Chair’s Opening Remarks to University Council – May 21, 2020

We acknowledge that Council meets on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respects to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

As we move toward the end of the year for University Council I am continually reminded of the dedication and hard work put in by all staff, students and faculty. I will continue to recognize members of University Council for the fine work they do.

I would like to thank the outgoing student representatives for dedication to their tasks over the last year. In particular, USSU President Regan Ratt-Misponis and GSA President Mery Mendoza have provided students with excellent representation and Council has benefitted from their leadership.

Next, I would like to extend on behalf of University Council, a warm welcome to the incoming student representatives. Welcome to USSU President Autumn LaRose-Smith and GSA President Humaira Inam and their respective teams to their year of student governance and engagement with Council. We all look forward to your input and support.

We are continuing with an electronic May meeting and plan to do so until the end of our meeting schedule this June. The success of our past electronic meetings was discussed at length at Council Coordinating Meeting and there is consensus amongst the chairs that the model is working. We will continue to explore options to make our future Council meetings engaging and continue to focus on the business of Council.

I am reporting to Council that the following motion was passed. Motion (DETMER/RISLING) – That the January Council Meeting will occur on the last Thursday of January for 2021. The change will allow more time to address pre-business of Council for a number of our committees.

The coordinating committee met this month through videoconference. Of note, we were able to put together a thorough agenda for our May meeting. I believe that the volume of business coming forward to this meeting is ample evidence of the continuing hard work of Council committees and I thank the Chairs and the committee members for their continued dedication to their tasks.

The May 13 PEC/Council Chairs “virtual” breakfast meeting addressed two issues. Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement, Jackie Ottmann shared a draft of the Indigenous Strategy with our group. The second agenda item was an update to Council chairs on the continuing impact of COVID 19 on the University. All members of the PEC were present and provided an overview of the pandemic’s impact on planning, finances, research, teaching, and our students. Questions and discussion followed each topic. The meeting was particularly engaging and a number of excellent points were provided by the Council Chairs to the PEC as we move from crisis mode to planning mode for the U of S.

In conclusion, I encourage Council members to continue to look out for your students, work colleagues, and the community in general. We have demonstrated great resilience by working together and will need that spirit as we move into the upcoming weeks and months.

Regards,
Jay Wilson, Council Chair