all of those wonderful things that have to do with learning for its own sake, not learning for a careerist outcome," says Steele. "But, I do think that young people in our country are looking at university for more than just learning for its own sake. I would say there is a minority of university students who are there purely



President Vianne Timmons answers questions from the media about the UR Guarantee program. The announcement made international headlines.

to learn. The reason university enrolments have escalated as fast as they have is because the university is now appealing to a much broader segment of

the society that is looking for employment."

In addition to capturing the attention of career-minded

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Writ Large

Tina Beaudry-Mellor
Coordinator
Online programs
Distance Learning Division

I came to the University of Regina in 1990 straight from high school. Luckily for me, I came from the separate school system, so I found myself under the loving maternal care of Loretta Leibel, former registrar of Campion College, and the recently retired Dean Samira McCarthy. I didn't realize it then, but these two women modeled for me what a University was: a place where people were committed, where you got involved and where you took the time to learn someone's name, understand them as a person and mentor them through to find their own way. Both of them took pride in a job well done and both understood that their jobs and their commitment to service often took them beyond the normal scope of their responsibilities in an effort to make Campion College and the U of R more generally, a community. They modeled "As One Who Serves."

My plan was simple: I would get a degree in Business Administration, write the LSAT and go on to become a high-priced lawyer. But like many students, my whole University experience was shaped by the influence of some key people. I took a political theory class from a professor who was so passionate about his subject and so committed to imparting that passion onto his students that I decided to pursue an undergraduate Honours degree in Political Science. I've never told him, but he is the reason I am finishing a PhD today.

In the fall of 2010, I will have been on this campus for 20 years: as an undergraduate, a graduate, a post-graduate, an instructor, and an administrator. In 2006, I received an Inspiring Sessional Award from URFA, which was a milestone for me because, as a student-nominated award, it recognized that I was positively shaping my students' university experience in the way that it had been shaped for me. Like my mentors, I have served on committees, cheered for our Cougar athletes and artists, taught UR Fit classes and organized speakers series. In these 20 years, I have also lived abroad and then come back home, gotten married and had twins.

I guess I have grown up on this campus. Now I write reference letters for graduate schools and in my present role, I am working hard to build the U of R's online program offerings to make education more flexible for today's students. I bring my kids here to Summer Sports School and to Cougar athletic events, and I bring my friends to watch artistic performances and hear lectures. My kids know this campus and many of its people almost as well as I do and they feel comfortable here. To them, the University of Regina is part of a community they also belong to.

I have learned that the University is not a passive institution. It is an activist one. While the ways in which we get active and the issues we get active about may have changed, the point is that education is only valuable if it is shared and used to empower. We all have a role to play in empowering our students and each other to find our place in our community whether we are faculty or administrators, students or executives. And while it is true that we must research to fulfil our responsibilities as the privileged, let's not forget that it is often an isolated activity. Every day, our students and peers are watching us and modeling our behaviours – what are we teaching them about service and about responsibility? Thankfully for me, I had great mentors.

Writ Large is written by campus leaders and is intended to challenge readers to engage with and learn about the various 'parts' that make up the wider University of Regina community and connect us to the world. If you have a topic suggestion for Writ Large, please e-mail UofR.Report@uregina.ca and include your contact information. Please put "U of R Report" in the e-mail subject line.

UR Guarantee program captures international interest

The announcement of the UR Guarantee program, an initiative that promises students who participate that their post-secondary education will lead to career-track employment within six months of graduation, has garnered a great deal of attention in and outside the community. The following are a few of the media mentions the program has received:

- "... they're stepping up. It's always nice when somebody guarantees something, that they're putting a little bit on the line themselves." – **John Gormley, John Gormley Live Regina, CJME Radio in Regina, 50 CKOM Radio in Saskatoon, Oct 1.**
- "The University of Regina has made a bold promise to its student body – enrol here and you are guaranteed to get a job after you graduate." – **Global TV anchor Jill Morgan, Regina, Sept 30.**
- "The UR Guarantee program is a credit to Timmons and her academic team – and so is the new strategic plan of which it is a part." – **Regina Leader Post, U of R guarantees that education really works, Oct. 1.**
- "Our neighbours at the University of Regina are taking what could be a unique approach to education. The university will guarantee qualifying students a job six months after graduation. And not just any job. A "great job" in their "chosen field." – **Carson Jerema, Winnipeg Free Press, University of Regina guarantees 'great job', Oct. 5.**
- "The "UR Guarantee" has the potential to revolutionize Canada's undergraduate focused universities. If URegina increases its out-of-province enrolment in the next year; Atlantic universities will be forced to follow suit to compete in the lucrative Southern Ontario market. This will create a domino effect as Ontario universities such as Trent, Windsor, and Brock are forced to follow suit." – **Joey Coleman, a Hamilton, Ont., undergraduate student, Globe and Mail, globalcampus.ca, The unique after-graduation job guarantee, Oct 1.**
- "The University of Regina is the first in Canada to make this kind of guarantee and it will apply to more than 50 areas of study – a gamble the school is willing to take due to the resilience of the Saskatchewan economy." – **Cameron MacIntosh, CBC News, The National, Oct. 13.**
- "The University of Regina, in Saskatchewan, has so much confidence in its graduates that it's giving them a job guarantee with their degrees." – **The Chronicle of Higher Education, Washington, D.C., Canadian University Offers a Degree and Guarantee of a 'Great Job', Sept 30.**
- "Worried about finding a job after you graduate from college? During this Great Recession, there are no guarantees. Or are there? The University of Regina, which is located north of the border in Saskatchewan, has introduced a unique program guaranteeing students a successful career launch following completion of their undergraduate degree." – **Todd Finkelmeyer, The Cap Times, Madison, Wisconsin, Campus Connection: Canadian university guarantees job after graduation, Oct. 1.**

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students, the program is an interesting way to get students to make use of the resources the university offers to make them employable after graduation, according to Steele.

"What is key to this guarantee is that it is essentially saying to students (that they need to) engage on campus, take advantage of support services and do all of these other things, then U of R will guarantee that they will get

a job. I think what it will do then is drive more use of those support services to ensure that students succeed in their studies and are well positioned for employment afterwards. It is pedagogically sound in that sense as well. It is not just a marketing tactic. It's actually a way to get students to make use of the support services that are there."

It is President Vianne Timmons' hope that by participating in the program, students

will do more than simply develop the skills they need to find a job; they will gain the tools they need to reach their full potential as people and members of the community.

"Our students come first," says Timmons. "Our teaching, research and our commitment to community service all come to life through the experience of our students, tomorrow's leaders. Our confidence in their success is the foundation of the UR Guarantee."

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A plan for action

The campus community has now received the approved strategic plan – *māmawoh-kamâtowin: Our Work, Our People, Our Communities* – and the call has gone out to the leadership team to develop unit level action plans.

The strategic plan addresses every aspect of the University's teaching and research work, relationships with students, presence in the community and partnerships with its federated colleges and other educational institutions. It also states that sustainability, in the broadest sense, must be a major emphasis of the University's activities.

"Every academic, administrative and operational unit is now preparing its own strategic plan," explains Brian Christie, the assistant vice-president for Resource Planning. "They will identify what needs to be done within the unit, and how their actions contribute to the overall plan."

Christie expects some smaller-scale plans will be ready early in 2010. The University's leadership team has identified some high-priority items in the strategic plan, such as a review of academic programs and ad-

ditional support for successful student transitions from high school or other educational institutions. The University, Christie notes, has formed a joint committee with school divisions within and surrounding the city to explore ways to ease the transition for high school students coming to the U of R. It is also looking at how additional student housing – particularly housing for mature students – might be financed, he adds.

The review of academic programming will be one of the most visible first initiatives stemming from the plan. In early October a forum attended by a cross-section of deans, department and program heads, and members of the Planning and Priorities Committee met to discuss issues related to the review process. Lynn Wells, the associate vice-president (Academic), who is one of the people leading the review, notes that one of the topics for discussion will be sustaining the liberal arts and sciences at a time when students and their parents increasingly desire career-specific programs.

"Dr. Boire (vice-president,



Every academic, administrative and operational unit will create specific action plans to identify what needs to be done in their unit and how their actions contribute to the University's overall strategic goals and objectives

Academic) and I will be working with the Deans' Council, Planning and Priorities Committee and the Faculty Councils to help us decide collectively if our programs are structured to meet the needs of current and prospective students," Wells explains. "We'll also be drawing on recent unit reviews for ideas."

Meanwhile, President Vianne Timmons and First Nations University President Charles Pratt visited several

First Nations and Métis communities during the summer, as part of the plan's objective to build long-term relationships with those communities.

"I had the opportunity to discuss with First Nations leaders how the U of R might better meet their post-secondary educational needs," Timmons says. "Those relationships will be so important for the educational future of our province in the coming years."

As part of the planning

process Christie's office is developing a performance management framework to analyze and measure each project's effectiveness. Some initiatives, he adds, will require additional resources or shifts in existing resources, and those will become part of the planning process for the University's budgets, beginning with the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

The strategic plan can be downloaded at <http://www.uregina.ca/home/strategic/>

Leadership retreat held for queer youth

The Faculty of Education saw a need to bring Camp fYrefly – Canada's only sexual minority youth leadership retreat – to Saskatchewan. Through a partnership with the University of Saskatchewan, community members, donor support, and online word-of-mouth from the campers themselves, it did just that.

In August, approximately 40 youth ranging in age from 14 to 24 gathered in Saskatoon for the province's first Camp fYrefly. The three-day camp was filled with workshops and activities aimed at helping the young people develop personal resiliency and the skills they need to be a positive force for change in their communities.

The camp was open to youth from across Canada and drew people from both rural and urban areas as diverse as La Loche in northern Saskatchewan as well as large cities like Vancouver and Toronto. It welcomed individuals who self-identified around a wide range of gender and sexual identities: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, two-spirited, intersexed, queer, questioning and allied youth.

For James McNinch, Dean of the Faculty of

Education, the camp is an important way to provide young people with a safe space to come into their own.

"One of the things that surprised me was that we often think – and as a gay man myself, it's tempting to think – that we have solved the problems around sexual and gender differences," says McNinch. "We live in a relatively progressive country. We have same-sex marriage, our rights are protected and entrenched in laws. But being in a sexual minority position, particularly young people still in school, is still very, very challenging in our society. It is one thing to be a white, middle-aged, middle-class, educated gay male like me. It is quite another to be a transgendered, unemployed 19-year-old Aboriginal youth in North Battleford."

"A lot of these kids are damaged, have been hurt, have been through very many hateful experiences. One of the young women at the camp in the workshop I facilitated told us this horrible story that made me cry, basically about being disowned by her mother. I asked when this happened and she said 'last month.' So very raw, very difficult."



The Faculty of Education helped organize Saskatchewan's first Camp fYrefly – Canada's only sexual minority youth leadership retreat.

Workshops delved into a range of issues: leadership, confronting bias, health and safety, challenging oppression through art, resiliency building and negotiating relationships with peers, parents and caregivers.

A keynote was delivered by Thomas Howard from the Matthew Shepard Foundation, who talked to campers about his experience of being a born-again Christian who was hiding the fact he was gay.

The camp also incorporated activities such as African drumming, yoga, movie nights, a button-making party,

fun science activities and an exploration of gender roles through drag.

"It was a privilege to see the growth and to see how, in a truly safe environment, people's guard comes down and they can really be who they feel they are. People are able to be who they are and make connections with people like themselves," says McNinch.

A local Southern Saskatchewan organizing committee is being put together to plan and fundraise for next year's Camp fYrefly, which will be held in a Regina location.

Andre Grace, director of

the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta who is one of the founders of Camp fYrefly, will share research and insights about Camp fYrefly as part of the University of Regina Queer Initiative (URQI) speaker series, Nov. 6 in ED 228 at 3 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

If you would like to make a charitable donation to Camp fYrefly you can do so through its website www.usask.ca/education/fyrefly/ or by contacting U of R Donor Relations at urging@uregina.ca or McNinch at James.McNinch@uregina.ca

Making connections in the community and abroad

Relationships are important to the University of Regina – on campus, in our province and abroad.

In Saskatchewan, the University is further engaging the community through a number of initiatives: inviting the public onto campus for an open house, a Community Connections tour through the province and online.

Overseas, the University continues to place a great deal of importance on its relationships in China. In a gesture of partnership, a delegation from the University traveled to the country Sept. 13-25 to strengthen existing ties and to cultivate new ones.

China

For 13 days in September, President Vianne Timmons led a University delegation on a tour through China. It was a trip that resulted in strengthened partnerships, idea sharing, the seeds of new projects and many honours and accolades for University faculty.

One of these honours went to Dongyan Blachford, associate dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, who was made an honorary professor, an advanced consultant as well as a senior investigator by the Research Institute of Multiculturalism and Applied Philosophy of Hunan University.

“The honour means to me that I need to work harder to promote internationalization by encouraging and participating in the exchange of ideas and research, and most importantly, to bring more people on board to work together,” says Blachford.

The Xiamen University of Technology made Paitoon Tontiwachwuthikul, dean of Engineering and Applied Science, an honorary director of the Sino-Canada Joint Teaching & Research Center of Membrane Technology.

Hunan University also named Tontiwachwuthikul a

director of the Joint International Centre for CO₂ Capture and Storage.

David Malloy, associate vice-president (Research), was made an adjunct professor of Hunan University as well as an honorary dean and principal investigator of the Research Institute for Multiculturalism and Applied Philosophy.

Although they were not part of this particular delegation, Christine Chan and Raphael Idem were both made adjunct professors of Hunan University. Chan is a professor of software systems engineering. Idem is an associate dean of Research and Graduate Studies and professor of engineering.

Gordon Huang, associate dean (International) and professor of engineering, is also held in great esteem in China. Huang is an adjunct professor of Hunan University. In addition to engaging in numerous collaborative research projects with Chinese institutions, he has hosted many visiting scholars, researchers and graduate students from China.

In addition to meeting with long-standing partners and celebrating successful collaborations, the delegation strengthened the University's international profile with Timmons' participation in the 4th World Women University Presidents' Forum hosted by Communication University of China in Nanjing. More than 130 women presidents from 37 countries and regions attended the event to share their views and findings about educational and development opportunities for women.

Community Connections Tour

While the University continues to make global connections it is also taking care of partnerships closer to home.

President Timmons is traveling across Saskatchewan in October and November to meet with teachers, students



Students at the Xiamen University of Technology pose with President Vianne Timmons during her tour of their campus. The school was one of the many stops a University of Regina delegation made during a partnership-building tour in China, Sept. 13-25.

and community group members and is hosting community receptions to learn more about the issues and opportunities that are important to people.

These community visits are also an opportunity to speak with – and listen to – Grade 11 and 12 students from across the province.

Timmons is sharing with students her perspective about the benefits of a University education – particularly one from the University of Regina.

“University helped me find my area of passion – my area of potential – and realize it,” she says.

“University has opened so many doors for me, and allowed me to see places I never dreamed of when I was growing up. From personal experience, I believe in the transformative power of universities. And I believe in the U of R.”

Community destinations include Prince Albert, Weyburn, Kawacatoose First Nation, Yorkton, Moose Jaw, Estevan, North Battleford and Swift Current.

A number of faculties are also hosting events to promote their connections to the community.

UR Connected!

More than 700 potential new members of the University community will visit our campus Oct. 21 and 22 for UR Connected! – the annual open house for Grade 12 students from across the Prairies.

The two-day event features a tour of the campus with current students, information about program areas that may be of interest and displays of the faculties, federated col-

leges, departments and clubs. The Grade 12 students have an opportunity to meet other high school students from across the province, as well as a chance to participate in a number of activities and seminars.

This year Grade 12 students who participate in UR Connected! can win a laptop or one of four scholarships worth \$750.

“We want to stress that it is a personalized campus visit,” says Naomi Deren, UR Connected! co-ordinator. “They won't get lost in the crowd. We have ambassadors that will take them from place to place, and there are smaller group sessions and smaller group tours.”

Deren hopes students will find that the U of R is a good fit for them.

“I want them to see that (the U of R) is the perfect-sized campus,” says Deren “It is small enough that we get to know them while they are here, but still large enough to give them a really great, solid education with a variety of choices.”

On Oct. 21, UR Connected! will be open to the community. This means that members of the general public are welcome to join the campus tours and view the various displays.

“Because it's a community-focused event, we want to reach out to our community and build relationships,” says Deren. “That's part of the University's mission.”

Online

Staying in touch with UR Connected! participants after they leave campus is a priority for event organizers. It's one of the reasons Student Recruit-

ment has developed a new website – www.URConnected.ca.

The site features in-depth information for all types of potential students – high school, transfer, adult, international, Aboriginal – as well as information for parents and high school counselors.

The site makes it easy for potential students to get personalized answers to their questions and gives them a way to connect with the University through social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Flickr.

“It's about getting students to interact with us, rather than simply providing an informational site,” says Deren. “It's about getting them to connect with us through Facebook, apply for UR Connected! and book a tour.”

“We are encouraging students to go on Facebook after the event and talk about it, ask any questions that are lingering. They can IM (instant message) us, email us. Hopefully there will be videos of the event on YouTube. There will be lots of photos of the event on Flickr.”

To help get the proverbial ball rolling, organizers have a Flickr photo contest planned for UR Connected! participants. Each student gets a disposable camera when they visit campus. The person who submits the best UR Connected! photo to the event's Flickr site wins a prize. Event organizers hope the contest will be a way for participants to not only remember the time they had at the University but connect with their new friends online.

(endnote)



President Timmons speaks with a group of Vanier Collegiate students in Moose Jaw. This fall she is traveling across Saskatchewan to connect with communities.