



PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

October 2021

After more than 18 months and now a fourth wave, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge us all. It has disrupted our daily routines, affected our sense of familiarity and comfort, and most importantly, it has presented many health and safety challenges. To protect the health and safety of our campuses, our USask community has met every challenge with resourcefulness and resilience. The low case and transmission rates on our campus to date confirm that the steps we have taken have truly helped 'Protect the Pack'.

As the Delta variant rapidly spread over the summer, we knew that further measures around vaccination requirements and proof of vaccination would be necessary for a successful and safe fall term—and once again our campus community approached this challenge with the unwavering commitment I have come to expect.

The numbers speak for themselves: over 25,000 students, faculty and staff have submitted their vaccine status. Of those who have done so, **97 per cent** of staff and faculty, and **92 per cent** of students are fully vaccinated. **These numbers** far exceed those of the general population in this province and across the country. We will continue to work to get these numbers higher, as full participation is vital to continue offering in-person activities.

Three per cent of those who have responded are either not vaccinated or have chosen not to disclose. Those individuals are now required to submit **two negative rapid test results** each week and complete a daily symptom record to participate in on-campus activities.

The paramount need for safety has led us to introduce consequences of non-compliance for individuals who have yet to declare vaccination status, including loss of access to course tools, unpaid leave and no longer being permitted on campus. All information submitted through our secure system will be protected in accordance with the university's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Policies, and Saskatchewan's *The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Implementing the guidelines, systems and processes around vaccination and proof of vaccination is a complex and comprehensive undertaking. I am confident in our response as we work through the fall term.

We acknowledge that even with these outstanding numbers, COVID-19 will continue to have a presence on our campuses and in our communities. As an additional health and safety measure, and to help everyone in our campus community be fully informed, we have begun providing additional updates on positive cases reported by our community members on and off campus, including when and where

the confirmed COVID-19 cases have been reported. This information can be found on the [Daily Case Count page](#)

We continue to adapt our measures in response to current realities and trends. In addition to our mask policy for all indoor spaces, we are now requiring masks be worn at any outdoor on-campus gathering of more than 20 people, including Huskies games. And please remember that given Saskatchewan is experiencing a significant rise in positive cases, please stay home if you are feeling unwell and get tested for COVID-19.

Every wave of this pandemic brings anxiety, stress and fear. Be assured that there are resources to support you. There is a broad range of services for students at the [Student Wellness Centre](#), while staff and faculty can access confidential counseling through the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#).

As fall term progresses and the number of COVID-19 cases in our province evolves, we will continue to monitor the status of COVID-19 and its effects on USask, and to respond accordingly by updating processes and activities. Additionally, USask will be flexible in operations to ensure we are aligned with the government safety measures recently announced. As guidelines are updated, details will be included in the weekly COVID Update e-newsletters.

For the most up-to-date information please visit covid19.usask.ca. If you have any questions, please email covid19@usask.ca.

Reporting on the Post-Pandemic Shift Project

Dr. Debra Pozega Osburn, Vice President University Relations, will present the Post-Pandemic Shift project report at this month's Council meeting. Council members will recall that the purpose of the project was not to create a plan or direct outcomes for the institution; rather, the project was designed to reflect on what we heard from our internal and external communities, and to create a framework to guide decisions in a post-pandemic reality. The framework that will be presented was developed from the voices of our stakeholders and will provide us with a lens through which to view the decisions we will need to make to be the university they need in our post-pandemic world.

The project was led by Dr. Pozega Osburn and supported by Julian Demkiw, Senior Strategist, Office of the President. Guiding the internal engagement was a commission of campus stakeholders led by Commission Co-Chairs Candace Wasacase-Lafferty and Dr. Vince Bruni-Bossio. Commission members included Dr. Angela Bedard-Haughn, Sarah Buhler, Dr. Pam Downe, Marcy Hildebrand, Don Leidl, Kiefer Roberts, Dr. Vicki Squires, Dr. Nancy Turner, and Candice Weingartner.

These commissioners, made up of students, faculty, staff, and senior leaders, volunteered their time to design engagement processes, lead workshops, and provide feedback on what we collectively heard. I thank them for their time, energy and, most importantly, their wisdom in helping bring the many voices together.

USask marks the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

USask events organized throughout the week of September 30th gave the USask community the opportunity to acknowledge and reflect on the tragic legacy and history of the residential school system, reminding us of our responsibility to be national leaders in transformative decolonization leading to reconciliation.

We pay tribute to the survivors, their families and their communities by being responsive to the TRC's Calls to Action. That is a commitment woven throughout our University Plan 2025 and embedded in our new [Indigenous Strategy](#) — ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan (“Let’s Fly Up Together”) — which was generously gifted to the university by Indigenous leaders, Elders, and Traditional Knowledge Keepers and Teachers, as well as Indigenous students, staff and faculty.

Establishing a new federal statutory day to recognize the tragic legacy of residential schools was one of the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. All faculty, students, staff and alumni, and all members of our extended campus community, were encouraged to take this day to learn and to listen, to remember the victims and the survivors, and to reflect on the trauma caused by residential schools and how we can move forward to heal together.

I want to thank the team led by the Provost’s office that organized the many events on campus to commemorate this important day. This first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is another step forward on the path to being the best place we can be for Indigenous students, staff, and faculty, and their families and communities. It is also part of our critical ongoing effort to make USask a more diverse, equitable and inclusive campus community for all. We are committed to doing all that we can to remove barriers, and to dismantle structural forms of discrimination on our campuses.

Three USask researchers become fellows in the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences

Three University of Saskatchewan (USask) leaders and researchers have been inducted as fellows into the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS): Dr. Volker Gerdtts (DVM, PhD), Dr. Walter Siqueira (DDS, PhD) and Dr. Cheryl Waldner (DVM, PhD).

The Canadian Academy of Health Sciences (CAHS) is one of three national academies that comprise the Council of Canadian Academies, the highest honour granted to scholars in Canada. (The other two CCA academies are the Royal Society of Canada and the Canadian Academy of Engineering.) Fellows of the Academy are elected based on their demonstrated leadership, creativity, distinctive competencies and commitment to advancing academic health sciences.

A total of 73 new fellows were inducted to the CAHS on Sept. 13.

USask researcher named a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada

University of Saskatchewan (USask) researcher [Dr. Malcolm King](#) (PhD) has been named a fellow in one of Canada’s oldest and most prestigious national institutions. King, a member of the Mississaugas of the

Credit First Nation, professor of community health and epidemiology, and scientific director of the Saskatchewan Centre for Patient-Oriented Research at USask, was named a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (RSC) on Sept. 7—one of 89 new fellows elected by their peers for their outstanding scholarly, scientific and artistic achievement.

Dr. King is one of Canada’s prominent leaders in the promotion of the health and well-being of Indigenous Peoples, and internationally has been key to efforts to improve health and health research for Indigenous communities.

His high-impact publications on Indigenous health have served as major benchmarks for understanding health equity and have been cited thousands of times. Dr. King’s role on the Canadian Institutes for Health Research’s inaugural governing council and as scientific director of CIHR’s Institute of Indigenous Peoples’ Health have helped to set the agenda for health research engaging Indigenous Peoples.

Dr. King was trained as a polymer chemist and has contributed substantially to the study of respiratory medicine, including cystic fibrosis, chronic obstructive lung disease, and most recently, the aerosol spread of COVID-19. He currently co-leads the Indigenous Wellness Research Group *pewaseskwan* (Cree for “the sky is clearing”) with Dr. Alexandra King (MD).

USask celebrates Nunavut Law Program

Graduates, their families, and others who contributed to the USask Nunavut Law program recently gathered for the official graduation ceremony in Iqaluit. Delivered in partnership with the College of Law, Nunavut Arctic College (NAC) and the Government of Nunavut, the program aimed to increase the number of practicing lawyers in Nunavut. After one year of pre-law instruction, three years of law lectures from more than 25 instructors, trips to various conferences, and participation in moot competitions across Canada, the program concluded with 21 students earning their Juris Doctor (JD) degrees.

USask hosts inaugural Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) event

USask is committed to establishing and nurturing an equitable, diverse and inclusive USask community. From the development of USask’s [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) policy](#) to the forthcoming companion EDI Strategy and Action Plan, this event is intended to recognize and celebrate initiatives that support and advance equity, diversity and inclusion at USask. Please join us on Tuesday, October 19 for this inaugural EDI event: *From Policy to Implementation*.

The online event will feature [Dr. Malinda Smith](#), vice-provost (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) from the University of Calgary, as this year’s virtual keynote speaker. The day will also include USask EDI scholars’ perspectives, and those of students, and an update on the EDI Strategy and Action Plan.

RSVP your attendance to the event through the following Eventbrite link: <https://usask-edi-event-2021.eventbrite.ca>