

President's message – April 2015

This time of year is a busy one for many of our students as they wrap up the winter semester and prepare for final exams that begin in about two weeks' time. Yet amidst all that work, many of them are also active in other pursuits, and I never tire of meeting or hearing about those students who, in addition to maintaining good academic standing, are engaged in community-building activities.

Our new strategic plan, entitled *peyak aski kikawinaw*, includes "Commitment to Our Communities" as one of our three strategic priorities, encouraging all of us to "focus on connecting and engaging with all the communities we touch." It is heartening to know that in addition to our faculty, staff, and alumni, our students are fulfilling that commitment by engaging meaningfully with the communities we serve.

An example of this is one of the recent philanthropic enterprises undertaken by a large group of our students – the "5 Days for the Homeless" event held on campus. "5 Days for the Homeless" is held across Canada at 22 post-secondary institutions to raise money and build awareness of the issue of homelessness in Canada. As part of the campaign, five University of Regina students spent five days and nights outside on campus. While the students did attend classes, they did not have access to the basic necessities of life, including shelter and food, for which they had to depend on the kindness of others.

The students raised more than \$31,000 and donated all funds to Carmichael Outreach, a community-based organization in Regina that helps those people who are marginalized and at risk in our community. The students also collected donations of clothes and non-perishable food items. Organized by the Business Students Society (BSS), the campaign has raised more than \$104,000 for Carmichael Outreach since 2010. Twenty-seven BSS members served on the organizing committee and an additional 55 volunteers helped ensure the week was safe and successful.

Another great example is Arts CARES (Community Action in Regina for Educational Service), a Faculty of Arts service-learning initiative that sees students volunteering at a variety of community organizations during Reading Week. In 2015, 57 students volunteered at 22 organizations and contributed more than 840 hours of service. Among the organizations benefiting from this year's program were the Regina Open Door Society, Cosmopolitan Learning Centre, Salvation Army and Street Culture Kidz.

Also in the Faculty of Arts, the Community Research Unit (CRU) engages University of Regina student and faculty researchers to find solutions to societal challenges and foster positive action and change. One recent project undertaken by the CRU is "The Cost of Healthy Eating in Regina," an examination of why people use the Regina Food Bank. Another is "Bridging the Gap: Regina Landlords and Tenants on Social Assistance," a project that examines the Regina housing crisis and the relationship between landlords and low-income tenants.

By participating in these types of community-building initiatives during the course of their studies, our students embody the spirit both of our strategic plan and of our University motto – “As One Who Serves.”

To thank them for this – and to give them some encouragement at a stressful time as they finish up the semester – I have a challenge for all of us. Over the course of the month, if you have the opportunity, please consider performing a “random act of kindness” for a student. If you are in line ahead of a student, for example, think about buying him or her a cup of coffee or tea. Or if you see students studying late on campus, compliment them on their work ethic. There are many things we can do to make things just a little bit easier for our students at this time of year, and I encourage you to be as creative as you can.

Our students go “above and beyond” – both at the University of Regina and in the larger community. We should be proud of them, and we should go “above and beyond” for them whenever we can.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor