

## President's Report to Convocation

Wednesday, June 2, 2010 - 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.

But first, let me welcome you to Convocation 2010! This is the University of Saskatchewan's most important celebration. It is here that we come together and recognize in a very public way the achievements of our graduates and the contributions to their success of their families and friends. This day also marks the admission of our students to the University of Saskatchewan family of graduates world-wide. I can say to you that their record of achievement is a magnificent one. I am confident that you will uphold and enhance that record in the years to come.

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 the 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.

Let me offer you a brief report on your university. As I thought about a framework for this report, it is not surprising that in the year 2010, the number ten came to mind. I asked myself "what are the ten most important things that I would say about the University of Saskatchewan at this time? We are a large and complex organization and we have many stories to tell, but if you had to pick ten things only to say about the U of S, what would they be?" Let me offer you my list.

- 1 We have our financial affairs in order.
- 2 We have a clear picture of our academic priorities.
- 3 Our research profile is growing and improving.
- 4 One of the largest building programs in our history is underway (cranes; vision 2057).
- 5 Our enrolment numbers are stable and consistent with our plans.
- 6 We are building residences.
- 7 Canada's top research park (on our campus) continues its track record of success.
- 8 Our theatre, music and athletic programs continue to be a source of pride for our campus, city and province.
- 9 We have been selected as the site for one of the 19 Canada Excellence Research Chairs.
- 10 Our opportunities are second to none.

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. Four 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.

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.