

President's Message – September 2016

Members of the University community,

Welcome to the start of another academic year at the University of Regina! This is always an exciting time, because our campuses are abuzz as students, faculty and staff dive into the busy fall semester. Unfortunately, this can also be a time of stress and anxiety for many.

Students returning to the classroom face a multitude of demands that come with attending a post-secondary institution. The pressures on new students can be even greater as they learn to cope with new surroundings, new social situations, increased academic loads, and perhaps for some, their first significant time away from parents and the family home.

Faculty and staff are no less vulnerable to the strain that this time of year can bring. The start of the semester carries with it an increased pace of activity as faculty and staff work diligently to meet the academic and administrative needs of our students.

One of the values in the University's strategic plan, *peyak aski kikawinaw*, is well-being. The plan states: "We value a safe, healthy, and supportive community." To uphold that, we work in many ways to help students, faculty and staff with any difficulties they may be experiencing related to their work or home life.

For faculty and staff, counselling services are available through the Employee and Family Assistance Program. The program helps employees and their family members deal with a variety of issues and engages outside agencies to maintain the highest level of confidentiality. More information is available at: <http://www.uregina.ca/hr/faculty-staff/wellness.html>.

During the course of the semester, faculty or staff might also come across students who may benefit from counselling. Counselling Services provides a number of free and confidential services designed to help students overcome personal difficulties and better cope with the stresses of university. According to Counselling Services, there are three key things to look for in a student that might warrant a referral: depression, anxiety (including exam anxiety) and relationship difficulties. I urge each of you to do what you can to help our students. If you sense that it might be necessary, please refer students to Counselling Services, who may be reached by telephone at 306-585-4491. You can also encourage students to visit the Counselling Service office at Room 251 in the Riddell Centre.

In recent years, the University has implemented other initiatives designed to further the well-being of our students, particularly around the time when final exams are scheduled. You may recall during finals this past spring seeing signs around the University with messages such as: "*Exams are tough but so are you!*" and "*Believe in yourself!*" Those signs were the result of collaboration between the University and Project YANA. Project YANA (You Are Not Alone) is a non-profit organization with a goal to raise awareness of the supports available to students in need.

A few years ago we also introduced the concept of pet therapy to the campus. Numerous dogs from the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program were made available for students during final exams. One of our Social Work faculty members, Dr. Darlene Chalmers, was part of a team that examined the benefits of therapy dogs for students. The pilot study, "PAWSing student stress: A pilot evaluation study of the St. John Ambulance program," examined input from more than 400 students. The findings offered evidence that the program achieved its goals of offering love and support to students at a critical time of year for them.

September is always a busy and exciting time at the University of Regina, so I want to remind everyone that while we all play important roles in ensuring that our students' needs are met, our work cannot come at the expense of our well-being. If throughout the year you, a colleague, or a student you know could benefit from the supports we offer, please do not hesitate to act.

I wish you all the best in the new semester, and in the coming academic year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor