



PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

June 2021

It is hard to believe that this is my final message to Council for the 2020/2021 academic year. I recall noting back in September that this would be a year like no other. And in many ways, not only due to the pandemic, it has been a year to remember. As I reflect on my Council reports, I am reminded of all the things we accomplished, including hybrid style course delivery, continued research achievements, and moving forward two key documents to guide the future of our university – the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Sustainability Strategy.

Most importantly, this year will be remembered as a time in our institution's history that exceptional efforts were made by our faculty and staff to stay true to our academic mission in spite of the pandemic. I still reflect upon the unprecedented move to complete the whirlwind transition to teaching, learning and working remotely - a challenge we had never faced before, and could not have been completed without the incredible commitment and professionalism of all of our employees. Remarkably, that transition was made in less than a week, thanks to your efforts.

We are also very grateful for all of the essential service employees who were called to remain on campus to keep the university functioning throughout this past year, and for those who joined their fellow health-care workers on the front lines of the pandemic. It has been truly inspiring for all of us to see our campus come together, even while being apart, in support of our community – a commitment that continues to this day.

On behalf of our senior leadership team, I want to thank all of you for your patience and perseverance, in support of our students and our community. No other time in the history of the university has asked so much of us. But in so many ways, the worst of times brought out the best in us, and we thank you for that.

Looking ahead to the fall term, we know that there are still challenges ahead, but also a renewed hope for the future. Vaccines are making a difference, and an ongoing commitment to following public health and safety guidelines is providing a path out of the pandemic for our province. With responsible optimism, we are now looking forward to beginning our return to in-person activities this fall during a transitional term, as more classes resume on campus and more employees return to support our students and programming, with the health and safety of all still our primary consideration. The transition to remote teaching, learning and working has also now opened the door to new possibilities and new opportunities for the future of our institution. Motivated by that spirit, our Post-Pandemic Shift Project is exploring how we can best make decisions about our future by capturing the authentic voice and needs of our community.

I want to thank you all for what you have done to keep the university focused on its academic mission, to serve our students and to continue to pursue our mission to be the university the world needs. For now, until we are back together again on our beautiful campus, I want to wish you and your families a safe, relaxing and refreshing summer.

Celebrating Pride 2021

June is Pride Month and USask campuses will be celebrating and learning together. USask stands for inclusion and diversity, and acknowledges the injustices faced by many in the 2SLGBTQ+ community. As our University Plan 2025 states, our ambition is to be the university the world needs, and the world needs safe and welcoming spaces for everyone, including people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions, and all races and religious and spiritual beliefs. If those spaces are threatened, the world needs courageous, collaborative communities to confront those challenges and to create opportunities. We will lead by example.

Thank you to all USask faculty, students and staff from across the institution who have dedicated a great deal of their lives to researching and learning about gender and sexuality and advocating for the rights of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. I also recognize our faculty, students and staff from the 2SLGBTQ+ community who contribute so much to the fabric of our institution and who share their experiences with others.

To observe Pride, we have lit the Peter MacKinnon Building and the President's Residence with rainbow lights. From June 14 - 20, the Pride flag will be flown in front of the Peter MacKinnon Building at the Saskatoon campus (there will be no flag-raising event this year because of COVID-19 restrictions) and the Saskatoon Pride Festival flag-raising ceremony will be live-streamed on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) on Monday, June 14 at noon.

The Diefenbaker Canada Centre's (DCC) virtual exhibit '[Pride on the Prairies](#)' is live and available for the entire community, and as part of Pride Month artists will take over the Gordon Snelgrove Instagram account. The Shop USask online store has [USask Pride-themed items](#) available and a portion of the proceeds go towards the university's queer housing initiative. [You can also donate directly to the queer housing fund here.](#)

During Saskatoon Pride Week, the University Library is sponsoring a session on Two Spirit Voices as part of [Spark Your Pride](#) and USask is also sponsoring the [Global Panel Discussion on Trans Rights and Responses to Anti-Trans Movements](#). On June 19, the [virtual Pride Parade in Saskatoon](#) will be broadcast live on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#)—make sure to watch for the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) Pride Centre entry. For more on USask Pride Week activities, visit news.usask.ca.

Thank you for supporting Pride Week at USask.

USask students capture history in northern Indigenous community through quilting

June is National Indigenous History month, which commemorates the ongoing impacts that Indigenous peoples have made across Canada. In reflecting upon the many achievements being made by USask Indigenous scholars and students, I was drawn to a recent story highlighting the work of USask College of Education students who are helping to preserve the culture and history of the province's oldest permanent settlement through quilting. As part of an Indigenous Studies course in the college's Cree teacher education program, USask students located in the northern community of Cumberland House have worked to translate the stories of their relatives and Elders into quilt patches. Led by long-time educator, retired administrator and program coordinator, Lily McKay-Carriere, the project connects students with the Knowledge Keepers and Elders in the community and gives them a greater understanding of their history.

To view this, and many other stories about the important work being conducted by USask Indigenous scholars and students, please visit the [USask Indigenous Engagement](#) page of the Office of the Vice President Indigenous Engagement.

USask Department of Drama celebrates 75 years

The USask drama department – the oldest drama department in Canada – is celebrating 75 years this month.

From June 3-19, a series of events and panel discussions featuring noted alumni have been planned to explore the history of the department, which profoundly shaped Saskatchewan's theatre community and launched the careers of numerous television, film and theatre professionals. Department graduate Kim Coates, a film and television actor known for roles in productions including *Sons of Anarchy*, *Bad Blood*, *Black Hawk Down* and *Pearl Harbor*, participated in a live virtual interview during the opening event.

The virtual reunion and celebration will conclude with three Greystone Theatre performances on June 17-19 of *Unity (1918)*, written by Kevin Kerr and directed by Skye Brandon.

See full schedule of events here: <https://artsandscience.usask.ca/drama/anniversary/events.php>

USask and City of Saskatoon wastewater project named to Smart Cities list

USask and the City of Saskatoon have been recognized for their collaborative wastewater monitoring project that advances environmental and human health – one of 50 international projects named to the 2021 Smart 50 list.

Smart 50 Awards recognize global “smart cities” projects, honouring “the most innovative and influential work.” The award highlights the work of a joint project, funded by the Research Junction partnership between the City and USask, that measured levels of human pharmaceuticals such as antibiotics in Saskatoon’s wastewater to assess potential risks these chemicals might pose to the downstream environment. **Research Junction** awards funding to projects that apply advanced research methods to addressing current issues in the city.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the partnership took an unexpected turn: USask researchers, together with the City of Saskatoon and the Saskatchewan Health Authority, began measuring traces of SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing COVID-19, in Saskatoon’s wastewater. Trace amounts of virus in wastewater is a leading indicator of impending surges in case numbers. By gathering this information, the team, led by USask toxicologist Markus Brinkmann and Mike Sadowski, manager of the City of Saskatoon’s Wastewater Treatment Plant, have been able to alert authorities to upcoming trends in COVID cases. This project, initially funded by the Global Water Futures program and later awarded funding by the Public Health Agency of Canada, was also part of the award application.

USask and Co.Labs join forces to foster tech innovation in Saskatchewan

USask and the Saskatchewan Collaborates Inc. (Co.Labs), the saskatoon-based tech incubator, have signed a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) aimed at creating a pipeline of innovative ideas, services and talent.

USask has been a key sponsor of Co.Labs since the incubator’s inception in 2018. The MOU outlines a commitment for the two organizations to collaborate on program offerings, and allows USask to tap into Co.Labs’ expertise in entrepreneurship. Under the agreement, the university will provide an annual investment of \$60,000 for three years. The new funding will support two Co.Launch competitions as well as initiatives for Co.Learn—interactive summits held twice a year for tech employees and prospective start-up founders. The agreement extends to Dec. 31, 2024.

USask joins Co.Labs other key program supporters, including Innovation Saskatchewan, Western Economic Diversification Canada and Innovation Place.