

## President's Report to Convocation

Wednesday, June 1, 2011 - 2:00 p.m.

It is traditional each year for the President of the University of Saskatchewan to report to Convocation on the State of the University. I am pleased to present my report at this time.

This is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Saskatchewan's first Convocation. On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1912, the first graduates of our university assembled at Nutana Collegiate in the presence of families and friends, and faculty and staff. Bachelor of Arts degrees were conferred upon seven graduates, and other awards and honours were announced. The first president, Walter Murray, presented the annual report, and our first chancellor, Edward Ludlow Wetmore, addressed the graduates. On this 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary we assemble in this fine hall, not in one ceremony, but in six, to confer 3,000 degrees in one of the broadest ranges of disciplines and programs available in Canada, across thirteen colleges and three graduate schools. What an exciting day this is!

And so, Welcome to Spring Convocation, 2011! Welcome successful graduates in Agriculture and Bioresources, and in Education.

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the families of the graduates that are assembled today. We are delighted to have you with us. You have shared the joys and hardships of your graduate in his or her journey leading to the success that we mark today. We share your pride and we thank you very much for being here.

As I noted, in the first Convocation, at Nutana Collegiate, back in 1912, Walter Murray – our first president – gave the annual report. Every year since then, the president has given an annual report on the state of the university. With all due respect to my predecessors – particularly the early ones – I suspect the task was easier in the past than it is now. From 70 students and 4 faculty members in 1909, to 21,000 students, with thousands of faculty and staff in 2011. From the Drinkle Building in downtown Saskatoon where the first classes were held, to 160 structures on our spectacular campus today; from one college in 1909 to 13 colleges and 4 schools today – our university has grown and developed so much! It is difficult to do justice to the range and complexity of our campus. But let me try to summarize some of the highlites, around the themes of progress, problems and possibilities:

### **1. People**

Generally; some of the great achievements in 10/11: SSHRC Gold Medal (Jim Miller); 3M Teaching Award (one of ten in Canada; one of eight in U of S history), Fred Philips; CERC (one of nineteen in Canada; U of S one of thirteen-out of ninety-five Canadian universities participating in the program), Howard Wheeler; Service Award, fall of 2010, Edna Warrington; Students; (so much! academic (record numbers of Greystone Scholars) performance in music and theatre, public service and charitable contributions;

outstanding performance by our student athletes – all great achievements in the life of the university.

## **2. Capital Expansion**

We continued in 10/11 to make excellent progress in the capital expansion of our campus

- Academic Health Sciences project
- Intervac - \$140M level 3 vaccine facility, opening later this spring.
- Residences, Phase 1, Phase 2 and Grad
- Place Riel/student health and counseling – opening this summer
- Successful management of KIP stimulus money: WCVM, and rooftops.

## **3. Fiscal Management**

- 10/11 was the second year of a process to take \$10 million or three percent out of our operating budget. I know that this was difficult but together we managed to do this.
- The result? In part because of the budget adjustments, and in part through negotiated changes to funding, our pension situation has stabilized. We still have deficits on a solvency basis but our situation is much improved, particularly in comparison to other Canadian universities.

## **4. Government Relations**

Effective government relations are essential to the success of the University of Saskatchewan. I can report that we have positive, vigorous and productive relations with all three levels of government: provincial, federal and municipal. We have excellent rapport with the City of Saskatoon, and our City has participated in and contributed to capital projects on campus including, most recently, our ambitious residence projects. In recent weeks we have witnessed important signs of our productive relationship with the Government of Canada, in particular announcements on campus of multi-million dollar federal government contributions to the cyclotron, the phytotron and the dairy facility. And I want to congratulate and thank the Government of Saskatchewan for its continuing robust support of our operating budget (\$288,898,000). I believe that our recent successes here are attributable to two factors: a Ministry led by Rob Norris that understands what we are trying to do; and our planning processes that allow us to state our priorities and needs with clarity and force.

## **5. Signature Areas**

In the Strategic Directions of a decade ago, I urged our campus community to identify areas of research and study in which the University of Saskatchewan would be among global leaders. I do not mind saying that I entertained doubts about our capacity to have the kinds of conversations that would achieve this goal. But we have achieved it, and for that I would give great credit to Vice-President Karen Chad who took the lead in this initiative. In alphabetical order the list is:

- Aboriginal Peoples: Engagement and Scholarship
- Agriculture: Food and Bioproducts for a Sustainable Future

- Energy and Mineral Resources: Technology and Public Policy for a Sustainable Environment
- One Health: Solutions at the Animal-Human-Environment Interface
- Synchrotron Sciences: Innovation in Health, Environment and Advanced Technologies
- Water Security: Stewardship of the World's Freshwater Resources.

It can immediately be seen that we are making progress in advancing our claim to be among global leaders in these areas. A CERC Chair in Water Security; an investment in isotope production at the Synchrotron; the construction of Intervac; the investments in nuclear research and the developing proposal for a mining centre; and the continuing and expanding commitments to Aboriginal peoples: - all are important strides forward.

### **Possibilities**

I believe that there is an encouraging coincidence between developing U of S capacity and the circumstances of our province. We can be ambitious about our future – not for the first time: Gerhard Herzberg, Mabel Timlin, Sylvia Fedoruk and countless others were ambitious about the future of our university. They represent the best of our history, and it is to the best of our history that I believe we should appeal, as we continue to chart our course for the future.

Let me return to our graduation ceremony.

The College of Agriculture was one of the original colleges of the University of Saskatchewan. Our founders had the vision to recognize that we had a core mission to provide an excellent liberal education and that the University of Saskatchewan had a vital role in building the province. The positive impact of the College of Agriculture in the development of the province's agricultural industry has been demonstrated in ways too numerous to mention. Suffice it to say that there is scarcely a major development or advance in Agriculture in this province that does not bear the stamp of influence of the College of Agriculture. Five years ago, the name of the college was changed and it is now the College of Agriculture and Bioresources. This name change recognizes that the activities associated with the production of food exist in a broader context of life sciences that are essential to a healthy planet. The name change symbolizes the evolution and vitality of a college whose roots in this province are long and strong. The mandate and mission of the college is to advance the responsible use of land, water and bioresources used to provide products and services that enhance the quality of life. There can be no indifference to this mandate. It is fundamentally important and I want to congratulate the graduates of the College of Agriculture and Bioresources for your commitment to a mission on which all our lives depend.

Just a few highlights in the College of Agriculture this year:

- First graduates from the Bachelor of Science in Renewable Resource Management program.

- Graduates under the two plus two agreement with SIAST in the Bachelor of Science in Renewable Resource Management and in the Environmental Sciences major of the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture.
- Four graduating students first completed the Diploma in Agriculture program and continues to complete a Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness or Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree.
- Preliminary data from a survey of graduates between 2006 and 2010 indicate 78% of graduates from Agriculture and Bioresources are working in Saskatchewan. Another 15.7% work in Alberta. 50% of employed grads secured their first job before graduation and a further 29% were offered a job within one month of beginning a job search. This stems from the long tradition that the College has of forging strong partnerships with industry and government. Moreover, AgBio graduates are contributing to the economy through their entrepreneurship: 12.1% reported themselves self-employed, an additional 8.4% reported both a paid job and self-employment income. Of those reporting self-employment, 74.2% are operating a farm enterprise, 13.6% an agriculture-related business or service, and 12.1% in a non-agriculture related business or service.
- University, provincial and federal government funding is providing significant improvement to research and teaching facilities through their investment in a new dairy research and teaching facility, retrofit and enhancement of the Controlled Growth Centre.

The College of Education offers a Bachelor of Education program to over 1,200 undergraduate students each year, including those who are in specialized Aboriginal Teacher Education programs in Saskatoon, Prince Albert, La Ronge, 7 Aboriginal communities across Saskatchewan and in the Northwest Territories. We also offer graduate programs to over 400 students at both the master's and doctoral levels. Many of these graduate programs are on campus, but others are delivered in communities across the province. Still others are delivered using distance technologies and some involve courses in international settings. These graduate students and our faculty contribute important research in a variety of areas such as Educational Psychology, Philosophy, English as an Additional Language, Math and Science Education, and diversity, to name only a few areas that have direct impact on schools and on our society. We are the proud home of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre and the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit and partner to the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation, provincial school divisions, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner and the Open Door Society, to name only a few. We have over 37,000 alumni, thousands of whom have become leaders in their respective communities.

May I say to our graduates in Education that I am reminded of the importance of the challenges before you in my frequent trips to the cities and towns of this province. I have ongoing talks with teachers, guidance counselors and students in communities large and small in our province. I know that your role with your students will be, in a word, formative. Reflect upon your own experience. Think about the teachers you have had over the years. Think about the impressions they made upon you. I do not know about you, but I can remember virtually every one of my teachers by name from Grade 1 to Grade 12. I can remember the good teachers and the not so good teachers but most of all I can remember the qualities and the examples of the best of them and I remain grateful to them for their commitment and for their example. The teachers we experience in our formative early years have a formidable impact on their students and on the health of our society.

When I reflect on the many dimensions of university life, the most prominent image that comes to mind is the one before me now: row upon row of gowned students awaiting the symbolic transfer of your hoods from across your arms to around your heads and shoulders. And the rest of us – on this stage and behind and above you in the audience of this great hall – bearing proud witness to the transfer. The symbolism is rich in meaning. On one side of the ledger are the opportunities that are available by virtue of your newly awarded degrees. And take it from me, forty years after I sat where you now sit, the opportunities are many and wonderful. On the other side of the ledger is the responsibility associated with your success. It is not always explicit; it is not always acknowledged. But it is always present and it boils down to this: the responsibility to use your degrees to serve others.

But for today, we join you in celebrating your achievements to date. I know that your achievements represent thoughtfulness, determination, struggle, and a fair measure of anxiety. But you are here, and you deserve to be here. Warmest congratulations, and very best wishes for the future.

Thank you very much.