

President's message – February 2015

Members of the University community,

Over the past several years, the University has undertaken a variety of measures to help ensure that the institution remains fiscally sustainable into the future. These measures have not always been easy to implement, and they have not always been popular with everyone – for example, the recently developed strategy for managing discretionary spending until the current fiscal year ends just under three months from now.

Although we will not agree on every point of its implementation, I do believe we can agree that the fundamental purpose of the University of Regina's strategy for managing spending – to enable us to fulfill our academic mission while living within our means – is a valid one. The intention of this strategy – and its long-term result, I believe – is not to jeopardize our academic mission or prevent us from participating fully as members of a national and international community of scholars. Rather, the intention is to help manage costs right now at a time of fiscal uncertainty in our province while we plan for 2015-16 and beyond. My hope is that the current constraints on hiring, travel and discretionary spending are short-term ones, but current financial projections contain a great deal of uncertainty.

Although it may be cold comfort to say this, the University of Regina is not alone in its need to manage costs carefully, if one considers what is taking place at universities across Canada. One example is the University of Manitoba, where President David Barnard has said that post-secondary institutions “can no longer sustain their operations within the current funding model.” The situation at the University of Manitoba is outlined in a message to campus available at http://www.umanitoba.ca/admin/budget_2015-16/message.html.

Just as discussions are taking place at other universities regarding fiscal sustainability, I hope that discussion continues at the University of Regina – and I encourage everyone to participate in this conversation. The next opportunity will be on Monday, February 9, when an Open Forum on the 2015-2016 budget will take place in CL127 from 10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. I invite everyone to attend.

But as we continue to discuss fiscal sustainability, we should not lose sight of some other concepts that form an important part of our recently launched strategic plan – environmental, cultural and social sustainability. These concepts – which are not always easy to define – were themes addressed by Dr. Wade Davis in the annual Forward Together Lecture held on January 27.

Dr. Davis' lecture – which may be viewed on the Luther College website at www.luthercollege.edu/forward-together-lecture – is an excellent touchstone from which to renew discussions on campus about environmental, cultural and social sustainability. In the coming weeks and months, I encourage everyone to give some thought to what these types of sustainability would look like for our University – and what measures we might undertake to achieve these objectives.

Several years ago, I established the President's Advisory Committee on Sustainability (PACS), which meets regularly to ensure that the best possible insight on sustainability – that of the University of Regina community – informs our institutional decisions. I encourage you to provide PACS with your input on how environmental, social and cultural sustainability may be realized at our University. You may provide your thoughts to Provost and Vice-President (Academic) Dr. Thomas Chase (email: provost.vpa@uregina.ca), who is the chair of PACS.

Thank you for considering what sustainability in all of its forms means for our University, and I look forward to hearing your perspectives in the weeks and months to come.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor