AGENDA ITEM NO: 8.0

Provost’s Report to Council

November 2019

GENERAL REMARKS

This month I will highlight that we are in the process of determining resource allocations that will shape the university budget going into 2020-21 budget year. As Provost, I will be placing as much of the resources that I can to allow the university to move forward with all its planning and vision. As highlighted below, we have made major changes in TABBS to capture collaboration and encourage interdisciplinarity on academic and research programs going forward. We are working hard at all levels; i.e., at College and School levels, support centre level to make sure the university is in a sound position going forward into 2020-21. I will brief Council through March 2020 as we finalize our university budget submission to the Board of Governors.

The section prepared by IPA on rankings is self-contained but I want to emphasize the importance that rankings and their impact do have on our reputation, ability to attract the very best faculty and students and allowing us to have engagement at the levels we deserve.

Finally, please see the update By Dean Melissa Just of the Library on the impact of our budget challenges on the Library Collection for 2019-20. The Library is working very hard with these constraints to minimize the impact to the university academic mission and that scholarship can be maintained at a high level. I will be asking Dean Just to join me in addressing Council on this important matter.

INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

Resource Allocation and Planning Processes
The 2020-21 resource allocation process is well underway guided by the strategic and multi-year financial plans submitted by colleges, schools, and support centres. Working with the Controller’s Office and Office of Financial Strategy, Institutional Planning and Assessment has received, assessed, and prepared these in context for resource allocation conversations and decisions taking place this month. In preparation for 2020-21 resource allocation, several refinements were made to the TABBS model in effort to better include, clarify, and recognize the diversity of activities taking place on our campus. Those refinements include formal recognition for collaborative programs, teaching and research, as well as much expanded definition of activity in RSAW.

Update on University Rankings
Each year, numerous national and international rankings organizations release an updated assessment on our performance in various areas relative to other Canadian and global post-secondary institutions. Rankings can impact our ability to recruit students and faculty, create new partnerships and collaborations with other universities, and attract donor investments. Nationally, these are Maclean’s and Research Infosource; internationally, these include the Times Higher Education, World University Rankings, Quacquarelli (kO-kO-ra-A-II-I) Symonds, World University Rankings and the Academic Ranking of World Universities. USask dropped slightly to 15 in Maclean’s, remained constant in the Academic Ranking of World Universities
(301-400 out of ~1,800) and the Times Higher Education (401-500 out of ~1,400), and moved up slightly in Quacquarelli Symonds (tied at 439 out of ~1,600). The Research Infosource ranking is released in November; we expect to remain close to last year’s position (14 out of 50). Further updates will be reported to Council as our work unfolds in this area. More information on university rankings can be found on Institutional Planning and Assessment’s website: https://www.usask.ca/ipa/Assessment-and-Analytics/university-rankings.php

COLLEGE AND SCHOOL UPDATES

University Library
Over the course of the last eight months, the library has been communicating across campus about the need to balance our collections budget. Due to the rising, unsustainable costs of journal subscriptions and unfavorable foreign exchange rates, we need to reduce our spending on electronic resources by $1.38M in order to balance the 2019/20 budget. Throughout the spring and fall we met with most faculty councils, RSAW, TLARC, GSA, and USSU to share an overview of the scholarly publishing environment, the journal packages we are cancelling, and the principles and processes we employed to make our decisions. We also sought feedback from faculty and graduate students and added that information to the internal data we gathered to guide us in the selection of the titles we would re-subscribe to from the cancelled journal packages. All information about the activity and communication to date is available on the library’s Balancing the Collections Budget website.

The unsustainable scholarly publishing ecosystem is a worldwide issue affecting access to published research at many institutions. In Canada alone, University of Calgary, Queens University, Universitè Laval, Memorial University, and Université de Montréal have all made significant cuts in the last three years. Undoubtedly, more will follow. Other institutions (see University of California, UNC Chapel Hill) and countries (Germany, Norway, Sweden) have taken a more proactive approach to addressing the issue by developing a set of principles that promote author rights, the free dissemination of scholarly outputs, and transparent licensing agreement with commercial publishers. Tri-agency requirements for open access and open research data (coming soon) are already driving this conversation forward, and fiscal realities are crystalizing the need for action.

In the coming months, the University Library, the Office of the Provost and VP Academic, and the Office of the VP Research will be working together to engage with the campus community to develop strategies that enable us to proactively participate in the global scholarly communication conversation.

College of Arts & Science
Lawrence Blough, principal of GRAFTWORKS Design Research and professor at Pratt Institute School of Architecture, was named the inaugural 2018-19 Structurist Fellow. This award recognizes the legacy of the internationally renowned journal The Structurist which was founded in 1960 by Professor Eli Bornstein, professor emeritus in the Department of Art and Art History. Professor Blough’s exhibition, entitled Domestic Mutations in the Age of the Sharing Paradigm, opened along with a lecture on Thursday, October 17 and will continue until December 13 at the Kenderdine Art Gallery. At the opening, it was also announced that applications for the second Structurist Award are now open and will be accepted until 31 January 2020. Further details regarding this award can be found at http://drc.usask.ca/projects/structurist/form.html.

The Digital Research Centre (DRC) has relocated to the Murray Library and this move will allow research, artistic works and items of cultural significance to be accessible to those on campus, but will also reach beyond the academy to enhance collaboration and community engagement. The DRC’s new structure will provide a range of
supports, from assistance in grant development to archiving digital projects in ways that are more accessible to a range of users including collaborative services and creative work spaces for students, faculty and community partners. This home of digital scholarship will foster and support courageous curiosity, boundless collaboration and inspired communities.

For more news and events please visit: http://artsandscience.usask.ca/news/