Convocation Ceremonies

As of the writing of this report we are in the midst of our eight annual spring convocation ceremonies. These ceremonies are particularly special as this June marks the first time convocation has been back on campus in over 50 years.

This year’s ceremonies are being held at Merlis Belsher Place, USask’s premier sports and event complex. The facility has allowed us the freedom to set up the space as we need it, including the ability to increase the audience capacity by about fifty percent – and people have been taking full advantage of that opportunity this week. We are glad to be able to share the ceremony with up to 1,000 more people per ceremony.

This spring we awarded over 3,500 degrees, adding to the more than 155,000 graduates worldwide whose contributions are helping to shape our world. Of special note is that, of the 3,500+ graduates, **377 (or about 11%) are Indigenous**.

The move to campus has also made it easier to pair the traditional convocation ceremonies with our other important graduation event, the Usask Graduation Powwow. The powwow is an important educational opportunity, and provides a chance and to connect with the community as more than 2,300 children from across the province registered to attend.

**USask in UK**

This past month I’ve had the opportunity to engage with key stakeholders in the United Kingdom. The primary motivation for the trip was to engage with some of the 225 USask graduates and supporters living in the London area. My engagement with this group was primarily achieved through a reception held at the Oxford and Cambridge club on May 22nd. The reception was not only an opportunity to connect but also to hear from celebrated author Ross King (DLET ’14), the event’s keynote speaker.

In addition to the alumni and friends event, and one-on-one meetings with donors, I held meetings with the following:

- **Alistair Jarvis, CEO, Universities UK (UUK)** – UUK, as the name suggests, is the UK equivalent of Universities Canada. We discussed outbound student mobility issues and other potential partnerships available to us in light of key Brexit impacts in the UK higher education sector.

- **Chelsea Ljutic, Education Trade Commissioner, High Commission of Canada** – The High Commission of Canada, United Kingdom is the diplomatic mission of Canada to the UK, akin to an ambassadorial embassy. I met with the Commissioner responsible for education at the Commission offices and discussed partnerships and opportunities for the University of Saskatchewan.

Our connections with the UK will make this region an important one to keep top of mind as we continue to implement our international engagement strategies.
Recognition and Appreciation

Long Service Awards

I had the opportunity to help congratulate 33 members of the USask community who were celebrating 25 years at the university. The long service awards is an annual event to recognize the service and dedication of faculty and staff members of the University. Honourees and guest sare celebrated with an evening banquet where each honouree is presented with an engraved timepiece.

USask Appreciation Picnic

The USask annual appreciation picnic in the bowl will take place on June 26th (rain date –June 27th). This year’s picnic will include our traditional picnic fare supplied by our top-notch Culinary Services as well as an opportunity to access various food truck vendors from around the city. There will be many activities and treats for children (and the young-at-heart). Everyone is encouraged to invite their families to join us for what promises to be a great event.

Prestigious Academic Awards

Three outstanding USask researchers have been awarded Vanier and Banting scholarships and fellowships totaling $430,000 for research that will advance regenerative medicine and improve water quality and mental health.

The Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship recognizes top-tier doctoral students who demonstrate excellence in academia, research impact and leadership at Canadian universities. Biomedical engineering student Adam McInnes has been awarded a Vanier Scholarship of $150,000 over three years to develop a new gel to promote tissue growth for 3D printing of artificial organs that may one day be used for transplants.

The Banting Fellowship is awarded to post-doctoral researchers, both nationally and internationally, who work on projects that will contribute to Canada’s economic and social growth. Toxicology researcher Jonathan Challis and sociology researcher Holly McKenzie were each awarded Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships worth $140,000 over two years. Challis will identify new contaminants that may affect water sources, including in Indigenous communities. McKenzie will study how therapy dogs can help women’s well-being.