

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO SENATE

April 2025

GENERAL ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY ADDRESS

On April 3, USask faculty, staff, students and other members of the university community were invited to attend the General Academic Assembly (GAA) held in Convocation Hall.

The University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995, directs that the GAA meet annually to allow the president to present a report respecting the state of the university and any other matters that the president considers appropriate. Members of the GAA include the president as chair, members of faculty, deans, executive directors of schools, vice-presidents, the university secretary and the registrar, as well as elected students.

I delivered my tenth annual state-of-the-university address titled *"Today's Universities and the Democratic Order"*. The address was followed by a question-and-answer period. More information, including the meeting agenda and printed copy of the address, are available at governance.usask.ca.

USASK STATEMENT ON PROVINCIAL BUDGET

The Government of Saskatchewan announced its 2025-26 budget on March 19, signalling its continued commitment to ensuring strong post-secondary education in Saskatchewan and providing predictable and stable funding to the University of Saskatchewan.

USask's original four-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the provincial government was extended for an additional year. Additionally, the inflationary increase from the 2023-24 cycle of 2.2 per cent will continue in 2025-26, along with a one-time increase of 1 per cent this year.

Now in its fifth year, the current MOU enables USask to continue to provide outstanding post-secondary education and advance innovation the province and world needs. Multi-year funding provides financial certainty and supports the university's efforts in revenue generation, sector collaboration, and achieving strategic initiatives outlined in the Growth Plan of Saskatchewan.

The 2025-26 budget is available online at www.saskatchewan.ca/budget.

CAMPAIGN FOR USASK

The University of Saskatchewan has undertaken the largest campaign in Saskatchewan history, with a goal of raising \$500 million. USask has achieved over 90 percent of this historic goal to date, demonstrating the remarkable support of the community in helping us to achieve our mission to be what the world needs. The campaign has raised more than \$470 million to support areas of crucial importance to USask, including critical research, Indigenous achievement, visionary spaces, and student support needed for the future of the university and the future of student life on campus. Some selected campaign highlights are below.

Nutrien supports the Campaign for USask with a transformational \$15 million gift

A transformational \$15-million gift from Nutrien to the University of Saskatchewan will drive a new era of innovation, collaboration, and success, and is the largest single gift to be made to the *Be What the World Needs* campaign. A large portion of the gift will establish the Nutrien Centre for Sustainable and Digital Agriculture, housed in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources. The donation will also establish the Nutrien Future Fund for the college, which will provide scholarships for AgBio students and fund Indigenous and community engagement initiatives. Additionally, the gift will support scholarships for engineering students and the creation of a state-of-the-art lecture theatre in the College of Engineering.

MLT Aikins gift expands scholarships, supports Indigenous access to USask Law

A generous \$500,000 donation to USask's *Be What the World Needs* campaign will directly benefit students pursuing their legal education in the College of Law through scholarships that recognize academic excellence, leadership potential and a commitment to public service. The gift will also support access to education for Indigenous students and is

designated for Indigenous law entrance scholarships and awards. While MLT Aikins has supported USask law students with entrance scholarships for decades, this new gift established a dedicated entrance award for an incoming Indigenous student to be awarded for the first time in fall 2025.

New student classrooms in the Edwards School of Business

Students at the Edwards School of Business are now experiencing the benefits of two state-of-the-art classrooms designed to foster innovation and excellence in business education. The newly renovated spaces are made possible by the generosity of alumnus Mel Berg (BComm'67) and Art Korpach (BComm'79) and his family. The Melvin Berg Classroom (formerly known as Room 145) has been named in honour of Berg. The revitalized space can now function as either an active learning-style or traditional front-of-room classroom, with flexible furniture, seven digital display screens, and a teaching console that can mirror and project onto any screen in the room. The Art Korpach Family Classroom (Room 142) has also undergone renovations thanks to a gift from the Korpach family. Room 142 now features flexible furniture, built-in power at all desks, dimmable LED lighting and a new acoustic ceiling. Expanding the number of seats from 20 to 36 and embedding computer stations within the seminar room now enables greater integration of technology into assignments and class discussions.

There have been so many impactful donations and acts of support to the *Be What the World Needs* campaign that are enabling this university to be what the world needs. You can find a full list of campaign highlights and impact stories at give.usask.ca.

CELEBRATING THE USASK COMMUNITY

International university rankings successes

USask has demonstrated its strong position on the world stage in multiple university rankings announced since fall 2024. Please find below highlights of USask's placements in three different ranking systems.

ShanghaiRanking 2024 Global Rankings of Academic Subjects

USask has ranked in the top 100 universities in the world in four subject areas, according to the [ShanghaiRanking 2024 Global Rankings of Academic Subjects](#). These areas are Water Resources (29th), Agricultural Sciences (51-75th), Earth Sciences (76-100th) and Veterinary Sciences (76-100th). Along with the four top-100 placements, USask also ranked in the top

200 in Atmospheric Science (101-150th), Law (101-150th), Energy Science and Engineering (101-150th), Environmental Science and Engineering (101-150th), Dentistry and Oral Sciences (151-200th) and Materials Science and Engineering (151-200th).

USask ranked in 25 out of 55 subject areas overall and ranked highly among the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities. USask placed in the top 10 in Canada in 14 of the 25 ranked subject areas.

QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025

The [QS World University Rankings by Subject for 2025](#) put USask in the top 100 for universities worldwide in the subject areas of Agriculture and Forestry (tied for 87th) and Veterinary Science (in the 51-100 tier). USask also placed among the top 300 institutions in the world in the subject areas of Environmental Science (tied for 144th), Geology (201-250), Geophysics (201-250) and Earth & Marine Sciences (201-275).

More than 5,200 institutions were analyzed for the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025, with 1,747 ranked. The rankings included placements in five broad subject areas and 55 narrow subject areas. Overall, USask ranked in three of the five broad subject areas and in 14 of the narrow subject areas.

2025 Times Higher Education World University Rankings

For the second year in a row, USask has maintained its strong position in the [2025 Times Higher Education \(THE\) World University Rankings](#). The THE rankings measure the performance of universities around the world through 17 metrics across five pillars: teaching, research environment, research quality, industry, and international outlook.

USask jumped significantly in the rankings released in 2023, moving from the 501-600 tier of universities to its highest-ever placement in the 351-400 tier. This year, USask has once again achieved the 351-400 tier, as the university's unprecedented progress continues. USask's ranking remained steady overall after last year's leap forward, with upward movement in the teaching pillar. USask also increased its score in all of the metrics in the research quality pillar.

Rhodes Scholars

In late November, two University of Saskatchewan students were selected to receive prestigious [Rhodes Scholarships](#). USask College of Law graduate Kennedy Marley and current College of Engineering student Colin Dyck will begin graduate programs at the University of Oxford in fall 2025. The scholarship includes tuition, fees, and a stipend for

living expenses while studying at the University of Oxford. It is the oldest graduate scholarship offered in the world and one of the most prestigious.

This achievement marks the second time in two years that two USask students have been selected to receive Rhodes Scholarships (only 11 are awarded across Canada each year). This brings USask to a total of five awards in three years, and 77 in total, a testament to the high calibre of academic, research and teaching opportunities at the University of Saskatchewan.

Lieutenant Governor's Post-Secondary Teaching Award winners

Four USask educators were awarded Lieutenant Governor's Post-Secondary Teaching Awards at a ceremony in Regina on Nov. 28. This award recognizes post-secondary educators in Saskatchewan who have displayed excellence in teaching, primarily at the undergraduate level. I want to extend my congratulations to each of these educators on this recognition.

- **Dr. Ben Hoy**, College of Arts and Science – Innovative Teaching Award
- **Dr. Colin Laroque**, College of Agriculture and Bioresources – Indigenous Teaching Excellence Award
- **Shannon Forrester**, College of Kinesiology – Distinguished Teacher Award
- **Dr. Amrinderbir Singh**, College of Dentistry – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Teaching Award

Indigenous Achievement Week

Indigenous Achievement Week (IAW) is an annual USask event that celebrates Métis, First Nations and Inuit students, staff, faculty and alumni's successes. This year's IAW was held March 10-14, 2025 and featured a full week of events and engagement activities for the university community.

The Indigenous Student Achievement Awards Ceremony was held on March 13. 49 students from different colleges, schools and programs were honoured for their academic achievement, community engagement, leadership, research and resiliency. Each recipient receives a framed award parchment and an eagle feather pin in celebration of their accomplishments.

The full list of 2025 awardees can be found at spotlight.usask.ca.

Black History Month

Throughout the month of February, the USask community came together to learn, reflect and celebrate the Black community in Saskatchewan and beyond during Black History Month. This year's theme was a collaboration with the USask Pan-African Students' Association: "Radiant Roots: Honouring our Heritage."

We came together to celebrate the launch of Black History Month with an opening event held at Place Riel on Feb. 3 that featured a panel of speakers, including myself, student and faculty representatives to share what Black History Month means to the university community.

Additionally, the month of activities featured learning opportunities, social events and stories shared by numerous students, faculty, staff and senior leaders across the university. View a full list of Black History Month activities, stories and updates at spotlight.usask.ca.

International Women's Day

The President's and the Chancellor's offices sponsored the launch of *Saskatchewan Superwomen: Challengers and Champions*, a new book written by Chancellor Emerita Dr. Vera Pezer (BA'62, MA'64, PhD'77), at an event on March 7, 2025, in Convocation Hall. The book was launched in advance of International Women's Day and features a sample of the accomplished women in the province who have been leaders in a wide variety of fields. Dr. Pezer has made significant contributions to the University of Saskatchewan, to athletics, and to the wider community.

Huskies celebrate third national championship

The Huskies women's basketball team brought home a national championship after a thrilling victory on March 16. A year after falling in the national final to the Carleton University Ravens, the Huskies turned the tables in this year's championship game rematch, as the Huskies won their 24th straight game to clinch their third national title after winning their first in 2016 and second in 2020.

The Huskies women's and men's volleyball teams and men's hockey team also had extremely successful seasons. The men's hockey team became Canada West conference champions and captured a bronze medal in the University Cup. Men's volleyball also brought home bronze to end their season.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

50th anniversary of VIDO

The year 2025 marks half a century of innovative research and cutting-edge science for the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO), one of USask's flagship research centres. VIDO has grown from a small, veterinary research-focused laboratory into one of the world's leading centres for human and animal infectious disease research and vaccine development. VIDO has taken important steps over the past few years to be recognized as Canada's Centre for Pandemic Research.

To establish itself as a critical hub for pandemic preparedness and response, VIDO recognized that its scientists must have the ability to study all pathogens and rapidly develop vaccines and therapeutics to combat emerging infectious diseases, including those with pandemic potential. Some key initiatives that have occurred since the COVID-19 pandemic to promote the organization as Canada's Centre for Pandemic Research include:

- establishing an in-house CL3 capable vaccine manufacturing facility (complete);
- currently developing Containment Level 4 capacity, to be completed in the near future (ongoing);
- building a new animal housing facility with the flexibility to house a variety of key species and vectors (such as ticks), to be completed in the near future (ongoing); and
- attracting new talent to expand our expertise and train the next generation of scientists.

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Canadian Light Source

Twenty years ago, USask became the home of Canada's only synchrotron with the launch of the Canadian Light Source. Today, more than 1,000 academic, government and industrial scientists use the CLS beamlines to shed light on a wide variety of scientific and medical challenges.

The CLS has a significant impact on the local and national economy. Every \$1 invested in the CLS is effectively doubled in terms of national GDP impact.

In 2024, the 60-year-old CLS linear accelerator was dismantled and replaced with an updated one that will soon be brought online. Given that synchrotron technologies are evolving, the national group of synchrotron users is currently conducting a review of what they and the global community will need from a Canadian synchrotron for the future.

Additionally, the Canada Foundation for Innovation is looking at developing a new funding model for major science facilities such as the CLS.

TEDxUniversityofSaskatchewan

On Feb. 2, 2025, USask faculty, staff and students took to the TEDxUniversityofSaskatchewan stage to ask questions, push boundaries and inspire impact for meaningful change with and for our communities in the theme of “Inspiring Impact.” The event was open to the public, and profiled compelling stories of ambition, achievement, innovation and inspiration led by USask community members.

Each talk focused on topics relevant to today's world, including sustainability challenges, understanding history to embrace the future and scientific advancements in health care. [A full list of speakers and videos can be found here.](#)

\$24 million awarded for pandemic preparedness research

USask's VIDO has been awarded a research grant worth up to \$24 million from Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), which aims to support VIDO's role in advancing global health and disease prevention.

The new funding will help VIDO continue developing its pan-sarbecovirus vaccine – a broadly protective vaccine designed specifically to protect against different types of potentially deadly coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-1, as well as SARS-CoV-2, the virus behind the COVID-19 pandemic. If successful, the candidate vaccine will be tested in a Phase I clinical trial in people.

The development of this vaccine will help advance the 100 Days Mission, a goal spearheaded by CEPI to create new vaccines in as little as 100 days from viral identification to contain new viruses with epidemic and pandemic potential. This project aligns with VIDO's strategic efforts as a global centre in pandemic research and as part of its mission to protect the world from infectious diseases.

\$11.8 million to Crop Development Centre

The Canadian Wheat Research Coalition (CWRC) has committed \$11.8 million over the next five years to a core breeding agreement (CBA) with the USask Crop Development Centre (CDC), ensuring continued funding for the CDC's industry-leading wheat breeding programs. The new agreement represents a more than \$2 million increase in funding compared with the previous five-year agreement.

CWRC funding via the 2025-29 CBA will support the CDC's development of new Canadian Western Red Spring, Canada Northern Hard Red, Canadian Western Amber Durum and Canadian Prairie Spring Red wheat cultivars with strong agronomics and improved resistance to common diseases such as the wheat rusts, common bunt and Fusarium Head Blight. This funding also supports the application of genomic-assisted selection across all wheat breeding programs at the CDC.

USask and Métis Nation-Saskatchewan agreement supports high-impact research

An agreement between USask and Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) government aims to enhance research impact for and with Métis citizens. The agreement is a first-of-its-kind partnership that outlines the commitment of both parties to establish the Métis Nation-Institute for Research and Governance (MNS-IRG) at USask.

The MN-IRG adds to the relationship between USask and the MN-S government to protect and promote Métis identity, culture, values, and language, drive high-impact research initiatives, and train the next generation of scholars and leaders. This agreement builds on the existing relationship between MN-S and USask, including the *Memorandum of Understanding: Advancing Métis Post-Secondary Education* (2019) and the *Agreement for Recognizing Métis Nation Citizenship* (2021).

Opus receives Government of Canada support

Opus, USask's startup incubator and pre-accelerator program, has received almost \$1 million from PrairiesCan to expand the startup incubator, providing additional entrepreneurship training and support services. Opus addresses the unique needs of founders developing deep tech innovations, including faculty, staff, students and alumni, and helps bring research-backed innovations from the university out into the world. Opus has created an array of programs to help innovators transform their ideas into successful products and services, including:

- **Idea2Explore**, to learn more about entrepreneurial thinking and the benefits of entrepreneurship.
- **Innovation2Build**, which provides access to entrepreneurial programming, infrastructure and a network of experts, tailored to the unique needs of USask founders.
- **Impact2Market**, which provides graduates of Innovation2Build with more training, funding and access to infrastructure.

Memorandum of Agreement on nuclear research and innovation

The University of Saskatchewan, Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. (AECL), and Canadian Nuclear Laboratories Limited (CNL) have signed a Memorandum of Agreement to collaborate on nuclear research and innovation. The agreement will address some of the most pressing challenges in the field, including health, safety, security, energy and the environment.

The partnership, housed within USask's College of Engineering, aims to leverage the strengths of each institution to advance nuclear science and technology, grow One Health applications, enhance educational opportunities, access specialized infrastructure, and contribute to the development of sustainable energy security and solutions. The MOA establishes a robust framework for collaboration between USask, CNL and AECL. Key areas of the partnership include joint research projects, faculty exchanges, and specialized educational programs focused on nuclear science and engineering. Additionally, the agreement allows for shared access to specialized infrastructure and expertise, facilitating enhanced knowledge mobilization.

As part of this agreement, USask joins CNL's Academic Partnership Program, an initiative launched in 2023 to strengthen ties with Canada's academic institutions and propel advancements in nuclear research. USask is one of the first universities in Western Canada to join the program.

New funding announced for Indigenous health research network

The Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR) have received \$37.6 million over five years from the federal government through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The funding, announced on Oct. 9, will serve as a renewal of NEIHR centres across the country, including the Saskatchewan centre featuring University of Saskatchewan researchers.

Dr. Robert Henry (PhD), an associate professor in the Department of Indigenous Studies in the College of Arts and Science at USask is the nominated principal investigator for Saskatchewan NEIHR and a co-lead with the NEIHR National Coordinating Centre. NEIHR programs across Canada are intended to connect and support researchers, Indigenous leaders and community members in community-based research to improve Indigenous health. NEIHR programs across Canada are designed to connect and support researchers, Indigenous leaders and community members in community-based research to improve Indigenous health.

Global Institute for Food Security becomes Canada's first Revio PacBio Certified Service Provider

In January, the Global Institute for Food Security (GIFS) at USask joined an elite group of global service providers that offer researchers access to specialized equipment and scientific expertise in genetic sequencing. Powered by leading-edge technologies and a world-class team in its Omics and Precision Analytics Laboratory (OPAL), GIFS is now the first Revio PacBio Certified Service Provider in Canada.

The designation recognizes GIFS as a trusted source for high-quality sequencing and data generation utilizing PacBio's sequencing technology. Since 2021, GIFS has provided genomics, transcriptomics, and bioinformatics services via OPAL. In 2023, GIFS became one of the first service providers in Canada to offer automated library preparation and genomic analyses using Revio, PacBio's latest long-read sequencing technology. The resulting HiFi data supports a wide range of large-scale genomic projects that are advancing innovation in the agri-food sector and beyond.