As my final report to university council for the 2019/2020 academic year, I wanted to reflect on the very successful year we have had as an academy and institution, despite the challenges we have faced in responding to a global pandemic. The last few months have been far from easy and so I want to extend a sincere thank you to all council members for their continued support and understanding in these trying times.

I also want to thank Dr. Tony Vannelli, who leaves us as Provost and Vice-President Academic. He served the university extremely well in the role, and I and my President’s Executive Committee colleagues were extremely fortunate to be able to work alongside him for the last three years. I wish him all the best in his new role as Provost and VP Academic at Sir Wilfrid Laurier University.

**USask statement on anti-racism**

I have been working with many campus community partners to develop a statement and actions to address anti-racism. This statement will be released on Wednesday, June 17th.

**USask COVID-19 Update**

Over the recent weeks, institutional planning in response to COVID-19 has moved from crisis response to recovery, focusing on the gradual increase in activity on campus and developing an implementation plan for the Fall 2020 term. In May, it was determined by the President’s Executive Committee (PEC) that USask would plan for a primarily remote approach to program delivery this fall. It is a ‘hybrid delivery model’ and it will combine primarily remote online learning, with limited classroom, laboratory, clinical, and physical instruction (only where warranted and where circumstances permit) in consultation with public health and Saskatchewan’s Chief Medical Health Officer. This direction reflects comprehensive analysis and planning work done at the university over the weeks since the emergence of COVID-19, and is based on current pandemic knowledge and projections.

To follow through with developing an initial plan for delivery of academic programming and research in September, a Pandemic Recovery Team (PRT) and Advisory Hub were formed with the mandate to lead this planning. The draft Fall Term Hybrid Implementation Plan was recently submitted to the PEC and we are now requesting feedback from stakeholders. The PRT has been busy meeting with various campus community stakeholders, including Dean’s Council, Faculty Council Chairs and student leaders. I encourage members of Faculty Council to review this plan at the USask COVID-19 site and provide feedback through the online channel.
Another development over the course of the last month was the decision to hold tuition at current rates for the 2020/2021 academic year. Given the many issues students are facing due to COVID-19, we felt that maintaining current tuition rates was the right thing to do. An additional initiative to help support students during COVID-19 has included the invitation to USask staff and faculty to reallocate unneeded funds from their Accountable Professional Expense Fund (APEF) or Department and Senior Administrator Expense (DSAE) account to emergency student grants or to a graduate employment initiative. The call went out on May 8 and has since been a resounding success, with $180,000 having been contributed by staff and faculty towards students. I want to thank all faculty who have given to this fundraising effort.

**Pride at USask**

USask has planned and will be involved in a number of events to mark Pride Week including the pride flag raising on the Saskatoon campus via social media, the Spark Your Pride panel discussion co-sponsored by the University Library on June 16, and virtual Saskatoon Pride Parade on June 20. Earlier this month, to observe Pride, we lit the Peter MacKinnon Building and the President's Residence with rainbow lights, and refreshed the Pride walkway between the Arts and Murray Library buildings—an annual occurrence made even more important this year due to vandalism. The shop USask online store has new USask pride shirts and tote bags available and a portion of the proceeds will go towards the university's queer housing initiative.

**Huskies’ first term seasons cancelled**

Last week, it was announced that the USask Huskies’ first term seasons for football, and men’s and women’s soccer will be cancelled. This decision follows the recommendation of the Canada West (CW) board. The 17 members of the CW conference voted for the cancellation of first term competition team sports due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Nationally, U SPORTS also announced the cancellation of all U SPORTS first term national championships. It is important to make this decision now to give Huskie student-athletes certainty as they begin to plan for the fall, including whether they plan to relocate based on the delivery model of their respective colleges. All Huskie student-athletes will continue to receive the supports necessary for their success even without the fall season, including physiotherapy, nutrition, strength and conditioning, mental health supports, access to training facilities as well as academic and coaching supports.

**Another major milestone reached in VIDO-InterVac vaccine development**

A COVID-19 vaccine candidate developed by USask’s VIDO-InterVac has cleared another major milestone in moving towards human clinical trials. The novel vaccine has proven highly effective in ferrets, one of the commonly used animal models for COVID-19. To evaluate the
effectiveness of the vaccine, the ferrets received two immunizations prior to being exposed to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The vaccine induced a strong immune response and decreased viral infection in the upper respiratory tract to almost undetectable levels. VIDO-InterVac’s vaccine was developed using the team’s expertise, gained from research on other coronaviruses including SARS and MERS. The vaccine was formulated with a combination adjuvant (a component that helps vaccines work better) previously created in partnership with Dalhousie University, the University of British Columbia, and the South Korean-based International Vaccine Institute, with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Several additional trials are planned over the next few months, including safety studies to prepare for human clinical trials this fall. The organization is also completing a vaccine manufacturing facility that will be GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) certified to support vaccine production capacity in Canada.

USask donates Emma Lake Kenderdine Campus cabins

Over the spring, USask responded to an urgent request from an Indigenous community in central Saskatchewan in need of additional housing during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing 22 cabins to be relocated from the currently shuttered Emma Lake Kenderdine Campus site. We were able to work with the Montreal Lake Cree Nation to move some of the buildings on-site to support their urgent need for additional housing. This quick move allowed the university to donate the cabins, which we had already been marked to remove. Montreal Lake Cree Nation, which has closed its borders to reduce the spread of COVID-19, inquired about obtaining the buildings in late March, with the USask Board of Governors approving the request on March 30. The cabins moved exclude any buildings on the campus of historical interest to the university, and do not have permanent foundations, making them easier to move and retrofit to meet urgent basic housing needs in the Indigenous community, during the pandemic. Cabin removal began in May and site cleanup and restoration will continue through June. With the plan to fully consider opportunities for a revitalized ELKC, the university remains firmly committed to engaging key stakeholders in its future. Plans for moving into the next phase of consultation in spring 2020 were put on hold due to COVID-19. When it is safe to do so, the university will continue to move forward with public consultation.