



PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO SENATE

OCTOBER 2024

Engaging and Celebrating our Community

CELEBRATING DISTINGUISHED HONORARY DEGREE RECIPIENTS

From one of the youngest female Nobel Prize Laureates, and a Man Booker Prize recipient, to community champions of charity and industry, USask celebrated four extraordinary individuals this spring by awarding them the institution's highest honour.

At this year's USask Spring Convocation at Merlis Belsher Place from June 3-7, the university awarded honorary degrees to renowned philanthropists and business leaders Gordon and Jill Rawlinson, as well as Man Booker Prize-winning author Yann Martel, and Nobel Prize-winning scientist Dr. Emmanuelle Charpentier (PhD).

With my thanks to senate members for supporting the process to award honorary degrees, I was delighted to be able to shine the spotlight on the remarkable career achievements of the following individuals:

Dr. Emmanuelle Charpentier (PhD) **(Honorary Doctor of Science)**

Emmanuelle Charpentier has been recognized world-wide for her groundbreaking research that laid the foundation for the revolutionary CRISPR-Cas9 genome engineering technology, widely used daily by University of Saskatchewan researchers all across campus. She has received numerous prestigious international awards and honours, including the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2020, and is an elected member of national and international scientific academies.

Charpentier is the founding, scientific and managing director of the Max Planck Unit for the Science of Pathogens and honorary professor at Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany. Charpentier has also held several research associate positions in the U.S.: The Rockefeller University, New York University Medical Center and Skirball Institute of Biomolecular Medicine, New York, and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis. She received her education in microbiology, biochemistry and genetics at the University Pierre and Marie Curie and the Pasteur Institute in Paris, France.

Yann Martel (Honorary Doctor of Letters)

Yann Martel is best known as the author of the novel *Life of Pi*, the No.1 international bestseller (translated into 50 languages) and the 2002 winner of the Man Booker Prize – described as the world’s leading literary award for a single work of fiction. The novel was made into an award- winning feature film by celebrated director Ang Lee and has also been adapted for the stage in New York and London. Martel has also written the collection of short stories *The Facts Behind the Helsinki Roccamatios*, the novels *Self, Beatrice & Virgil*, and *The High Mountains of Portugal*, as well as the collection of letters, *101 Letters to a Prime Minister*. Martel studied philosophy at university, then travelled and worked at odd jobs as he became a writer.

Martel, who served as a visiting scholar in the University of Saskatchewan’s Department of English from 2005-2007, was named a Companion of the Order of Canada in 2021 – one of the country’s highest civilian awards – for his “contributions to literature and his philanthropic commitment to the betterment of his region” and earned the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal in Saskatchewan in 2022. Martel generously supports numerous community health care and cultural organizations, from the Remai Modern art gallery and Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan to the Friendship Inn and the Sanctum Care Group.

Born in Spain in 1963, Martel moved to Saskatoon in 2003. He lives with writer Alice Kuipers and their four children.

Gordon Rawlinson and Jill Rawlinson (Honorary Doctor of Laws)

Gordon and Jill Rawlinson personify what it means to be community builders, with a remarkable record of philanthropy and business success, generously donating in support of health care, education, the arts, as well as Indigenous achievement. Gordon was raised in Prince Albert and earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree (with distinction) from the University of Saskatchewan. He is a member of the Order of Canada, is a recipient of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, and serves on the Dean’s Advisory Council at the Edwards School of Business. He built a successful radio broadcast company, today consisting of three radio stations in Saskatoon, three in Regina and one in Calgary. Rawlco Radio stations have been recognized for their community service through events like the C95 Radio Marathon for Breast Cancer Research celebrating 25 years; the Z99 Radiothon in support of the Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit at the Regina General Hospital (now in its 37th year); and CJME’s Santa’s Anonymous supporting the Salvation Army (in its 55th year).

Jill grew up on a farm near Redvers, Sask. She received the Governor General’s Academic Award in high school and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree. She serves as chair of their family’s philanthropic foundation, the Lily Street Foundation. Through their foundation, Jill and Gordon have directed their support towards health care, education, and the arts including: the Rawlco Centre for Mother Baby Care at the Regina General Hospital; the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) at USask; the EA Rawlinson Centre for the Arts in Prince Albert; the Rawlinson Centre for Indigenous Business Students; the Gordon Rawlinson Finance and Trading Room at the Edwards School of Business, and the United Way and food banks in Saskatoon and Regina.

Gordon and Jill are proud parents of Edward and Katherine and have four wonderful grandchildren.

USASK RECOGNIZES PRIDE MONTH

Each June, the USask community gathers to recognize and celebrate Pride, something we strive to do throughout the year. Our USask community is committed to supporting and uplifting each other on a continuous journey to ensure our living, working, learning and teaching spaces are inclusive.

On Friday, May 31, USask community members gathered for a flag-raising ceremony. The inclusive Pride flag and Two-Spirit flag was raised in recognition of the beginning of Pride Month and demonstrates USask's commitment to creating an environment that is safe and welcoming, where individuals feel supported, respected and valued.

Together we will create a brighter, more inclusive future. As a university with an ambition to be what the world needs, we share in our mission to make positive change and create an environment where everyone thrives.

FOUR MEMBERS OF USASK COMMUNITY RECEIVE CBC FUTURE 40 AWARDS

Students, staff, alumni and a researcher were honoured for their leadership and community involvement via the CBC Saskatchewan Future 40 awards. These awards are a celebration of young leaders and change-makers across the province. Four members of the USask community were among the ten 2024 recipients. They are being honoured for making a difference in their communities and helping Saskatchewan be a better place to live, work and play:

Tasnim Jaisee:

Tasnim Jaisee (BA'24, BA'24, CQGS'24) graduated from the College of Arts and Science in 2024 with dual undergraduate honours degrees in Political Studies and Women's and Gender Studies, and a certificate in Queer Theory, Gender Diversity, and Sexualities Studies. Previously, she was elected USSU President, as the first woman of colour in the role. She is now the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) Project Specialist in USask's Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic.

Dr. Linzi Williamson (PhD):

Dr. Linzi Williamson (MA'13, PhD'19) is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology and Health Studies in USask's College of Arts and Science, and the co-director of the PAWSitive Connections Lab. Williamson is also a USask alumnus with an MA (2013) and PhD (2019) in Applied Social Psychology.

Madhurja Ghosh:

Madhurja Ghosh (BComm'18) is a USask alumnus who graduated from the Edwards School of Business in 2018 with an undergraduate degree (with distinction) in accounting. He serves as a mentor for the USask's Connects mentorship program, among his many other talents.

Ishita Mann:

Ishita Mann is an undergraduate student who recently served the University of Saskatchewan students' Union as the first-ever female Indian president of the USSU.

To learn more about the impact these four trailblazers are having in their communities and to view the full list of the 2024 CBC Saskatchewan Future 40 recipients, [click here](#).

USASK HONOURS PRESIDENT'S STAFF EXCELLENCE AWARD RECIPIENTS

The recipients of this year's President's Staff Excellence Award at USask are an AgBio lab manager whose proactive approach to seek out impactful collaborations on campus has brought widespread benefits, and a team leader whose steadfast support has significantly contributed to the success of students and faculty in the department of Computer Science.

I want to extend a congratulations to this year's two recipients:

Natalia Rudnitskaya, Manager, Analytical Services, Department of Animal and Poultry Science, College of Agriculture and Bioresources

Greg Oster, Technical Team Lead, College of Arts and Science, Department of Computer Science

This prestigious award is given annually to staff members who not only achieve excellence but also embody the university's Mission, Vision, and Values, thereby playing a key role in realizing the goals of the University Plan 2025.

USASK AT THE OLYMPICS

USask had several students and alumni completing in the Paris Olympics and Paralympics this summer, notably bringing home four bronze medals.

- Kinesiology student **Rylan Wiens** won bronze in the men's 10-metre synchronized diving event, alongside his diving partner, Nathan Zsombor-Murray. It was the first time Canada has ever reached the podium in this event.
- Education alumna **Shelby Newkirk** won bronze in the women's 100m backstroke S6 Para-swimming final,
- Agribusiness alumna **Julie Kozun's** women's sitting volleyball team won the bronze-medal match against Brazil.
- Kinesiology alumna **Dr. Keely Shaw (PhD)** won bronze in the women's 3,000-metre individual pursuit C4 Para-cycling event.

USask was also represented in the Paris Paralympics by current education student **Jacob Wassermann** (Para- rowing) and arts and science student **Ashlyn Renneberg** (Para-athletics women's javelin), as well as education alumna **Nikita Ens** (Para-swimming) and former Huskie women's basketball player and kinesiology alumna **Erica Gavel**, who served as an athlete ambassador with the World Anti-Doping Agency at the Paralympics.

In the Olympic competition, USask was represented by sociology student **Margo Erlam** (women's diving) and education student **Sydney Carroll** (artistic swimming), along with alumna and former Huskies track and field star **Michelle Harrison** (100m women's hurdles). Other USask connections at the Olympics included Huskies track and field coach **Jason Reindl** (Harrison's coach in Paris) and Huskies women's basketball coach **Lisa Thomaidis** and support staff member **Connor Jay** with Germany's Olympic women's basketball team.

GIVING DAY 2024

September 10th was Giving Day at USask. We were pleased to start the day with the announcement of a generous gift from Jonathan (BEng'86) and Chennene (BA'86) Wright of \$100,000. Throughout the day, more than 400 donors from the USask community, across the country and around the world contributed, raising \$319,446 for the Be What the World Needs campaign. Credit to Cheryl Hamelin, VP University Relations and her team for organizing a positive and successful day.

USASK SIGNS MOU WITH THUNDERCHILD FIRST NATION

In August, I was delighted to join Chief Delbert Wapass to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of USask with Thunderchild First Nation. The intent of the MoU is to support collaboration on common interests such as mentorship, research, and supporting Indigenous youth.

The signing of this MoU is a credit to the Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement. Dr. Angela Jaime led its development and will work closely with colleges and schools— in particular the kihci-okâwîmâw askiy Knowledge Centre, along with the College of Agriculture and Bioresources, the College of Education, and the School of Environment and Sustainability—to implement shared initiatives with Thunderchild to fulfil the intent of the MoU.

Research and Innovation

USASK STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN GERMANY

Senior leaders from USask, along with leadership from Innovation Saskatchewan, travelled to Germany in May to continue forging strong global partnerships for the university. The delegation's agenda centered on activities that built and strengthened ties with government, top research institutions, and private industry. Discussions with these groups focused on topics ranging from quantum technologies to agriculture and sustainability.

The mission featured meetings with world-class institutions including Goethe University, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development. The engagements are part of USask's efforts to elevate new and existing student exchange programs and spearhead joint research innovations. The tour also featured a one-of-a-kind forum that USask co-hosted alongside the Saskatchewan Germany Office, Innovation Saskatchewan, and the Embassy of Canada. The forum blended critical topics spanning continents and provided a unique opportunity for groups in government, academia, and industry to come together to respond to these international challenges. Guest speakers included representatives from world-leading organizations, including the University of Bonn, IBM Quantum, Nuclidium AG, Bayer AG, and LenioBio GmbH.

The international trip underscores USask's commitment to be what the world needs and reflects the institution's efforts to nurture and foster a global network that champions innovation.

USASK AGRICULTURE RESEARCH RECEIVES \$25 MILLION BOOST FROM GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA AND SASKATCHEWAN

The federal and provincial governments announced an investment of \$25 million for continued support of 15 strategic research chairs at USask College of Agriculture and Bioresources through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

Funding is provided through the Strategic Research Program and is focused on supporting crop genetic improvement, livestock development, food and bioproducts development and soils and environment.

The Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, \$3.5-billion investment by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments that supports Canada's agri-food and agri-products sectors. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories.

USASK ACHIEVES PERSONAL BEST IN QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

USask achieved its highest-ever performance in the QS World University Rankings (QS WUR) – an accomplishment that helped garner an award for the most improved university in Canada.

Every year the QS WUR analyzes and ranks more than 5,600 academic institutions from around the globe, publishing a list of their top 1,500. The 2025 QS WUR announcement marked two celebratory milestones for USask: achieving a highest-ever performance and being granted the “Most Improved – Canada” award. USask ranked 340th – a five-point improvement over last year’s position of 345th – reflecting growth in areas such as employment outcomes, international research network, international faculty, and citations per faculty. This ranking also secured USask’s spot in the top quartile of ranked universities from around the globe for the second year in a row.

The “Most Improved – Canada” award recognizes USask for having made the most significant improvement in rankings amongst all Canadian institutions over the past five years. USask Associate Vice-President Research (Engagement) Dr. Dawn Wallin (PhD), attended the QS EduData Summit in Washington, D.C., where she accepted the award on USask’s behalf.

INNOVATION SASKATCHEWAN PROVIDES \$210,000 TO USASK’S OPUS TO SUPPORT START-UP DEVELOPMENT

Innovation Saskatchewan has announced a new partnership with Opus, the USask start-up incubator, which includes a \$210,000 investment over three years to support the organization's pre-accelerator programming. The funding will support Opus programming streams that target different timelines in the entrepreneurship lifecycle to drive startup development.

Idea2Explore (i2Explore) provides year-round opportunities for anyone at USask to explore entrepreneurship through events and curated meetings with advisors.

Innovate2Build (i2Build) runs annually over 10 months as successful program applicants

participate in bi-monthly workshops as well as mentor and advisor meetings.

Impact2Market (i2Market) runs long-term and offers targeted mentorships for i2Build graduates by requiring participants to meet business growth milestones.

Opus Student Ambassador Program is a student-led initiative that equips aspiring entrepreneurs with business acumen and an entrepreneurial mindset through engaging campus activities.

Opus pre-accelerator programming focuses on commercializing deep tech innovations that are research-based, equipping founders with the necessary skills for startup development and facilitating their progression to other accelerators and incubators like Co.Labs and Cultivator. In its pilot year, Opus supported over 12 startups engaging with over 88 stakeholders ranging from community and business leaders, entrepreneurs and ecosystem service providers.

USASK RECEIVES RECORD \$417M IN AWARDED RESEARCH FUNDING IN 2023/24

USask set an institutional record in 2023/24, attracting \$417 million in awarded research funding. This amount is the highest-ever awarded in a single year in the university's history and is a testament to both the quality and quantity of research being conducted across campus.

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This unprecedented success for USask can be attributed to a variety of factors, including:

- several large-scale, interdisciplinary research grants from provincial and federal funding agencies and industry partners,
- an increase in Tri-Council funding – grants and other supports from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and
- an increase in awarded research funding from other government, international, and industry sources, made possible by the collaborative efforts of USask's Government Relations and University Relations bodies.

The record research funding is distributed across all USask's colleges, affiliated research centres and diverse areas of expertise. Funding to support both new research and new projects as well as to bolster USask's current research infrastructure and ecosystem contributed to the record-setting year.

USASK-LED INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION RECEIVES UNPRECEDENTED FUNDING

Dr. Maureen Reed (PhD), professor in School of Environment and Sustainability, is the principal investigator on a multinational education project that received more than \$500,000 CAD from the Spencer Foundation in the United States. Titled "Co-designing Transdisciplinary Sustainability Education," this project is meant to offer training internationally that draws on the collective knowledge of community partners and academic researchers to support learners inside and outside of academia. The goal is to work together to address key sustainability challenges. This is the first time that a USask-led project has received this grant funding from the Spencer Foundation.

FARM CREDIT CANADA ANNOUNCES \$5 MILLION INVESTMENT INTO GIFS AT USASK TO ACCELERATE BREEDING AND INNOVATION FOR CANADIAN AGRICULTURE

Farm Credit Canada is investing \$5 million into the accelerated breeding program of the Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS). The newly named FCC Accelerated Breeding Program at GIFS will drive sustainable advancements in agricultural productivity across Canada. Accelerated breeding combines technologies such as genomic selection, speed breeding, bioinformatics and computer simulation to increase the rate of genetic gain for crop and livestock breeding programs, delivering new products into the hands of producers two to three years faster and improving agronomics, quality and disease resistant traits.

USASK'S VIDO AWARDED NIH CONTRACT TO DEVELOP CRITICAL MODELS FOR GLOBAL RESEARCH

The Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) has been awarded a major new research contract in the global fight against infectious diseases. VIDO has received an Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract under the pre-clinical models of infectious disease program by the United States' National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, part of the National Institutes of Health. VIDO was one of four international awardees and the only Canadian organization selected as part of the program which further demonstrates VIDO's scientific excellence, robust quality systems and strong ethical research practices. The seven-year IDIQ contract's ceiling is \$146.3M USD.

NEW USASK RESEARCH INTO AGING-RELATED CELL DAMAGE RECEIVES CIHR FUNDING

Dr. Jeff Dong (PhD), assistant professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology in the College of Medicine, recently received more than \$1 million from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Project Grant program for his work exploring the mechanisms behind how cells in the brain and nervous system are damaged by age – leading to the formation of chronic lesions in the brain or the spine that are part of multiple sclerosis (MS). By better understanding that mechanism, Dong believes his group can learn ways to better address progressive MS, which is the type of MS that becomes increasingly debilitating with age.

USASK RESEARCHERS EXPLORE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR FARMERS

Dr. Christy Morrissey (PhD) is leading a project to help farmers use marginal lands, which are often not profitable for producers, in a way that benefits both them and the ecosystem. Her project recently received \$3.9 million over four years from the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council sustainable agriculture research initiative grant. Morrissey and her colleagues are using more than 800,000 acres of crop yield data from farmers' combines to find sustainable solutions that will benefit both producers