

President's Message – March 2016

Colleagues,

In the past two weeks, we have felt the loss of two special people who have meant a lot to our University community.

Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew passed away unexpectedly on February 18 after a sudden illness. In her roles as a Professor of English at First Nations University of Canada and Director of the Indigenous Peoples' Health Centre, Jo-Ann contributed so much to our University and community as a teacher, researcher and advocate.

Then on February 26, we lost Lyle Benko, who taught many students over the years in the Faculty of Education, was a member of the President's Advisory Committee on Sustainability, and served as co-chair of Saskatchewan's Regional Centre for Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development. Like Jo-Ann, Lyle cared deeply about the future and worked tirelessly to improve life for others at our University, in our province, and around the world.

On behalf of the University, I would like to extend my condolences to Jo-Ann and Lyle's families, friends, and colleagues.

Jo-Ann and Lyle will be remembered here for a long time to come. The University has already begun establishing a student award in Jo-Ann's name, for example, and people can contribute to it by contacting Donor Relations at (306) 585-5432.

I spent a great deal of time with both Jo-Ann and Lyle in recent years, and their passing has caused me to reflect on what it means to be part of the University of Regina family. Our strategic plan states that "The members of our community are our defining resource." This may be one short sentence in a document that contains hundreds, but it speaks volumes about this place and the people who give life to it as faculty, staff, students, alumni, and supporters.

Many of us spend a significant amount of our time on campus, with the result that it has become a sort of "second home" for us. And in some cases, our colleagues are almost like family members. We care about each other, we joke with each other, we sometimes disagree with each other, and in difficult times, we rally together and support each other. I have personally experienced all of these things over the past eight years, and I'm sure many of you have as well during your time at the University of Regina.

It can be painful when we lose members of our University family. That loss can be profound like the death of someone like Jo-Ann or Lyle. Or it can be bittersweet when we wish a longtime colleague well on the occasion of his or her retirement – as was the case last week with the retirement of Facilities Management's Vinh Tran, whose wonderful smile never fails to brighten the day of anyone who meets him.

Our strategic plan states that "together we are stronger," and that is indeed the case. We are a resilient University precisely because we are a close-knit family of people who value each other

and the contributions all of us make to the education of our students. That is something of which I am very proud, and it is something I am certain we will never lose.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor