

President's Message – January 2013

Welcome to 2013! I hope all of you had a wonderful holiday, and are ready to tackle the new year with the same enthusiasm for our University that you demonstrated over the past year.

Reflecting on 2012, I would be making an understatement if I said it was a busy year. We experienced the highest student enrolments in our history, the Faculty of Nursing began its second year of operation, and we received a number of significant donations from alumni and others in support of revitalizing the College Avenue Campus. Throughout the year we also celebrated many faculty, staff and student successes.

2012 was also a year in which the Academic Program Review became a reality for all of us. The campus community was invited to think about and discuss creative ways we could better serve our students. Concurrent with the Academic Program Review discussion were the potential budget scenarios the University had been asked to consider leading up to the 2013-14 budget cycle. This created a robust dialogue, with many opinions and views expressed publicly – in person on campus, by email, in traditional news media, and via social media.

The engagement of our campus community with these issues has been excellent, with many of you attending “town hall” meetings and other forums. I was pleased to see that as the year progressed, our student body took an increasing interest in the discussions, and provided a great deal of thoughtful input. This involvement is a positive thing, and as President I am encouraged to see the campus becoming engaged in issues that I face every day.

I hope that engagement continues in 2013 – and throughout the year there will be many opportunities for in-person public discussion about issues facing our University. At the Strategic Plan update forum in late October, I promised more opportunities for campus dialogue, and I am pleased that these are already taking shape. On January 17, for example, Dr. Ken Coates of the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy's University of Saskatchewan campus will be at the University of Regina to discuss the role of the liberal arts in today's universities. In April, there will be a day of public presentations and roundtable discussions led by Dr. Chad Gaffield, President of SSHRC. The day will be capped off with the Dr. Barbara Powell Memorial Lecture, delivered by Dr. Antonia Maioni, President of the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences. I encourage everyone to participate in these and other opportunities for public discussion about our shared academic mission.

Participating in these discussions is important, and I am proud that the University of Regina has always been – and always will be – a place where people are free to voice their opinions. In recent months, many people have expressed differing views on a variety of issues. One prominent theme has been the desire that the level of administrative staff should be reduced to deal with budget challenges we may face. I assure you that we will continue to find

administrative efficiencies, and I welcome any suggestions campus members may have in that regard.

I do want to highlight, however, that when we talk about “cutting administrative staff,” we are talking about people: people who have families and mortgages; people who work very hard to support faculty and students and our academic mission; people without whom this University cannot function. Many such individuals have expressed to me concern about their future, and have told me they feel they are being unfairly targeted by others. As employees who have the privilege of working at a progressive institution that should be setting a positive example in our province, we must all be sensitive to the concerns of our colleagues, and treat each other with the respect all deserve.

Taking on new challenges has always been a New Year’s tradition. As another year begins, I challenge our University of Regina community to pull together and work with me to continue finding ways to better serve our students and deal with the fiscal challenges we anticipate. It is imperative that the public is knowledgeable and has the information required to advocate for an appropriate level of investment in post-secondary education in our province. I need your help in getting this message out to the broader community.

In his book entitled *Choosing Civility*, Dr. P.M. Forni, a professor at Johns Hopkins University, says:

“Civility means a great deal more than just being nice to one another. It is complex and encompasses learning how to connect successfully and live well with others, developing thoughtfulness, and fostering effective self-expression and communication. Civility includes courtesy, politeness, mutual respect, fairness, good manners, as well as a matter of good health. Taking an active interest in the well-being of our community and concern for the health of our society is also involved in civility.”

I am mid-way through my fifth year as President of our University, and I have always been impressed with the understanding, respect and civility which people on this campus show toward others. The true test of civility is when times get difficult – and I hope that collectively, we pass this test with flying colours over the next year, while taking the same “active interest in the well-being of our community” that we always have in the past.

In 2013, I encourage you to stay engaged in the campus discussions, and to work with me to promote the value of post-secondary education as an economic, social and cultural driver in our province. I will continue to work hard for you, and I will continue to appreciate all of the support you can provide through your advocacy.

All of you have contributed in so many ways to make this University a wonderful place of higher learning, and I thank you for that. Let’s have a wonderful 2013!