More than 1700 undergraduate and graduate students received their degrees during Fall Convocation on November 19 and 20. Each convocation our students reflect on the years past and celebrate their many achievements while at the same time turning their attention forward to exciting next stages, whatever they may be.

In this meeting we will be looking for your approval of the Statement on Free Expression to recommend to the Board of Governors for their final approval on December 13. An updated draft was shared with the community on October 28. Comments on the draft were welcome at a town hall on November 1, and through email until November 4.

As you know, the provincial budget was tabled on October 24, with significant cuts to post-secondary education. The U of A’s Campus Alberta grant will be cut $44 million (6.9%) in the 2019-20 fiscal year, and our Infrastructure Maintenance Program funding has been reduced to zero on a one-time basis this year. As a result, the total reduction at the U of A is $79 million for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

On October 30, Gitta Kuclzucki, Steven Dew, and I held a Campus Forum to provide an update on our response to the budget, give some clarity around what we know and don’t know, and answer questions from the community. We are currently seeking input from the community about reducing spending, finding efficiencies, and generating revenue. You can watch the full presentation, ask questions, and provide feedback, at uab.ca/budget. After re-evaluating our priorities following the tabling of the budget on October 24, I made the decision to cancel my trip to India for the earlier this month.

As GFC Secretary and Manager Meg Brolly’s final meeting was on October 21, I want to thank her for all of her years of service with GFC. Meg was instrumental in leading the GFC through the entire governance transformation. The search for Meg’s replacement is underway.
Celebrating Our Alumni

Once again the events of Alumni Weekend inspired the students of yesterday. 64 events across our campuses on September 19-22 showcased how the diverse work of our talented alumni impacts our communities. Thirty one distinguished alumni were honoured at the twenty-fifth Alumni Awards and 21 honorees from previous years returned to join the celebrations. More than 4,500 guests attended the various Kids on Campus events with their families. Seven hundred guests sold out the Myer Horowitz theatre to see the keynote talk by Dr. Timothy Caulfield. More than 500 guests went back to school for U of A in a Day—ten sessions hosted by six U of A professors and alumni. Alumni Weekend saw a 19.6% increase in attendance from last year with 13,396 participants.

Help us recognize the significant contributions of our alumni by nominating an outstanding alumnus for an Alumni Award. Nominations are due December 15.

Green and Gold Day 2019

Objective Five of For the Public Good is “build and strengthen trust, connection, and a sense of belonging among all members of the university community through a focus on shared values.” One of the ways our internal community comes together in celebration is for the annual Green and Gold Day. On September 13, students, staff, faculty, and other members of our community gathered on The Quad in green and gold clothing to watch—or participate in—a parade, play in a friendly dodgeball tournament, and enjoy carnival games.

Indigenous Initiatives

In September, the Students’ Union officially adopted the 60 recommendations of the Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee. Students’ Union representatives will consider the recommendations during decision-making and governance processes in order to continue to advance and promote reconciliation within the Students’ Union.

EDI Census

On November 26, you will receive a Workforce Diversity Census in your inboxes. This new demographic census is critical to helping us build a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive University of Alberta for everyone who works and studies here. It will give us a better understanding of our current environment, and guide the next steps of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Strategic Plan moving forward. This census is different from the Faculty & Staff Engagement Survey that was distributed in October—please complete both. You have until December 17 to respond to the confidential census.
EXPERIENCE

New Programs
Prospective students can now apply for a new undergraduate program in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in the Faculty of Arts that will be launching in fall 2020: Media Studies. This multidisciplinary major examines the content, history, and effects of media on social, political, and cultural systems.

The Department of Political Science has added the Master of Arts in Policy Studies program, which will also launch in fall 2020. The program has course-based and practicum based-streams designed to teach students the professional and practical skills needed to succeed in a variety of public sector careers.

Canadian Centre for Welding and Joining
At the October 23 GFC Academic Planning Committee meeting the establishment of the new Canadian Centre for Welding and Joining in the Faculty of Engineering was approved. This multidisciplinary centre is made possible with a $2.1 million endowment. It is only one of two in Canada and the scope of its research, infrastructure, education, and collaboration with industry position it to surpass existing facilities globally. While the act of welding is taught at colleges such as NAIT and SAIT, no other post-secondary institution in Western Canada addresses more intricate aspects of welding, including metallurgy and physics of plasmas, with a more academic focus. There is no similar initiative in the country aside from University of Waterloo in Ontario. The centre will give students and faculty access to new research and development opportunities in the fields of manufacturing, construction, natural resource development, occupation health, and physics. The centre will work with external stakeholders and industry leaders to guide, develop, and sponsor research projects.
Signature Areas Development

By establishing signature areas, the U of A will increase its capacity to change by nurturing dynamic, innovative multi- and inter-disciplinary teams that are able to attract major, interdisciplinary grants and take multi-faceted approaches to problems. We have had a few exciting developments related to Signature Areas since our last meeting:

- The first Intersections of Gender conference took place October 3-4 on North Campus. More than 220 guests were in attendance from a variety of faculties and disciplines across the sciences, education, arts, professions, and health sciences, as well as the broader community. More than 90 presenters and 25 sessions showcased how producing intersectional research—which recognizes that a person or group cannot be reduced to a single category—can help address social, political, and technological challenges.
- Situated Knowledges: Indigenous Peoples and Places continues its listening phase with a series of listening events intended to gather insights from the university community about the direction of this signature area. Indigenous faculty, staff, and graduate students are invited to participate in the next listening event on Wednesday, November 27 to discuss a governance model for SKIPP.

Awards of Excellence

- Marilyn Dumont, Associate Professor in the faculties of Arts and Native Studies, was awarded the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta’s Distinguished Artist Award in September.
- Ten researchers were named as new or renewed 2019 Canada Research Chairs in the second cycle of announcements.
- Two students were awarded Schulich Leadership Scholarships, the highest undergraduate entrance award.
- Ninety-three of the U of A’s outstanding faculty, staff, and students were recognized for their major accomplishments at Celebrate! Teaching, Learning, Research on October 3.
- Twenty-nine students, postdoctoral fellows, and academics starting research careers were recognized with a Killam Award on October 19.
- The TEC Edmonton Innovation Awards celebrate the success of University of Alberta researchers. In October, awards were presented to ten University of Alberta spin-off companies and nine research teams that received a coveted, difficult-to-obtain US patent.
ENGAGE

U of A’s United Way Campaign
The annual United Way Campaign kicked off on October 9. Thank you to everyone who has donated. Your support will help to provide programs and services to help the 135,000 people in Edmonton living in poverty. The campaign runs through December 31.

Visit to China
From October 6-13, I travelled to Beijing and Shanghai for a series of meetings, keynote lectures, and events to maintain the university’s relationships with alumni and key institutions in China. Highlights including renewing a student exchange agreement with Tsinghua University after 20 years of collaboration, and delivering a public lecture about “Building World Class Universities” at East China Normal University.

MetroLab Network Partnership
On September 19, Mayor Don Iveson and I announced University of Alberta and City of Edmonton as the first Canadian partnership to join more than 40 members in the international MetroLab Network. This partnership will allow our researchers to engage in three projects in Edmonton related to extending connecting vehicle infrastructure, using artificial intelligence in elder care, and improving the sustainability of buildings.

Community Engagement Consultations
Objective 16 in For the Public Good reinforces the value of mutually beneficial community relations. One of the ways we’ve engaged this part of the strategic plan is through the Community Engagement Consultations that Government and Community Relations and University Relations launched in 2018. These consultations have allowed us to ask questions and to gather input regarding the university’s engagement with its community partners in order to develop a community engagement plan. The final two Community Engagement Consultations will be held on November 28. You are welcome to attend either the University of Alberta Community session at 12 pm, or the Community Partners session at 7 pm. This will conclude 81 sessions with more than 1500 respondents.

Advance Polling Stations
Elections Canada made advance polling stations for the federal election available in SUB from October 5-9 for voters in any riding. There was a 60% increase in use of the advance polling stations from 2015.
Integrated Asset Management Strategy
As part of the Integrated Asset Management Strategy, the Van Vliet Locker Rooms are currently undergoing renovations and two temporary change rooms have opened to accommodate users of the complex. When the renovations are complete, the change rooms will be turned into universal locker rooms that can accommodate users with greater needs for privacy, gender anonymity, and/or accessibility.

Additionally, the difficult decision was made to demolish Alumni House, and its removal began earlier this month. Its lack of accessibility, failure to meet modern safety codes, and chronic maintenance issues, including a detrimental pipe burst last spring, all factored into the decision. It became clear that Alumni House would be too costly to renew, maintain, or operate without significant investment. For now, the site will be landscaped so that it can serve as greenspace on campus, and future plans will be guided by our Long Range Development Plan, sector plans, and engagement with the community.

Clean Air Strategy
With the legalization of cannabis in October 2018 and the rise in youth vaping, the Clean Air Working Group was formed in February 2019. The group was tasked with developing a set of recommendations for a clean air strategy to minimize student, staff, and faculty exposure to smoke from cigarettes, inhaled cannabis, vapes, and hookah pipes. Now the committee co-chairs are leading a subgroup in developing and executing the consultation phase of their work. During this period they will gather as much feedback as possible from members of our community about their attitudes toward smoking and vaping on our campuses to inform whether the university should keep the smoking and vaping rules as they are, ban all smoking and vaping, or significantly limit where one can smoke or vape.

Philanthropic Gift
On November 19, Scotiabank gave a gift of $1.25 million to the Department of Computing Science in the Faculty of Science. This generous gift recognizes the leading-edge work being done in the department, and it will support ongoing artificial intelligence research by faculty and provide several experiential learning opportunities for students.

Outdoor Gym
As part of the U of A’s Healthy University Strategic Plan, a new outdoor gym park opened on North Campus on November 6. The park includes five pieces of equipment that are free of charge and available to use year-round. The space represents a joint initiative between the Healthy Campus Unity, Campus & Community Recreation, and Facilities and Operations to encourage outdoor physical activity.
Leadership Transitions

- As you may know, Chancellor Doug Stollery’s four-year, non-renewable term concludes in June 2020. Nominations for the next chancellor are now open and will be accepted until December 6. As the ceremonial head of the University of Alberta, the chancellor chairs the Senate, serves on the Board of Governors, represents the university at ceremonial occasions, presides over degree-conferring ceremonies, and represents the public interest in the university. Candidates should have an interest in public education, a history of respected leadership in the community, thoughts on representing the public interesting at the University of Alberta, and perspective on challenges and opportunities for the university over the next four years.

- On November 14, I announced that Catherine Swinglehurst will serve as Interim Vice-President [University Relations] until a new Vice-President is announced. Catherine will also maintain her role as Chief of Staff in the President’s Office. The search for the next vice president will commence after a new president has been announced and is in position to lead the process.

Thank you for your continued dedication to academic governance at the University of Alberta.

Yours sincerely,

David H. Turpin, CM, PhD, LLD, FRSC
President and Vice-Chancellor