

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO SENATE

October 2026

The 2026–27 academic year has begun with renewed energy across University of Saskatchewan campuses. Students, faculty, staff, and partners have returned with purpose, reflecting a community committed to learning, discovery, and respectful partnership. Across classrooms, labs, clinics, studios, and gathering spaces, the momentum of the fall term is clear. USask continues to be a place where people feel they belong and where their aspirations are supported by a community focused on impact.

UPLAN 2035 UPDATE

Development of UPlan 2035 is nearing completion following an extensive engagement process involving more than 3,500 members of the university community and nearly 200 external partners, including Indigenous leaders and Knowledge Keepers, governments, industry leaders, research partners, alumni, donors, and community partners. Analysis of more than 17,000 data points has informed the university's emerging vision, mission, priorities, and implementation framework.

A clear theme emerged throughout the planning process: local to global. Participants consistently emphasized that USask's greatest contributions to the world are rooted in its connection to Saskatchewan. The relationships USask has with communities, industry, Indigenous Peoples, governments, and the diverse cultures, environments, opportunities, and challenges of this province shape the questions we ask, the partnerships we build, and the solutions we pursue. This connection to place provides USask with distinctive strengths and responsibilities that enable impact both locally and globally.

The emerging vision is to strengthen Saskatchewan and the world through future-focused people and solutions. The framework focuses on areas in which USask can make distinctive contributions to society, including food and water security, health and well-being, thriving communities, sustainable energy and resource futures, and responsible technological transformation.

To advance this vision, the plan is organized around three interconnected mission goals: to facilitate accessible and meaningful lifelong learning, to advance discovery and insight, and to deepen our connection and commitment to community. These goals are supported by institutional priorities intended to strengthen the student experience, research and scholarly impact, Indigenous leadership and priorities, university infrastructure, community wellbeing, and long-term sustainability.

The plan is now moving into its final refinement and endorsement phase through discussions with students, academic leadership, and governance bodies, with a formal launch anticipated early in the new year. I am looking forward to a comprehensive discussion about UPlan 2035 with Senate at its October meeting.

Strategic Plan Engagement Statistics

Engagement Activity	Total Count
Survey Activity	
Faculty and Staff Survey Response	862
Learner Engagement Survey Response	1,697
Interviews/Focus Groups/Meetings	
Senior Leadership	187
Academic Governance (committees)	182
Campus Conversations (focus groups)	421
Industry	36
Donors & Alumni	45
Government	35
Community (Including Senate)	94
Research Ecosystem	39
Indigenous Communities	56
3,654 points of engagement	

CAMPUS PLANNING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

USask continues to advance long-term campus development through Campus Planning and Real Estate, while responding to significant infrastructure and transportation projects affecting the campus community.

- **College Drive and Link Rapid Transit construction:** The City of Saskatoon’s Link Rapid Transit construction along College Drive continues to affect access to campus and surrounding roadways. With College Drive under construction, traffic has diverted onto Preston Avenue, increasing traffic volumes on the east side of campus and placing additional pressure on campus roads and intersections. While

congestion has eased somewhat in recent weeks, further challenges are anticipated as the project progresses. The next phase of the City's project will require the full closure of College Drive between Preston Avenue and Cumberland Avenue during the April-October 2027 construction season. The City's Link Rapid Transit System should improve access and mobility around campus.

- **Transportation planning and traffic safety:** In response to changing traffic patterns, USask introduced temporary all-way stops at three key intersections as part of a pilot project running from September 2026 through April 2027. These measures are intended to improve pedestrian safety at important campus crossings and help traffic move more predictably through intersections while construction continues to affect normal traffic movements. The university is also undertaking a comprehensive Transportation Master Plan, using traffic, pedestrian and cycling data to help inform longer-term solutions to improve traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and accessibility across campus.
- **Bowl Remediation Project:** The Bowl Remediation Project is entering its final major phase following significant underground infrastructure and site preparation work completed over the past year. To allow newly planted trees, vegetation and other landscape features sufficient time to establish and to protect the university's investment, the Bowl will remain closed until Fall 2027. Once complete, the project will provide renewed critical underground infrastructure, improved drainage, and a fully restored landscape, creating a healthier, more sustainable and attractive Bowl that the campus community can enjoy for many years to come.

PROVINCIAL PARTNERSHIP AND PUBLIC INVESTMENT

In September, the Board of Governors approved a strategic financing approach enabling USask to pursue up to \$250 million in new capital financing. This strategy supports modernization of foundational systems through the Integrated Services Renewal initiative, renewal and expansion of teaching and learning spaces, and new opportunities in nuclear medicine. The university will self-finance these projects through a bond structure without requiring provincial capital funding or relying on unrestricted operating funds.

USask also strengthened its northern presence through a new Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Prince Albert, formalizing collaboration in community development, transportation, health and wellness, and recreation. Building on more than 40 years of partnership, the agreement establishes a framework to align city priorities with USask expertise and research, supporting collaborative projects that improve quality of life, strengthen community development, and address local challenges through innovation and

evidence-based solutions. A structured working group will help identify and advance shared projects focused on community needs and opportunities.

RESEARCH AND GLOBAL IMPACT

USask's faculty, students, and research partners continue to advance work that strengthens Saskatchewan, contributes to global progress, and reflects the university's growing impact across disciplines.

- Dr. Daniel Chen (PhD) and Dr. Tara Kahan (PhD), were recognized by the Royal Society of Canada for their contributions to biomaterials innovation and environmental chemistry.
- Dr. Valerie Verge (PhD), professor of anatomy and cell biology, was named a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences for her leadership in neuroscience and spinal cord injury research.
- Dr. Arinjay Banerjee (PhD), principal scientist at VIDO and Canada Research Chair in Zoonotic Virus and Animal Reservoirs, was named one of Canada's Top 40 Under 40. His work on wildlife-borne viruses and antiviral therapeutics continues to shape Canada's leadership in infectious disease research.
- Dr. John Pomeroy (PhD), distinguished professor and director of the Global Water Futures Observatories, received the Royal Society of Canada's Bancroft Award for his contributions to understanding the cryosphere and advancing global water security.
- Dr. Valerie J. Korinek (PhD), professor of history, earned the Royal Society of Canada's Ursula Franklin Award in Gender Studies for her influential scholarship on feminism, queer histories, and gender activism across the Prairies.
- USask also signed a new agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency to advance nuclear research, education, and training, building on strengths in nuclear medicine, energy systems, and policy.
- Canada announced the Quantum Defence Innovation Secure Hub (DISH), with USask serving as a primary academic partner. Building on the university's growing leadership in quantum research, including the Centre for Quantum Topology and Its Applications (quanTA) and Canada's first university-based quantum computer, the initiative will accelerate quantum technologies that support national security, defence, and other real-world applications.
- Two incoming students, Matthew Craddock and Clarenz Portades, were named USask's 2026 Schulich Leaders, reflecting the academic strength and leadership of students choosing USask.

RANKINGS AND GLOBAL REPUTATION

USask achieved outstanding results in recent global rankings of water research, placing first in Canada and among the top ten universities worldwide in the Water Resources area of the annual ShanghaiRanking Global Ranking of Academic Subjects. ShanghaiRanking is an independent international organization that evaluates universities using objective measures of research strength, academic impact, and disciplinary excellence across 57 subject areas. The university earned top marks for its leadership in hydrology, climate and water security, and for the impact of its research on global policy and community resilience. These results reflect USask's long-standing strengths in water science, the contributions of researchers across the Global Water Futures program, and the university's growing international reputation for excellence in discovery and collaboration.

INDIGENOUS ACHIEVEMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan update

August 20 marked five years since ohpahotân | oohpaahotaan was gifted to USask. Units across campus have now completed progress reports that reflect achievements, challenges, and opportunities for continued growth. The Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement has compiled 22 reports that document how the seven commitments are being translated into action and how the strategy continues to guide our work. The reporting process reinforces a culture of accountability and highlights the importance of creating safer, more inclusive environments. It also acknowledges that racism remains a reality that must be addressed through collective effort and sustained leadership.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

On September 30, USask observed the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a statutory holiday across Canada that coincides with Orange Shirt Day. The university remained closed so students, staff, and faculty could reflect on the legacy of residential schools and participate in learning and remembrance. Leading up to the day, USask held a Week of Reflection that offered events, teachings, and opportunities for the campus community to honour Survivors and remember the children who never returned home.

Members of the university community also participated in the Saskatoon Tribal Council Every Child Matters Powwow, supporting community-led reflection, learning, and

reconciliation. The powwow provided an opportunity to come together in recognition of Survivors, their families, and communities, and to reaffirm our shared commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

HEALTH-CARE TRAINING

Program launch

A major milestone for Saskatchewan's health-care system arrived with the launch of the province's first Master of Occupational Therapy and Master of Speech-Language Pathology programs at USask. These programs welcomed their inaugural cohorts this fall and will train 80 students each year, supported by a \$37-million provincial investment. Students will gain experience in rural, urban, and Indigenous communities, strengthening access to essential services and supporting the Patients First Health Care Plan and the Health Human Resource Action Plan.

New Pediatric Research Chair

In June this year, USask received a \$4-million donation to the College of Medicine from the Hospitals of Regina Foundation to establish a Pediatric Chair in the Origins of Health and Disease. The new research chair will study how early life factors shape chronic disease risk and improve lifelong health.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Alumni Achievement Award

USask will celebrate the 2026 Alumni Achievement Award recipients at a gala on October 26 at Remai Modern. This year's honourees are:

- Dr. Lorne Babiuk and Dr. Tom Warkentin (PhD) — Alumni Lifetime Achievement Award
- Piya Chattopadhyay and John Desjarlais — Outstanding Impact Award
- Bryce Boynton and Cianna Murray — One to Watch Award

President's Staff Excellence Award

USask honoured Rob Peace, laboratory engineer in the College of Engineering, and Dr. Susan Bens (PhD), academic integrity strategist in the Office of the Provost, for

contributions that strengthen teaching, research, safety, and student success across the university.

Appreciation Picnic

Earlier in the summer, USask hosted the 28th annual Employee Appreciation Picnic, which brought faculty, staff, and their families together on the green space between the NRC and Engineering buildings. The event drew a strong turnout and offered an opportunity to connect, relax, and celebrate the contributions employees make to the university. The sense of community was evident throughout the day, and it was a welcome chance to engage with colleagues in an informal and appreciative setting.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND CELEBRATION

Pride parade

In June, I joined members of the USask community in walking in the Saskatoon Pride Parade. The parade brought together students, faculty, staff, alumni, and families in a celebration of inclusion, visibility, and community spirit. The morning began with a pre-parade pancake breakfast hosted by the College of Medicine, and it was inspiring to see such strong participation from across the university. Pride Month activities throughout June encouraged reflection, learning, and celebration of the contributions of 2SLGBTQQA+ students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

Giving Day 2026

USask Giving Day 2026 raised \$376,495, a 22 per cent increase over last year, with 676 donors supporting more than 120 initiatives across campus. This momentum reflects growing community engagement and the generosity that strengthens opportunities for learners and researchers.

Marcoux Leadership Program

The Marcoux Leadership Program launched this year in the Edwards School of Business thanks to a \$1 million donation from Russel Marcoux (BA'73) and Bonnie Marcoux. The new program will help students build confidence and leadership skills through new programming, scholarships, hands-on learning and leadership coaching.

Nutrien campaign gift realized

Nutrien's \$15 million gift to USask's *Be What the World Needs* campaign is being put to work. We just celebrated the grand opening of the Nutrien Lecture Theatre in the College of Engineering – a modern learning space for the province's future engineers. And, coming up in a few weeks is the grand opening of the Nutrien Digital Agriculture Centre and the Great Mother Earth) Knowledge Centre – two centres based in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources that will advance sustainable agriculture and Indigenous land management.

Huskie updates

Huskie Athletics entered the fall season with strong momentum. Across all programs, student-athletes are demonstrating commitment, resilience, and pride as they advance through their 2026–27 seasons.

- Football's Homecoming win over the Calgary Dinos drew thousands to Griffiths Stadium and set an energetic tone for the term. The team is now well into its conference schedule.
- Men's and women's soccer are deep into their Canada West campaigns, building on competitive early-season play as they push toward postseason.
- Cross-country athletes continue their fall schedule with strong individual performances.
- Basketball and hockey have moved through preseason and are preparing to open regular-season play.
- Volleyball is underway with its conference schedule.

CLOSING REMARKS

The period from July through early fall has shown a university that is focused, collaborative, and committed to meaningful impact. From major investments in infrastructure and health-care training to global research partnerships, Indigenous engagement, and community celebration, USask continues to demonstrate leadership across Saskatchewan and beyond.

Guided by UPlan 2035, we will continue our work toward a unified vision and a successful future for USask. Thank you for the dedication you bring to this institution and for the support you offer to our students, colleagues, partners, and communities.