

## President's Report to Convocation

Wednesday, May 28, 2008 – 9:00 a.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 2008. 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.

If I were to inquire of the members of this audience about the state of the University of Saskatchewan, I would no doubt hear replies and impressions on a broad range of topics. Whatever the differences, all would agree that five topics at least must be included in any such report: academic programs, student body, research, capital program, and planning and budget. Let me touch on each of these.

With respect to instructional programs, we have seen dynamic curricular work at our university. We have seen the College of Agriculture become the College of Agriculture and Bioresources to recognize that this college is concerned with more than animal and crop production and that its curriculum extends to value added production, to the environment, to public policy and to the life sciences generally. We have seen the College of Commerce become the Edwards School of Business, and we have established three new schools at the University – broad inter-disciplinary programs to encourage colleges and departments to work across the boundaries of disciplines. These new schools are the School of the Environment and Sustainability, the School of Public Health, and in collaboration with the University of Regina, the new School of Public Policy. These are only examples of the dynamic curricular change that is underway on our campus.

With respect to the size and composition of the student body, we expect the demographics in our province to be challenging in the short and medium terms. We are on the leading edge of a smaller cohort of high school graduates and high school students. To maintain a stable enrolment we will see an adjustment in the makeup of our enrolment of nearly 20,000 students. We will have higher numbers of graduate students and we are making important progress in this respect. We will increase the number of out-of-

province and international students. And we are deeply committed to providing additional opportunities for the education of Aboriginal students. I believe that this is one of the great social imperatives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Saskatchewan and across our country. We have 1,800 Aboriginal students now and we are determined to see this number rise in the years to come.

On the subject of research, universities are responsible not only for the dissemination and preservation of knowledge but also for the discovery of new knowledge. Research is not an option or an indulgence in the university environment; it is a requirement that is vital to the success of a university and its surrounding communities. Money is not the only indicator of research success, but it is one of the indicators. We have seen financial support for our research multiply over the past decade. In 1997–98, the University of Saskatchewan attracted 46 million dollars in external research support. In 2006-2007 the figure was 152 million dollars.

We have seen our tri-council funding increase by multiples and this is important to the University because tri-council funding determines many of the other resources that flow to the University including the distribution of Canada Research Chairs and the indirect cost of research. We have seen the share of Canada Research Chairs allocated to the University of Saskatchewan grow from 31 to 34 to 40 and I expect the number to increase again this year. So too, we have seen the University of Saskatchewan's share of indirect costs nearly double in the years in which this program has been in existence. This reflects significant improvement in the University's tri-council research performance.

The University of Saskatchewan's record in CFI or Canada Foundation for Innovation support has been nothing short of remarkable. Obviously the flag ship was the Canadian Light Source, but many more research projects have attracted Canada Foundation for Innovation funding. We stand 7<sup>th</sup> among the 93 Universities in the country in attracting CFI support, but if you were to translate that into the level of support on a per capital basis, we are among the top three Universities in the country. This program is a unique opportunity for Universities to build infrastructure and our University is one of its principle beneficiaries.

On the subject of capital program, I can report to you that the University of Saskatchewan is in the midst of what may be the most significant building program in its history. We have seen 83 projects, large and small, completed, planned or in progress since 2000, with a total value of about one billion dollars. This has been a tremendous challenge for us, particularly in this day and age of rapidly escalating construction costs, but we have been able to maintain our capital development program in a healthy state. One of the priority projects for the next few years is to develop more residence space for our students. We have about 1,500 residence beds, well below the average for Universities of our size. Our plans for the development of more residence spaces are advancing steadily.

This brings me to the fifth of my five topics – planning and budget. On May 2nd, the Board of Governors approved the Operating Budget for 2008-2009 along with our Second Integrated Plan and the accompanying Multi-Year Budget Framework. The plan and budget together establish our course for the next four years. The priorities areas include improving the student experience, sustaining the University's momentum in

research, scholarly and artistic work, and working effectively across institutional boundaries. With each priority area we have identified a series of commitments accompanied by indicators of success. We remain committed to the strategic directions that were set out in 2002: international standards in all that we do; commitments to global leadership in areas of pre-eminence; and rootedness in our sense of place in this fine City of Saskatoon and Province of Saskatchewan. Our first President, Walter Murray, called upon us to have large dreams, to look up, and to reach far to ensure that the University of Saskatchewan has an honourable place among the best Universities. That is our path and that is our goal.

Let me now say a few words to the graduates of the four colleges assembled here this morning.

The College of Kinesiology continues to attract outstanding applicants and boasts a very strong record both in teaching and in research that has a strong impact on the community. The college is home to Huskie Athletics and our entire University joins the city and province in shared pride of the achievements of our student athletes whether in inter-collegiate or intramural competition. Kinesiology students also are active in our community whether in the college's first community service learning course at Pleasant Hills School, or in community activities such as SWITCH. And the college continues to be a catalyst in improvements in physical fitness. There were 409,000 student, staff or member visits to the Physical Activity Centre this year. More than 430,000 visited the fitness centre which also welcomed its one millionth visitor since the centre opened. And we all rejoice in the achievement of graduating Kinesiology student Adrian Vangool who completed the Huskie Triple Crown advancing from Female Rookie of the Year to All Round Female Athlete of the Year to the Most Outstanding Athlete of the Year. These are the top three awards that female Huskie Athletes can win and Adrian has won all three.

The College of Nursing is celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2008. Established as the School of Nursing in 1938, College status was granted on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1973, and several activities are planned over the year in celebration of the anniversary.

A PhD program in Nursing was launched in September 2007. The program prepares nurse scholars for leadership roles with the knowledge and skills to advance Nursing as an Academic, Research and Practice Discipline. As graduates, these nurse scientists will contribute to the health and well being of individuals, families and communities.

The College of Pharmacy and Nutrition is justifiably proud of the quality of its programs, and of its faculty, staff and students. I want especially to commend the college on its growing involvement in international initiatives. Faculty are involved in collaborations in China, Australia, Japan, India, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Brazil, Uganda and the Caribbean. Pharmacy and Nutrition students have also been involved in international initiatives through the Health Training for Renewal Program in Mozambique, and in Health Promotion and Community Development projects in Ghana, Morocco, Ukraine and Tanzania. Our students and graduates are crossing the boundaries of geography, culture and language, and they are contributing to a better world.

The Western College of Veterinary Medicine is one of Canada's four Veterinary Medicine Programs. We are pleased to note the progress in the construction of an addition to the physical space of the college funded by the Governments of Saskatchewan and Canada and by private fundraising efforts. I am pleased to note as well, prominent faculty awards to two members of the Colleges Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences: Dr. Reuben Mapletoft who was inducted into the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, and Dr. John Campbell who received the Canadian Animal Health Coalitions Carl Block Award in honour of his research contributions to Canada's Cattle Industry. I am pleased to note, too, that seven third-year Western College of Veterinary Medicine students and two faculty members participated in an important conference that highlighted opportunities in the public health sector at the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia.

This review gives you just a glimpse of the exciting range and depth of activities to be found in these four colleges. To the graduates, now, I want to extend my warmest Congratulations and very best wishes to you. And I want you to know that you carry with you the confidence, respect and affection of every one at the University of Saskatchewan. We will follow your future activities with much interest. Stay in touch with us. We are proud to be your university.

Thank you very much.