



PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

January 2021

Spring/Summer Term announcement

As we embark on the beginning of a new semester and a new year, I would like to thank everyone for the patience, creativity and dedication you've displayed over this past year. The pandemic has presented many challenges and constraints, all of which have been successfully overcome with the resilience and perseverance of our students, faculty, and staff. We will together need to continue with that spirit and resolve until we know the vaccination program is successful.

Through all pandemic-related challenges and constraints, USask has remained active in advancing our teaching and learning, and our research, missions, and has been able to move forward on fulfilling our commitments to our students, to the province and to many around the world.

With multiple vaccine approvals in Canada, we have hope and are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. And while the initial phase of the COVID-19 vaccine-roll out in the province and across Canada is a promising sign, we remain aware that the public health crisis is not over and that we continue to face significant risks.

Taking these factors into consideration, and in consultation with public health, Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer and post-secondary education partners in the province, the university has made the decision **to continue with a hybrid approach to program delivery for the spring/summer terms, which begin May 2021, and continue through to the end of August 2021.**

Like the previous fall and current winter terms, the hybrid delivery model will combine primarily remote online learning, with limited clinical, laboratory, field-based, and other in-person instruction only where required to meet specific teaching goals, and where circumstances permit. Our focus at this time and in the weeks ahead is on our priorities including academic program delivery and research; however, over the coming months we will also give consideration to whether other typical activities such as summer camps are viewed to be safe possibilities. This direction aligns with other post-secondary sector partners in Saskatchewan and is based on consultation with key stakeholders along with the comprehensive analysis and planning work done with current pandemic knowledge and projections by the university's Pandemic Response and Recovery Team (PRT).

This method of program delivery has proven to be the best way to achieve our academic mission while also keeping our campus community healthy and safe. Consistent with the approach taken this past fall and again now in winter, academic program planning and decision-making for the spring and summer terms will stem from discussions within colleges, followed by university-level confirmation to ensure coordination. Information on specific courses will be communicated by colleges and schools in the coming months.

I recognize that many of us are eager to know when a potential return to our campus may be possible, but in the best interests of and continued safety of all members of the university community, all staff currently working

remotely will continue to work remotely, until further notice. This helps ensure the health and safety of those students, staff, and faculty who are required to be on campus.

Preparation for the Fall 2021 term is now underway, with significant consultation planned over the next several months. A decision on program delivery for the Fall 2021 term is anticipated in May.

Vice-President Research Karen Chad Concludes Final Term on January 31st, 2021

As the university's longest-serving vice-president of research, Dr. Karen Chad has led our research enterprise since 2008 with passionate, visionary and strategic leadership, fostering "discovery with impact" that will have long-lasting benefits for the university and the communities we serve.

Dr. Chad's exceptional leadership in building strong external partnerships and in nurturing multidisciplinary collaborative teams has resulted in many successes for the university, enhancing the university's performance as a member of Canada's U15 Group of Research Universities and helping to bring national and international recognition to the university's research, scholarly and artistic work.

With a bold vision of "Think big, think global", she led collegial processes to identify strategic signature areas of research focus that have been foundational to advancing the university's research and profile and helping faculty achieve more together than was possible individually. The creation and success of world-leading research centres has been critical in addressing important global challenges such as sustainable food and water, and emerging infectious disease threats. She ensured the implementation of a comprehensive suite of research programs, services, and supports for researchers, and has been pivotal in recruiting world-leading researchers who in turn have been a talent magnet for attracting top students and post-doctoral researchers.

Her leadership brought together individual faculty and research teams that were successful in attracting millions of dollars in research investment from competitive national and international sources. Prominent examples include securing funding through the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) programs—making us the only university with two of these large-scale grants in Canada—and two Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC), which have played a key role in the success of the Global Institute for Food Security (a \$50-million partnered initiative with Nutrien and the Saskatchewan government) and the Global Institute for Water Security established under her leadership. The \$30-million CERC in water security and the \$77.8-million CFREF "Global Water Futures" program have put the university at the forefront of efforts to improve water security worldwide and advanced our position as one of the world's top 20 universities for water resources research. The \$37.3-million CFREF in "Designing Crops for Global Food Security" and the \$20-million CERC in Food Systems and Food Security helped take USask's long tradition of agricultural research excellence to new levels.

Dr. Chad has strongly supported the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) and its \$140-million International Vaccine Centre, which opened in 2011 with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and which plays such a key role in VIDO's world-leading research into infectious disease and vaccine development including combatting COVID-19. Over the past five years, she has also been instrumental in nurturing a vision for VIDO to establish vaccine manufacturing capabilities. The Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation was also founded in 2011 under Dr. Chad's leadership, and she delegated the Fedoruk Centre to manage the university's Saskatchewan Centre for Cyclotron Sciences, a cyclotron facility built in 2014 to produce medical isotopes and enable faculty and industry to carry out advanced imaging research for animal, plant and human health.

Dr. Chad was also instrumental in the creation of several unique research initiatives and facilities, such as the Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research, the Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence, the

Collaborative Sciences Research Building, and the Social Sciences Research Laboratory, now the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research. Most recently, she has been working with Indigenous partners on plans to create a Wanuskewin Centre of Excellence and an Indigenous health research training centre to help address health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Through her work in co-founding the International Minerals Innovation Institute and her leadership with Mitacs, the Canadian Neutron Initiative, and the Protein Industries Canada supercluster, as well as continuing improvements in the university's intellectual property management framework, she has helped drive innovation in Saskatchewan and nationally.

A key accomplishment has been her leadership in developing through a collegial process a renewed strategic focus with the university's new research plan—"Discovery the World Needs"—that positions the University of Saskatchewan for continued research success under the leadership of her successor Dr. Baljit Singh.

Dr. Chad's contributions and leadership in our local and provincial community have been recognized through numerous awards, including a YWCA Woman of Distinction Award, the International Award for Innovation in Research, the National Leadership Award from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, the "Woman of Influence" Business Award, the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal, and "Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100" Award.

Dr. Chad is an exceptional ambassador for the university, a highly charismatic and energetic leader, and an inspiring and trusted mentor to many academic and administrative leaders. She has been a catalyst for change, particularly in fostering a collaborative research culture. Her legacy as the vice-president research is indeed significant for the university, the province, and the national research community.

A "virtual" celebration of her contributions will be held Jan. 29th at 3:30 p.m. Register [here](#). Members of the research community are invited to sign a [virtual guestbook](#).

VIDO receives Health Canada clinical trials approval for COVID-19 vaccine

In late December, the USask's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) reached a major milestone in vaccine development. The organization received a notice of authorization from Health Canada to initiate a Phase 1 clinical vaccine trial. The authorization from Health Canada enables the Canadian Center for Vaccinology (CCfV) in Halifax to begin recruiting volunteers for the first Phase 1 clinical trial. CCfV anticipates that the volunteers will be vaccinated in January. VIDO Director and CEO Dr. Volker Gerds notes that, assuming all goes well with the trials and in obtaining regulatory approvals, VIDO expects to have at least one of its vaccines ready for use by late 2021.

Research Junction projects announced

Four new research projects that will benefit Saskatoon residents are advancing thanks to [Research Junction](#), an innovative partnership between the City of Saskatoon and University of Saskatchewan (USask). Research Junction awards funding to projects that apply advanced research methods to addressing current issues in our city.

The four new projects, with combined funding of \$100,000, include:

Public Safety in Downtown Saskatoon

This project will look at the factors that inform public perception of safety to develop an evidence-based, collaborative response. The response will look at ways to address the public safety issue as well as the root cause(s). Funding: \$25,000

USask lead researchers: John Hansen, associate professor of sociology, and Isobel Findlay, professor emerita and co-director of USask's Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR)

City leads: Elisabeth Miller, senior planner of neighbourhood safety, planning & development in the community services department, and Bill Holden, senior planner in the planning and development branch, and co-director of USask's CUISR

Slope Failures Along East Riverbank

This project will apply geophysical methods to monitor the east riverbank of the South Saskatchewan River, where slope failures have occurred. The information gathered is expected to improve the ability to predict regions of slope instability. Funding: \$30,000

USask lead researcher: Sam Butler, professor of geological sciences

City lead: Vanessa Heilman, geotechnical engineering specialist

Strategic Allocation of Business Tax Incentives

A comparison of business tax incentives and subsidies in major Canadian cities and their impacts on local employment, income, and economic growth. The project's aim is to identify the best ways to encourage investment in Saskatoon in terms of attracting new businesses and promoting expansion for existing firms. Funding: \$15,000

USask project leads: professor Haizhen Mou and faculty lecturer Yang Yang with the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy

City lead: Mike Jordan, chief public policy and government relations officer

Integrating Renewable Energy Through Implementation of Microgrids

This project will look at forming microgrids that connect renewable energy sources with Saskatoon Light & Power's distribution system. The goal is to identify ways of providing reliable and affordable power that integrates renewable energy sources. Funding: \$30,000

USask lead researcher: Xiaodong Liang, associate professor of electrical and computing engineering, and Canada Research Chair in Technology Solutions for Energy Security in Remote, Northern, and Indigenous Communities

City lead: Mehrnoosh Janbakhsh, senior project management engineer for Saskatoon Light & Power

The newly announced projects will be carried out between now and spring 2022.

Interim Provost and Vice-President Academic Dr. Melissa Just

I thank Dr. Melissa Just for her excellent leadership as Interim Provost and Vice-President Academic since last June. She stepped into this important role during an extremely challenging time for the university, particularly given the pandemic, and has faced the many demands of the position superbly. She will step down from the Interim role at the end of this month and Dr. Airini will begin as Provost and Vice-President Academic on February 1st. Please join me in thanking her for her leadership and commitment to the University.