

President's message – January 2015

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2015 and welcome back to campus. I trust that your holiday season was overflowing with family and friends, and that your time off was filled with many memorable moments.

The year has only just begun and already we are making plans for several important January events. One of those comes in just over a week when, on January 13, we will launch the University's new 2015-2020 strategic plan entitled *peyak aski kikawinaw*.

The title of the plan is a Cree phrase that can be translated to "We are one with Mother Earth." The name was bestowed by two Elders associated with the University.

In the weeks to come, you're sure to see a lot of the symbol of the new strategic plan – a circle of braided sweetgrass. For thousands of years, sweetgrass has been used by North American Indigenous cultures to cleanse, heal and prepare for ceremony. The sweetgrass is braided together from three separate strands, each of which symbolizes body, spirit and mind.

The braiding of sweetgrass and the coming together of body, spirit and mind is an apt symbol for a strategic plan that has emerged from a collaborative process. The development of the plan depended on many minds coming together and moving forward with one vision for our future.

It began with the formation of the Strategic Plan Facilitation Team, a 15-member group comprised of students, faculty members, staff, alumni, and administration.

Throughout the spring and summer, the team facilitated extensive internal stakeholder consultation. As well, our external stakeholders representing governments, First Nations, school boards, post-secondary institutions, local businesses, the creative arts, and non-profit agencies provided valuable input that has helped shape the final product.

The foundation of the strategic plan is a trio of pillars upon which the entire plan is constructed: student success, research impact and commitment to our communities. Many of the new activities you will see over the course of the next five years will concentrate on these priorities. As well, interwoven throughout the plan are two areas of emphasis that are very much reflected in the name *peyak aski kikawinaw* – Indigenization and sustainability.

Much of what we initiate in the next half decade will be examined through the lenses of Indigenization and sustainability. We will look for opportunities to further Indigenize our campus and will continue to develop innovative projects to support the success of Aboriginal students, faculty and staff. We are committed to building a campus and community that integrates and celebrates the contributions of Indigenous people and knowledge. Sustainable growth will also be our hallmark and we will concentrate on economic, cultural, social, and environmental sustainability to ensure the long-term growth and success of our institution.

Our new strategic plan comes at a most opportune time. The University of Regina has evolved into a very different university than it was in 2009 when we last undertook this process.

In the past five years, we have experienced consistent growth in enrolment, including setting new records for the University of Regina. In September of 2014, there were over 14,000 students registered– the highest total number in our University’s history!

In those same five years, our Aboriginal student population has increased by 50 per cent and now represents more than 1,500 students. International student enrolment during the same time period has almost doubled and now stands at more than 1,800 students from 90 countries around the world.

Record enrolment is just one example of the degree to which our campus has grown and evolved. Our University community is stronger, in large part because of the diversity of voices, experiences, and cultures represented here. These are exciting times that require a new strategic plan to reflect an expanded vision for our future.

I would like to emphasize that we find ourselves in this position because we have all worked together – this is our strategic plan. As such, please come out and celebrate the launch of *peyak aski kikawinaw*, our 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, on January 13 at 11 a.m. in the RIC Atrium. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor