

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

This year, we are celebrating the centennial of Regina College, the forerunner of the University of Regina. As part of that celebration, we will also commemorate our 30-year relationship with China – a relationship that has helped shape our institution.

The University of Regina was one of the first Canadian post-secondary institutions to sign a formal partnership with a higher education institution in China after the People's Republic of China opened its doors to the world in the 1970s. In 1981, former University of Regina President Dr. Lloyd Barber signed a historic agreement between the University and Shandong University, the first of many long and fruitful relationships with Chinese institutions.

Since that initial agreement, the University has developed relationships with approximately 50 Chinese institutions. Those partnerships have resulted in joint undergraduate and graduate programs, student and faculty exchanges, scholarship programs, co-operative education placements and innovative research partnerships.

The relationships formed over the past three decades have benefited thousands of Canadian and Chinese citizens, students and scholars who have exchanged ideas, shared knowledge, and built friendships for the good of our countries and our world. Right now, there are approximately 800 Chinese students studying at the University of Regina and there have been more than 200 visiting Chinese scholars since our partnerships began. Since the mid-1980s, nearly 3,700 Chinese students have graduated from the University of Regina and the University has awarded honorary degrees to two Chairs of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

In 2009, I had the privilege of going to China with a delegation from the University of Regina to advance our teaching and research partnerships. It was an honour to meet so many of our Chinese colleagues who so graciously hosted the visit. Now it is our turn. It is our pleasure to host several of my Chinese colleagues at the University of Regina in early October to celebrate the 30th anniversary of our formal relationship.

During this celebration we will welcome colleagues from Hunan University, North China Electric Power University, CVIC Software Engineering Co., Ltd., Xiamen University of Technology and Shandong University. I am also proud to extend a special welcome to representatives from the City of Jinan, State Administration of Foreign Affairs, and National People's Congress General Office of the Standing Committee.

During this celebration we will, with great pride, officially open the Confucius Institute at the University of Regina with our partners from Hunan University. The Confucius Institute will build on the 30-year relationship, further helping us to promote and teach Chinese language and culture at the University of Regina and throughout the province. It will help meet the increasing demand for Chinese-language learning in Regina and the province of Saskatchewan, and will offer academic instruction in the areas of Chinese language, history, cultural diversity, artistic traditions and business practices. Hunan University will also send two instructors who will help implement a co-operatively designed teaching program and provide community-based language instruction and cultural training. Additionally, this institute will help strengthen relationships that exist in the business and government sectors in Saskatchewan and China.

Not only will the Confucius Institute provide a rich opportunity for students to discover Chinese culture on our campus, but it will connect business, government and local community groups to China as well.

The benefits of a rich multicultural environment are apparent everyday in our hallways, classrooms and community at large. Diversity provides us with an opportunity to learn from each other. It is also a value that is central to our post-secondary education system and part of the vision of the University's strategic plan, *mâmahohkamâtowin: Our Work, Our People, Our Communities*.

By promoting multiculturalism and strengthening international partnerships like the ones we have developed with China, we demonstrate our commitment to being an institution that “combines deep-rooted values with innovative thinking, classroom theory with real-world practice, and global ideas with regional needs.” That is a commitment of which all of us should be proud.

Vianne Timmons  
President & Vice-Chancellor