PRESIDENT’S REPORT

TO THE GENERAL FACULTIES COUNCIL | May 25, 2020

Circumstances for all of us continue to change rapidly. At the University of Alberta we have seen an incredible transformation in a very short period of time thanks to the efforts and adaptability of every student, faculty, and staff member. Thank you for participating in special GFC meetings so we can continue to discuss the timely issues that arise.

In light of our inability to gather together on campus, we will celebrate the Class of 2020 during a virtual convocation on June 12. Our graduates will be welcomed back to the University of Alberta campus at an in-person ceremony when it is safe to do so. Likewise, the awarding of honorary degrees has been put on hold until we can gather again in person.

Over the last several weeks, the University of Alberta has been turning its attention to fall 2020. We have begun the preparations for welcoming incoming and current students to a new academic year. Following the directives of Alberta’s Office of the Chief Medical Office, in September 2020 the majority of our classes will be delivered remotely and online. However, where possible, we are committed to providing small group in-person learning and experiential learning such as labs and clinical instruction, especially in those programs where in-person instruction is essential. In cases where students cannot join activities in-person, we commit that alternate arrangements will be made so that progress in programs can continue. This decision allows our community to deal with some of our current uncertainty. Students and instructors can now move forward with planning and decision making knowing the direction we’ve set.

We, as a community, are also working hard to address unprecedented financial challenges. In addition to a total reduction in provincial funding of $110.3 million over two years, the partial shutdown of our campuses has resulted in a significant reduction in revenue streams from ancillary services. Our challenge, like that faced by many across our province, is serious.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the university community.
BUILD

Community Connection Awards
Our ability to contribute to society flows in large measure from our ability to connect with our communities. The University of Alberta’s Community Connections Awards honour those individuals and groups who have embodied the U of A’s promise to “uplift the whole people” by sharing their expertise, time, and energy for the benefit of the public good. Together, they contribute to a diverse and vibrant campus. This year’s recipients are:

- Shalene Jobin: A scholar of Indigenous studies, Professor Jobin has devoted her career to Indigenous community engagement through her research, public education, consultations, and the expertise and support she brings into the communities she works with.
- WISEST: For almost 40 years, WISEST has inspired and empowered thousands of women, girls, and underrepresented groups to excel in science, engineering, technology and scholarship.
- Fresh Routes: Through their community partnership, Grocery Run and Fresh Routes endeavour to help all Edmontonians access affordable, nutritious food and make informed decisions about healthy lifestyles.

EXPERIENCE

Remote Delivery of Courses
In response to COVID-19 the U of A made a number of changes including moving the remainder of winter courses online in order to ensure that the academic term could be completed on schedule. Our students adapted mid-stream to new classroom formats, new syllabi, and new grading schemes, and our instructors worked quickly and creatively to give our students the best learning experience possible in very difficult circumstances. Our staff supported the entire transition, including ensuring that student supports for mental health and accommodations were still available. Spring and summer courses will also be delivered remotely. From March 11-31, 2020 the Centre for Teaching and Learning assisted more than 2,100 instructors.

Three Minute Thesis
The Three Minute Thesis is an annual academic competition at the U of A that assists current graduate students with fostering effective presentations and communication skills. Participants have just three minutes to explain the breadth and significance of their research projects to a non-specialist audience. The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research hosted the finals online on April 24.
Awards of Excellence
- Outgoing Students’ Union president Akanksha Bhatnager is the recipient of the International Students’ Association’s 2020 ISA Salute award.
- The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research recognized 30 supervisors through the Great Supervisor Awards. The recipients were nominated in recognition of their student mentorship and committee support.
- The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research recognized 54 graduate students in 14 faculties with Graduate Student Teaching Awards for demonstrating excellence.
- 13 instructors were recognized with 2020 Teaching Excellence Awards for their impact on students and colleagues, and for their contributions to an outstanding learning experience.

Trudeau Foundation Fellow
Associate Professor Ubaka Ogbogu, a health law scholar in both the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, has been named a fellow of the prestigious Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation for 2020 to 2023. Ogbogu, who is an authority on the ethical, legal and societal implications of novel and emerging biotechnologies, was one of four scholars selected.

Supreme Court of Canada Clerkships
Two Class of 2020 graduates of the Faculty of Law have landed coveted clerkships at the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) in 2021–2022. Only 36 SCC clerkships are available annually, and the U of A has sent six graduates in the past five years.

Athletics Excellence
Golden Bears football offensive lineman Carter O’Donnell has signed with the NFL’s Indianapolis Colts.

Supporting the Community During COVID-19
The U of A community has been instrumental in helping the greater community with COVID-19 relief efforts. Here are just some of the ways:
- The Butterdome is being used by AHS as a secondary assessment site and treatment centre.
- Some of Canada’s top virologists at U of A’s Li Ka Shing Institute of Virology are focusing on research into diagnostic tests, antiviral drugs, and vaccines.
- Four U of A research projects received $2.4 million total in federal funding for faster, more accurate testing of COVID-19.
More than 100 U of A medical students are providing volunteer emergency child care for physicians and other critical health-care workers.

Faculty of Law professor Timothy Caulfield has been named to the Royal Society of Canada’s Task Force on COVID-19 in order to support Canada’s response to and recovery from COVID-19. He’s also received a grant from Alberta Innovates and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to study misinformation and conspiracy theories surrounding COVID-19.

Criminal law professor Peter Sankoff created the 100 Interns Project to support law students across Canada who have had their employment affected because of the pandemic.

48Hour Discovery, a U of A spinoff company, is using its propriety technology to sift through billions of molecules in search of promising compounds that might be effective against COVID-19.

U of A researchers are studying how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the physical and mental health of front-line physicians.

The U of A is one of the partners of the provincial Be the Cure campaign which attracts participants to clinical trials. Since March, the campaign has focused on recruiting participants for COVID-19 health research including:

U of A researchers are participating in a province-wide study to investigate the effectiveness of the drug hydroxychloroquine as an early intervention for Albertans who test positive for COVID-19.

Seven U of A projects are receiving a total of more than $3.5 million from Alberta Innovates and the Canadian Institute of Health Research.

Community Engagement Online Open House
The Office of Government and Community Relations within University Relations has been working on identifying issues and opportunities related to how the university engages with communities within the context of the university’s institutional strategic plan. Eighty-three consultation events have taken place to gather input regarding institutional community engagement with both internal and external stakeholders. In April, the community was invited to view summary comments from these consultations and provide feedback at an Online Open House. This feedback will be used to inform the final Community Engagement Consultation plan which will be published in June 2020.

SUSTAIN

New Scholarships
CIBC and IndSpire created 36 new awards for Indigenous students. 18 of these scholarships will be given to students who are studying, promoting, and maintaining Indigenous languages and traditions.

- 8 MD Program Indigenous Entrance Scholarships
- 10 Indigenous Scholars Awards (Arts, Education, Native Studies, and Business)
- 3 Indigenous Resilience Graduate Awards (Native Studies)
- 15 Aboriginal Education Teacher Program (ATEP) Indigenous Language Teacher Bursaries

Federal Financial Support for Students
The University of Alberta worked together with Universities Canada and U15 to advocate for greater
financial assistance for our students. In April, the federal government announced a suite of programs amounting to $9 billion to support post-secondary students. On May 15 they announced additional funding of $450 million for academic research, including graduate student research.

Provost and Vice-President Reappointment
Following the unanimous recommendation of the Advisory Review Committee, on May 8 the Board of Governors approved the renewal of Dr. Steven Dew for a second five-year term as Provost and Vice-President (Academic).

Leadership Transitions

- Dr. Steve Patten has been appointed Interim Dean of the Faculty of Arts for a two-year period effective July 1, 2020. Dr. Patten will be taking over for Dean Lesley Cormack when she departs the University of Alberta to take up the role of Principal and Vice-Chancellor at UBC Okanagan. Previously Dr. Patten was to begin a term as Vice-Dean on July 1, 2020.

- Dr. Kerry Mummery will extend his term as Dean of the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation (KSR) by one additional year to June 30, 2021. Because of the uncertainties caused by the revised budget, Provost Steven Dew and I decided to not proceed with the appointment of a new Dean of the Faculty of KSR at this time.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the University of Alberta community.

Yours sincerely,

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