



Interim Provost's Report to Council

June 2026

GENERAL REMARKS

We marked an exciting Spring Convocation from June 1-5 that celebrated 3,976 new USask graduates. I was especially honoured to present the Distinguished Teacher Award to Cheryl Besse, associate professor in the College of Nursing, during the June 4 ceremony. Cheryl has devoted more than 30 years to nursing education, creating inclusive, supportive learning environments that foster critical thinking and professional growth, and it was such a pleasure to recognize her with this award.

I also want to extend my congratulations to those named Distinguished Professors, and to the recipients of the Provost's Teaching Awards for the 2025-26 academic year. Each of you contributes to USask's learning and discovery environment in profound ways, and we look forward to honouring you at special events in June. You can read more about each of the educators we are celebrating below.

I would also like to highlight one new and one renewed advisory committee to the provost's portfolio. Thank you in advance to colleagues who have agreed to serve on these advisory committees.

On December 3, 2025, USask published its first university-wide [Accessibility Plan](#), as part of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Framework for Action. The Accessibility Plan expresses USask's commitment to "strive to create spaces where everyone can take part in learning, working, and community life" and recognizes that "accessibility means removing physical, social, and systemic barriers caused by ableism. It also means designing spaces, systems, and services with and for disabled people — including those with visible, invisible, episodic, or contested disabilities." To inform next steps for the plan, the new Provost's Advisory Committee on the Accessibility Plan (PAC-AP) will provide advice to the Provost and Vice-President Academic. It will involve reviewing policies, processes, and practices and providing recommendations to further accessibility.

The 2026-27 committee members include:

- Loleen Berdahl, Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic (co-chair)

- Azul Gonzalez Avila, University of Saskatchewan Students' Union
- Lori Bradford, College of Engineering
- Sunny Bui, Graduate Student Association
- Paul Fraser, Capital and Business Planning
- Tasnim Jaisee, Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic
- Maxine Kinakin, Access and Equity Services
- Solina Richter, College of Nursing
- Jim Walters, Planning Design and Construction

The Provost's Advisory Committee on Gender and Sexual Diversity (PAC-GSD) is an established forum that assists USask in creating a community that embraces gender and sexual diversity. We are now once again meeting as a committee to continue this work. The group works to ensure equitable, respectful, and inclusive treatment for all members by proactively addressing intersectional issues related to gender and sexual diversity within and surrounding the campus community, including students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Additionally, the PAC-GSD works to increase visibility and amplify the voices of the diverse gender and sexual groups in the campus community, affirming those who have not been equitably represented within the dominant culture of our community. This includes, but is not limited to, Two-Spirit people, transgender and nonbinary people, lesbian women, gay men, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, intersex, queer, and questioning people.

The 2026-27 committee members include:

- Loleen Berdahl, Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic (co-chair)
- Azul Gonzalez Avila, University of Saskatchewan Students' Union
- Dani Brittain, College of Kinesiology
- Sunny Bui, Graduate Student Association
- Jean Ketterling, College of Arts and Science
- Elliott Klassen, University of Saskatchewan Students' Union Pride Centre
- Tasnim Jaisee, Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic
- Jocelyn Orb, Student Wellness Centre
- Jocelyn Ormerod, Edwards School of Business
- Joshua Shaw, College of Law

Thank you for your engagement with our Reports to Council this year. This will be our final update until University Council resumes in September. I wish you all a restful summer.

USASK UPDATES

2026 DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORS

USask has named five scholars as distinguished professors, the university's highest honour for lifetime achievement in research, scholarly, and artistic work. Selected through a rigorous review process resulting in approval by both the Provost and Vice-President Academic and the Vice-President Research, the award recognizes sustained excellence, leadership, and impact across disciplines, as well as significant contributions to teaching, mentorship, and service. The 2026 recipients reflect excellence in multiple forms, with achievements spanning health, engineering, structural biology, agriculture, and law, and advancing knowledge at local and global levels.

Thank you to the Vice-Provost, Faculty Relations team for leadership and stewardship in managing the distinguished professorship process.

2026 Distinguished Professors

Dr. Claire Card, Western College of Veterinary Medicine
Dr. Daniel Chen, College of Engineering
Dr. Mirosław (Mirek) Cygler, College of Medicine
Dr. Curtis Pozniak, College of Agriculture and Bioresources
Dr. Barbara von Tigerstrom, College of Law

PROVOST'S TEACHING AWARDS

The [Provost's Teaching Awards](#) recognize outstanding contributions to teaching and learning through a comprehensive, adjudicated process spanning institutional and college-level awards. The program honours excellence, innovation, and impact on student learning across a range of roles, from faculty and sessional lecturers to graduate student instructors and staff who support teaching and learning. Recipients are selected through peer review and are celebrated annually at the Staff and Faculty Awards event. Together, these awards highlight the breadth of teaching excellence across USask and its impact on student success. Congratulations to the 21 recipients below on your achievements and extraordinary impact.

2025/26 Recipients

Institutional awards

Provost's Outstanding Teacher Award: Dr. Alec Aitken (Arts and Science)

Provost's New Teacher Awards: Dr. Valerie Caron (Medicine); Dr. Madison Ricard (Veterinary Medicine)

Provost's Award for Support of Teaching and Learning: Natalya Mason (Medicine)

Provost's Graduate Student Teacher Awards: Dr. Gabrielle Achtymichuk (Veterinary Medicine); Andrew Hartman (Arts and Science)

Sylvia Wallace Sessional Lecturer Award: Dr. Jordan Raymond (Education)

College and school awards for outstanding teaching

Agriculture and Bioresources: Dr. Katherine Stewart

Arts and Science: Dr. Kyle McLeister; Dr. Matthew Toohey

Dentistry: Dr. Michelle Siqueira

Education: Dr. Jing Xiao

Edwards School of Business: Brooke Klassen

Engineering: Brad Schmid

Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy: Dr. Michelle Bussiere-Prytula

Kinesiology: Shannon Forrester

Law: Dr. Clayton Bangsund

Medicine (Rehabilitation Science): Dr. Stan Bardal

Nursing: Jill Zdunich

Pharmacy and Nutrition: Dr. Jason Perepelkin

Veterinary Medicine: Dr. Michael Wu

ACADEMIC HEALTH SCIENCES

The Academic Health Sciences (AHS) brings together the strengths of diverse disciplines to advance health through education, research, and community engagement. The Joint Governance Council of the Academic Health Sciences (JGCAHS) provides strategic direction and oversight for shared priorities across the AHS.

The Health Sciences Education Strategy Committee (HSESC), a committee of the JGCAHS, supports and guides shared health science education initiatives and programs that involve more than one department, school, or program, including interprofessional education. The HSESC meets on a regular basis and helps identify priorities, coordinate and support implementation, and evaluate shared education initiatives and programming within this mandate, providing recommendations to the JGCAHS for decision making. Its work supports collaboration across colleges while respecting their distinct academic mission.

Current membership for the 2026/27 year includes:

- Dr. Amrinderbir Singh – College of Dentistry
- Dr. Joel Lanovaz – College of Kinesiology
- Dr. Meredith McKague – College of Medicine
- Dr. Marnie Kramer – College of Nursing
- Dr. Charity Evans – College of Pharmacy and Nutrition
- Dr. Bruce Wobeser – Western College of Veterinary Medicine
- Dr. Michael Szafron – School of Public Health
- Dr. Jennifer Lang – Clinical Psychology, College of Arts and Science
- Zach Berardi – Health Science Student Association representative
- Dr. Loleen Berdahl – Acting Deputy Provost

LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS, GALLERIES, AND THE DIEFENBAKER CANADA CENTRE UPDATE

Effective May 1, 2026, the university's museums, galleries, and the Diefenbaker Canada Centre joined the University Library to form a unified cultural heritage organization. Together, the Museum of Natural Sciences, Museum of Antiquities, College Art Galleries, Gordon Snelgrove Gallery, Kenderdine Art Gallery, the Diefenbaker Canada Centre, and USask Library will create a connected ecosystem that supports teaching, learning, research, and engagement both on campus and beyond.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS HISTORY MONTH

June is National Indigenous History Month and June 21 is National Indigenous Peoples Day, which recognizes and celebrates the history and diverse cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples across Canada. Over this month, we will be sharing stories celebrating Indigenous members of the USask community and are encouraging those who are able to attend community events.

On June 21, and every day, members of the University of Saskatchewan (USask) community can learn about Indigenization, decolonization, and the history of Indigenous Peoples and cultures through the Office of the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Engagement's [website](#) and the University Library's [I-Portal: Indigenous Studies Portal](#).

PRIDE MONTH

At USask, creating a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environment is central to our ambition to be the university the world needs. June is Pride Month, and the USask community is invited to participate in events, explore learning resources, and read stories that highlight the experiences and contributions of 2SLGBTQIA+ students, staff, faculty,

and alumni. With planning support from the provost's office, the annual USask Pride flag raising ceremony took place on May 28, where we welcomed student leaders and senior leadership, including President Vince Bruni-Bossio, to give remarks and recognize the meaning of Pride Month on our campuses. Please join us at the Saskatoon Pride Parade on June 28, where the University of Saskatchewan has been accepted to walk as a group in the parade procession.

COLLEGE AND SCHOOL UPDATES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES

A selection of recent accomplishments, achievements and milestones for USask's college and school community are shared below.

EDWARDS EXECUTIVE EDUCATION EARNS GLOBAL RECOGNITION FOR THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR IN FINANCIAL TIMES RANKINGS

Edwards Executive Education has once again been [recognized by the Financial Times \(FT\)](#) as one of the world's top executive education providers. This marks its third consecutive year on the prestigious list and reinforces its position among leading global providers in professional development and leadership training. To qualify for FT ranking, business schools must hold AACSB or EFMD accreditation and report at least \$1million in annual revenue from custom or open programs. The ranking evaluates open enrolment programs based on factors such as participant quality, teaching, skills gained, and more. This recognition reflects Edwards' commitment to delivering relevant, high-impact learning experiences that meet the evolving needs of professionals and organizations. Looking ahead, [Edwards Executive Education](#) is excited to continue expanding offerings, developing new programs, and strengthening partnerships. Congratulations to the Edwards School of Business on this achievement!

COLLEGE OF MEDICINE GROWTH STRENGTHENS SASKATCHEWAN'S HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Medical Education:

The Government of Saskatchewan is supporting a new College of Medicine expansion, adding 20 undergraduate medical training seats (increasing from 108 to 128) and 10 residency seats (increasing from 150 to 160). This expansion highlights the colleges continued commitment to growing training capacity to best serve the province. [Read the full release.](#)

The undergraduate expansion will be implemented for the current admissions cycle and incoming class. Twelve of the new seats will be at the college's Regina campus (52 seats

total) and eight at the Saskatoon campus (76 seats total). The college is working with government to target 95 per cent of medical school admission for Saskatchewan students. The new residency seats were included in the 2026 Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS) match. All residency [seats offered were successfully filled](#), and learners will begin training on July 1, 2026.

Physician Assistant Studies:

The first [Master of Physician Assistant Studies](#) (MPAS) cohort is completing its third term of case-based and team-based learning. This fall, students will begin their second year and start clinical placements in urban and rural sites across the province. Interest in the program remains strong, as the admissions process just finished for the new incoming class, and offer letters were sent out in May to top candidates.

School of Rehabilitation Science (SRS):

The School of Rehabilitation Science is finalizing preparations for the August launch of the [Master of Occupational Therapy](#) (MOT) and [Master of Speech-Language Pathology](#) (MSLP) programs. Key priorities include hiring faculty and staff, continuing clinical community engagement, ongoing development of curricula, and working on accreditation for the new programs and the existing MPT program. Both programs received high interest from applicants in the recent admissions process and offer letters have been extended to successful candidates. A ceremony is being planned to formally welcome the inaugural MOT and MSLP student cohorts, alongside the MPT student cohort, in late August.

SASKATCHEWAN LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Four outstanding Saskatchewan graduate and post graduate students are being recognized for their academic excellence and leadership through the 2026-27 Saskatchewan Lieutenant Governor Scholarship and the Saskatchewan Lieutenant Governor Indigenous Scholarship. Each award provides \$20,000 to support graduate and post graduate students in Saskatchewan who are advancing research excellence and leadership within their disciplines. This year, for the first time, two additional \$20,000 scholarships have been awarded, totaling \$80,000 in student support. The 2026-27 recipients from USask are Mehdi Khalaj, a PhD student in Computer Science (Quantum Bioinformatics) within the College of Arts and Science, and Katie Tolley, a PhD student in the School of Public Health. Congratulations to both of our USask recipients on their hard work and impactful research that earned them this recognition.

RECENT APPOINTMENTS

Dr. Martha Smith has been appointed as Interim Executive Director, Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy for a one-year term, beginning July 1, 2026 up to June 30, 2027.

Dr. Bobbi Helgason has been appointed as Head, Department of Soil Science, College of Agriculture and Bioresources, for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2026 and up to June 30, 2031.

Dr. Gill White has been extended as Associate Dean, Regina Campus, College of Medicine for a term up to six months, beginning July 1, 2026 up to December 31, 2026 or until a new Associate Dean, Regina Campus is appointed, whichever occurs first.

Dr. Paula MacDowell has been appointed as Associate Dean, Research, Graduate Support and International Initiatives, College of Education for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2026 up to June 30, 2031.

Dr. Eric Micheels has been appointed as Head, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, College of Agriculture and Bioresources for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2026 up to June 30, 2031.

Dr. Robert Laprairie has been appointed as Assistant Dean, College of Pharmacy and Nutrition for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2026 up to June 30, 2031.

Dr. Natacha Hogan has been appointed as Associate Dean, Academic, College of Agriculture and Bioresources, for a five-year term, beginning July 1, 2027 up to June 30, 2032.

ACTIVE SEARCHES AND REVIEWS

Searches:

- Dean, College of Pharmacy and Nutrition
- Dean, College of Law

Please see [here](#) for information on searches and reviews.