To begin my first report of 2020, I want to wish you all a happy new year and a successful winter term. I thank Council for its interest and input in the University Plan (UPlan) presentation delivered at the last Council meeting in December. The response and feedback have been extremely beneficial in moving the plan forward into its second year. What has become clear is the institutional ownership of this plan and the evident momentum that will ensure its overall success.

I would also like to thank Council for the congratulatory remarks made during the December meeting. It is a privilege to be able to continue serving as president and to continue to support the work of Council, and of the university community as a whole.

Over the coming years, I see USask’s role as crucial in driving local, provincial, national and international innovation agendas. Our university has a strong record of being innovative, can become stronger and more deliberate in driving innovation within the region, and can be recognized by our stakeholders and constituents for playing this important role. We have recently seen exceptional accomplishments that will continue to move the innovation agenda forward. Examples include global genome research breakthroughs; engagement initiatives such as the signing of a number of MOUs with community partners; and the announcement of numerous research initiatives that involve a wide variety of topics, including Indigenous health, renewable energy, climate change, humanities and fine arts initiatives, and cybersecurity. I also look forward to the great things that will come from our signature areas of research in water and food security, as well as from our world-class research facilities – the Fedoruk Centre, VIDO-Intervac, and the Canadian Light Source – all having received renewed funding in 2019.

On a final note, I want to extend my deepest sympathies to the members of our university community affected by the recent Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 crash. Our hearts and thoughts are with the victims and their families, friends and colleagues during this very difficult time. Global events often have local impact, and our campus community, like so many communities around the world and at other Canadian universities, is mourning. We are working to ensure our community has the supports needed. As we grieve and heal, I encourage you to talk to friends or family members about how you are feeling during this difficult time. I know the USask community will offer strong support to the many among us suffering from the impact of this tragedy.