

President's Message – October 2013

Members of the University of Regina community,

In a changing post-secondary landscape, many Canadian universities are facing tremendous challenges. One need only consider our sister institutions in Alberta to see how financial constraints, for example, are having a severe impact on the academic mission. The University of Regina is not exempt from challenges such as these – and in fact, we never have been. But it is how we have faced adversity as a community in the past – and how we continue to do so into the future – that will define us as an institution.

It was painful to see such division on our campus at the September 27 special meeting of Council, and as I said when the meeting came to a close, it was a sad day for the University of Regina. As difficult as that meeting was for all of us, however, I believe that good things will ultimately come of it if we commit to moving forward together as a University community.

That meeting strengthened my resolve to work with Council and its various committees on areas of concern, and it is my sincere hope that at the same time, the meeting strengthened the resolve of Council and all of its committees to work openly and collaboratively with me. If we are to provide the best possible education for our students, we must all lead by example in this regard.

Over the past few months, the Special Committee of Council has been doing just that. With input from members of Council, the Special Committee has been working hard to address issues that had previously been raised by Council. The committee has been revising the Council bylaws, looking at committee structure, and determining how to implement the motions passed at the last two Council meetings. That work, which I fully support, will continue.

Since the September 27 Council meeting, the University of Regina has already begun researching how other Canadian universities report their financial information such as budget and expenses. I know that we can benefit from other institutions' shared experience and report our own finances in a manner that is as transparent and cost-effective as possible. We will follow best practices for financial accountability to the public – but my long-term objective is actually to establish best practices that can set an example for other public institutions.

In addition, I committed at the special meeting of Council to hold a public meeting open to all employees of the University, as well as students, alumni, members of the public, and government. That meeting, which is scheduled to take place on the afternoon of October 24, will provide an opportunity to publicly discuss matters of concern to everyone in the University community. It will also be an opportunity for me to report back on how Council's concerns are being addressed in a number of areas. I will provide further information about that meeting in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, I would like to reiterate something I have said many times over the past five years. My door has always been open – and always will be open – for anyone who wishes to discuss the operations of the University with me. I am pleased that several members of Council have already taken me up on the invitation I extended at the September 27 meeting, and have

made appointments to speak with me directly. I extend that invitation to all students, faculty members and staff. I will always take the time to discuss your concerns and act upon them when I can.

Some might argue that I am being too optimistic when I say this, but I believe that in terms of healing our campus and building a stronger University, the meeting of September 27 was in fact a step in the right direction. It is clear that as individuals and as a group, we have a lot of work ahead of us to heal the divisions that exist on our campus. With that in mind, we must move forward in an open and constructive manner, knowing that we will not always agree on every issue, but nonetheless working together with optimism for the future of our University, and confidence in our shared academic mission.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor