In early March I expressed optimism and confidence about a significant increase to in-person, on campus programming for the Fall 2021 Term. Although COVID-19 case counts are currently high in Saskatchewan, we remain confident that, with the rapid deployment of vaccines and the support of the Ministry of Health and the Chief Medical Health Officer, our continued planning for a more open Fall Term can proceed.

While we are preparing to have many more programs, classes and labs return to in-person delivery in September, the Fall Term should be considered “transitional” as we will continue to offer some classes remotely. We will likely not complete our full transition out of pandemic operations until at least January 2022, at the beginning of Winter Term.

Alongside the increase of in-person teaching and research activity, there will be an increase in available services on our physical campuses. Student Residences will be more fully opened to safely accommodate the increase in students on campus. So, too, will food service outlets that are operated by USask, like Marquis Culinary Centre. Additional in-person student services will be phased back in to offer needed face-to-face contact for those on campus. Again, all of these in-person services will be following strict health and safety measures to protect the health and wellness of our university community.

We’ve learned a great deal over the past year, including how to quickly move to a completely remote learning and working environment. The transition back to in-person activities won’t be as quick, but we will ensure that those members of our community who are returning to learn and work on our campuses will have the necessary protections to keep them safe. We will continue to follow the directions given by Public Health and the Chief Medical Officer. USask’s Pandemic Response and Recovery Team has worked closely with government and other partners in the Saskatchewan post-secondary sector to develop and implement plans so we can deliver our programming in the safest ways possible. Based on the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, we will also need to remain flexible and diligent. An updated Framework for Return plan will be provided to the campus community in the next couple of weeks.

It is expected that administrative staff who directly support teaching, learning, and research, and associated student services, will return to campus this fall if their on-campus presence is necessary. As such, other administrative staff currently working from home will continue to work remotely for the time being to reduce the number of people on campus, facilitating the safety of students, faculty, and staff who will be returning. In the coming months, unit leaders will make decisions about who is able to return to campus, and when.

While we are closer to the end of the pandemic than the beginning, we are not through with COVID-19 yet, nor it with us. Current case counts remain high, the spring and summer terms will be primarily remote, and the campus remains closed to all unless approved.
It is the expectation of the university that everyone in the USask community will do everything possible to protect themselves and each other now, and in the Fall, fulfilling public responsibilities by following all public health orders and occupational health and safety guidelines.

**It is important to stress that the surest step you can take to prevent COVID-19 and keep the campus safe is through vaccination.** The university strongly urges all staff and students get their COVID-19 vaccinations as soon as they are eligible and ask that you encourage your friends and family members to do the same. In case you have questions about getting vaccinated, be sure to look at the information we are regularly updating on the [vaccination website](http://vaccinationwebsite.com).

For all USask students, faculty, and staff, I know there is growing excitement - and some apprehension - as we move towards the Fall Term. September will present a significant step towards the campus life and in-person experiences we remember. There is more planning to do, and additional details about how the fall will look will be announced over the coming weeks. And while it will still be different than fall semesters of the past, I know our campus community will work together to ensure the health and safety of everyone and continue to “protect the pack” as we work toward a full return in winter.

### USask Honorary degree recipients to be celebrated at Spring Convocation

I am proud to announce that USask will honor five remarkable individuals during spring convocation, who have gone on to make significant contributions to their communities and to Canadian society throughout their careers. The university will award its highest honor to the following individuals:

**Maria Campbell, Honorary Doctor of Letters**: A dedicated volunteer, activist and advocate for Indigenous rights and the rights of women and children for more than 40 years, Campbell opened doors for Métis writers when she authored her best-selling autobiography, Half-breed, in 1973. She has since written eight books and dozens of stage plays, including Flight, the first all-Indigenous theatre production in Canadian history. For the past 30 years, Campbell has been a mentor for young people, including USask students, and is the cultural advisor at USask’s College of Law after previously being an Indigenous scholar and writer in residence, and working as an assistant professor and lecturer in the College of Arts and Science. Campbell was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2008 and named to the Saskatchewan Order of Merit in 2005.

**Trevor Herriot, Honorary Doctor of Letters**: An award-winning writer, social justice activist and influential naturalist from Regina, Herriot has authored six books, and has had several stories, essays and articles published in the likes of the Globe and Mail and Canadian Geographic magazine. He has produced radio documentaries for the CBC, is a regular guest on media broadcasts, has appeared in and consulted on several video/film documentaries and has taught university creative writing courses. Herriot, who earned a bachelor’s degree with honours in English from USask in 1979, has received multiple awards and honours, including the prestigious Cheryl and Henry Kloppenburg Award for Literary Excellence in 2017.

**That Ngo, Honorary Doctor of Science**: After earning his bachelor’s degree and PhD in the 1970s at USask, Ngo went on to become a celebrated biochemist, researcher scientist and innovator, serving as president and CEO of a number of companies in Canada, the United States and China. Ngo has published more than 140 researcher articles, edited seven books, and holds 14 different industry patents, and was the co-inventor of the Ngo-Lenhoff Assay, a groundbreaking technological procedure that benefits diabetes patients worldwide. In 2016, he was selected one of
the USask College of Arts and Science’s Alumni of Influence and now opens doors for other enterprising students after establishing the That Ngo Fund for Study Abroad at USask.

**Ed Ratushny, Honorary Doctor of Laws:** A nationally regarded legal scholar, author and certified NHL hockey agent, Ratushny earned bachelor’s and law degrees at USask in the 1960s before embarking on an award-winning legal career. He became a trusted advisor to public servants, administrative tribunals, cabinet ministers and Chief Justices from across Canada. In turn, these symbiotic relationships imported broader experience and deeper understanding into Ratushny’s classrooms and his related academic writing. His professional achievements have been recognized by the Order of Canada, the Order of Ontario, an honorary Doctorate from the Ontario Law Society and a variety of additional, prestigious legal awards.

**Bryan Harvey, Honorary Doctor of Science:** A world-renowned barley breeder, Dr. Bryan Harvey (PhD) spent four decades contributing to the field of plant science and to the Canadian agriculture economy through his work with the Crop Development Centre at the University of Saskatchewan. During his time at USask starting in 1966 until his retirement in 2005, Harvey bred or co-bred more than 60 varieties of barley, leading pioneering research that benefitted the brewing industry in North America, Latin America, Asia and South Africa. His work contributed significantly to Canada’s leading role in world malting barley exports and resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in trade each year. Two of his barley varieties, Harrington and CDC Copeland, earned Seed of the Year honours in 2009 and 2019, highlighting their importance in the seed industry and to crop production in Canada. Harvey was also the author of eight books and book chapters on cultivar development, and close to 50 refereed journal publications during his prolific career. Harvey’s efforts earned him multiple awards and accolades, including being appointed to the Order of Canada in 2007, recognizing his lifetime of outstanding achievement, dedication to the community, and service to the nation. He was inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2020, and was one of only 57 Saskatchewan residents to receive the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012, awarded in recognition of significant contributions to Canada.

Recipients will be honoured on the graduation celebration website on May 31, which can be accessed here: [https://students.usask.ca/academics/graduation.php](https://students.usask.ca/academics/graduation.php)

**USask joins in announcing Herzberg50 and ‘NobelCanadian’ commemoration projects**

As part of a national initiative to mark the 50th anniversary of Gerhard Herzberg’s Nobel Prize in Chemistry, USask is partnering with heritage education organization Defining Moments Canada, Canadian Heritage, and the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) on a major digital project that will showcase Herzberg’s life and achievements to a wide public audience including high school students. An interactive website targeted at youth and teachers will be developed to include innovative digital mapping created by Esri Canada. The project will also be supported by archival and historical research at USask, Herzberg’s academic home for 10 research-intensive years after he was brought to Canada from Germany in 1935, through efforts led by USask’s first president Walter Murray.

Herzberg’s work is a testament to the importance of fundamental research where transformative applications become evident over time. I am proud that Canada and USask welcomed Herzberg and his wife when no other country or university did, and in the process, enabled him to undertake superb work on the journey to the Nobel Prize. His legacy is evident today in so many ways, including at the USask Canadian Light Source where scientists from across Canada and around the world continue to unravel the mysteries of atomic structure.
Further information on the partnered announcement can be found here: https://definingmomentscanada.ca/news/announcing-herzberg50-and-nobelcanadian/

**Federal budget supports USask’s VIDO with $59.2M**

On April 19th, the government of Canada announced $59.2 million in funding to support USask’s VIDO, including the development of its vaccine candidates and the expansion of research facilities, including a National Centre for Pandemic Research. This funding is in addition to the commitments made by the provincial government ($15 million), City of Saskatoon ($250,000), and private donors.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, VIDO has taken a national leadership role. This includes being the first in Canada to isolate the virus that causes COVID-19, the first in Canada to develop an animal model of disease and the first Canadian university organization to have a COVID-19 vaccine in clinical trials. In addition, VIDO has continued to engage with organizations around the world to support the development of novel vaccines, antivirals and therapeutics in an effort to help end the ongoing pandemic.

**USask ranks among the world’s best universities for sustainability and social impact**

For the second year in a row, USask was ranked in the Top 100 overall and even higher in select categories in The Times Higher Education (THE) rankings of universities around the world. USask ranked 13th in Canada for making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, according to the THE.

USask also ranked in the top 100 in the following categories:

- Partnership for the Goals (61) measuring universities’ global partnerships for sustainable development;
- Sustainable Cities and Communities (67) measuring universities’ research on sustainability, their role as custodians of arts and heritage and their internal approaches to sustainability; and
- Clean Water and Sanitation (81) measuring universities’ research related to water, their water usage, and their commitment to ensuring good water management in the wider community.

The 2021 Impact Rankings is the third edition, and the overall ranking this year included 1,115 universities from 94 countries and regions.

More comprehensive results are available on the [THE website](https://www.timeshighereducation.com).