

## **President's Message – November 2011**

As part of the University of Regina's strategic plan, *mâmahokamâtowin: Our Work, Our People, Our Communities*, we have together made a commitment to building long-term relationships with First Nations and Métis communities, addressing the needs of First Nations and Métis learners, and reflecting their cultures across program areas and campus life.

As the 2011-2012 academic year progresses, I am proud that we are making significant advances toward achieving these goals and improving the campus experience for all of our students and staff – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. This fall, for example, we established an Aboriginal Advisory Circle. This group, which is comprised of Aboriginal employees, has been formed to identify and provide recommendations to help address challenges faced by Aboriginal students pursuing post-secondary education at the University of Regina. Having met for the first time on October 20, the Advisory Circle is already taking an active role in ensuring that our campus remains dedicated to meeting the needs of our Aboriginal staff and students. The members will be consulting the campus community and providing recommendations to the President's Office, including the University Executive Team, in the coming months.

We are also making progress in attracting more Aboriginal students than ever. This fall, we had our highest year-over-year increase of first-term enrolment for self-declared Aboriginal students – an increase of 48 per cent over last year. As a result, students of Aboriginal descent now represent close to 10 per cent of the University's total undergraduate enrolment. This is a positive development, but we must work to maintain this momentum by providing a welcoming and inclusive environment – one that meets and anticipates the needs of students while they are here.

We must also continue to build on the relationships with First Nations and Métis communities across the province – something that has been a particular focus this fall. I recently returned from an outreach tour in La Ronge and Nipawin, where I met with a number of chiefs from communities across northern Saskatchewan, including Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Vice-Chief Simon Bird, whose portfolio includes elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. I was welcomed so graciously by these individuals and others in the communities I visited. The dialogue that took place throughout my northern visit will help to guide us as we continue to develop additional initiatives to support our strategic plan objectives related to Aboriginal education. I am excited to work with our community partners to better support Aboriginal students in their post-secondary years.

I am also excited to continue working with and in support of our federated college, First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv). There have been major accomplishments at FNUniv as of late, including funding stabilization and an increase in course enrolments this semester. The establishment of a national Board of Governors, the installation of a new President, Dr. Doyle Anderson and the secondment of Dr. Lynn Wells as Vice-President (Academic) will ensure that FNUniv continues to develop as a post-secondary institution of choice for Aboriginal students from across Canada and beyond.

As stated in our strategic plan, we intend to “prepare all our students to live in a Saskatchewan where First Nations and Métis peoples achieve their rightful place in society and the economy, and where their cultures are celebrated.” Through the work of our staff who guide and support our students and create an environment of inclusiveness on our campus, we are well on our way to achieving this goal.

Vianne Timmons  
President & Vice-Chancellor