PRESIDENT’S REPORT

TO THE GENERAL FACULTIES COUNCIL | January 27, 2020

It has been a difficult month for our community. On January 8 we woke up to the news of a devastating loss of life of 176 people aboard Flight PS752 leaving Tehran, Iran. As the day unfolded, it was confirmed that 10 of the victims were university students, faculty, and alumni, and another three were close family members. Through the stories and memories that have been shared, it is clear to me that the people we lost were talented, generous with their time, eager to help make the world a better place, and important to the intellectual and social fabric of their communities. This is a significant tragedy and loss for our entire university community, and we have been in mourning.

I am moved by how our community came together to respond to this tragedy. Many volunteered their time, attended vigils and memorials, acknowledged a moment of silence, shared a message of condolence, or supported someone who is grieving. With input from our internal and external communities, the Mojgan Daneshmand, Pedram Mousavi, and Victims of Flight PS752 Memorial Fund has been established with the goal of creating an endowment to provide two annual graduate student scholarships. The teams in the Office of the Dean of Students, Human Resource Services, and Faculty of Graduate Studies have ensured that critical supports are available to everyone.

On Monday, January 20 the Minister of Advanced Education announced details of the province’s new outcomes-based funding model that is anticipated to come into effect in April 2020. The University of Alberta will be working with the Ministry of Advanced Education to set performance measures and targets that support the key role we play in Alberta’s economic and social prosperity. On Friday, January 24 the General Faculties Council, Board of Governors, and Senate will convene for the annual joint summit with this as our topic.

I recently provided another budget update to the community. We are on pace to meet our budget targets, inclusive of the in-year grant reduction in every fund, with the exception of the capital fund. We are on target thanks to actions that have occurred across the university, including hiring constraints, cuts to all non-essential spending, participation by nearly 600 employees in the voluntary winter leave program, and staff reductions due to attrition, retirements, and position eliminations. We know there is more work to be done and budget planning for 2020-21 is well underway. I will continue to provide the community with regular updates.

I would like to welcome Yimmie Sonuga, our new General Faculties Council Secretary and Manager of GFC Services. Yimmie is a proud alumna and has extensive experience and knowledge in the area of corporate and not-for-profit governance. She will be a valuable addition to the GFC and governance team.
Workplace Diversity Census
On November 26 the Workforce Diversity Census was distributed via email to employees. The census had a 62 per cent response rate. The results are now being analyzed by a third party and the data will give us a better understanding of our current environment, and guide the next steps of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Strategic Plan.

Focus Conversations
In December and early January employees were invited to participate in a series of EDI focus conversations, led by an independent third-party consultant, about experiences of inclusion, equity, and marginalization at the university. The conversations intend to provide a safe, confidential way for employees to provide input to help the university to better understand employees’ needs, barriers, and opportunities. Now that the conversations have concluded, the consultant will submit a written report summarizing the results to the Office of the Deputy Provost to help inform the review and implementation of the EDI Strategic Plan. There are plans to facilitate these conversations with students in the future.

EDI Awards
The EDI Awards program honours faculty, staff, and students who are champions in the creation of respectful, diverse, and inclusive environments at the University of Alberta. I encourage you to nominate individuals, work teams, or campus groups that have demonstrated skill, determination, and accomplishment in building equity, diversity, and inclusivity. The deadline is January 31.

New Residence Terms
As of December 2019 Residence Services now offers eight-month contracts in Linden, Tamarack, Pinecrest, and Nipisigi residences. This change comes in response to student feedback that suggested the eleven-month contracts were not conducive to students who only need accommodations for fall and winter semesters.

Athletics Records
Over the fall a number of impressive athletics records were set by our Golden Bears and Pandas:

- Vanessa Wild, senior guard on the Pandas basketball team, broke a 40-year-old record by scoring 39 points in one game.
• Pandas volleyball coach Laurier Eisler is the first school coach in Alberta to achieve 800 career wins. Eisler’s overall coaching record now stands at 800-302 over 28 seasons. Eisler also holds the record for most wins as a University of Alberta coach.
• Pandas hockey coach Howie Draper scored 600 career wins, the first women’s collegiate hockey coach to do so in Canada in 23 years.
• For the first time in history, both the Bears and Pandas curling teams won the provincial championship in the same year.

EXCEL

Community Connection Awards
The University of Alberta’s Community Connections Awards honour 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. Nominations for these awards are open through February 6. I encourage you to nominate your colleagues who have demonstrated exceptional service to the university through the impact of their community involvement.

Signature Area Development
Professors Geoffrey Rockwell (Faculty of Arts) and Eleni Strouila (Faculty of Science) are leading the development of a new signature area, AI 4 Society. This signature area will build on more than four decades of expertise in AI and machine learning. Over the last 30 years the University of Alberta has consistently been ranked as one of the top three institutions worldwide for AI research. In 2018 Google DeepMind, opened its first international research lab in Edmonton under the leadership of three U of A experts.

Top 40 Under 40
A number of the University of Alberta’s faculty and staff were recognized by Avenue Edmonton magazine in their annual Top 40 Under 40 issue. The U of A’s Top 40 Under 40 include:

• Alexis Ksiazkiewicz, Office of the Vice-President (University Relations)
• Kate Storey, Faculty of Arts
• Matthew Dourna, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry
• Qasim Mian, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry
• Richard Oster, Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences
• Ratmir Derda, Faculty of Science
• Rehana Chatur, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry
• Kisha Supernant, Faculty of Arts
Awards of Excellence

- François Paulette, an Adjunct Professor in the School of Public Health, received the Order of Canada for his contributions to treaty and Indigenous rights and his promotion of circumpolar health research.
- The Celebration of Service Awards were held on December 2, 2019 to honour faculty and staff members who have attained service milestones of 25, 30, 35, 40, and 45 years. Seven faculty and staff members were also recognized with Awards of Excellence for their outstanding contributions to healthy and vibrant workplaces.

ENGAGE

Statement on Free Expression
The Board of Governors approved the University of Alberta’s Statement of Free Expression on December 13, 2019. Once again, thank you for your input and engagement over the past several months to arrive at a statement that is reflective of the university’s commitment to providing spaces that balance discourse and debate with inclusiveness and respect for human dignity.

Visit to Mexico
In December I visited Tecnológico de Monterrey in Monterrey, Mexico to deliver a keynote address at the Innovating the Future of Education conference and strengthen the academic and research linkages between our universities. Many of our world-class researchers in the fields of artificial intelligence, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing are already working with colleagues at Tecnológico de Monterrey. Establishing closer ties with Tecnológico de Monterrey is driven by our recognition of their leadership in the area of innovation and entrepreneurial education. In recognition of this commitment, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance the mobility, in both directions, of students, interns and researchers between the universities, and to facilitate future research collaborations through a co-financed Seed Grant Program.

Community Partnership
Atlas Biotechnologies is investing just under $300,000 over two years to fund three research studies in the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry which will explore the use of medical cannabis for the treatment of multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer’s, and Huntington’s diseases.
Clean Air Strategy
The Clean Air Strategy committee launched a survey on January 22 to gather input from the community about their attitudes toward smoking and vaping on our campuses. The data collected will inform the university’s rules around tobacco, cannabis, and vaping and determine whether there is interest in a Clean Air Strategy. The survey runs through February 12.

Leadership Transitions
- Melissa Padfield was appointed to the role of Vice-Provost and University Registrar effective December 1, 2019.
- Barbara Billingsley was appointed as Dean of the Faculty of Law for a five-year term, effective July 1, 2020.
- Matthias Ruth, Vice-President (Research and Innovation) has announced he will be leaving his role to take up the position of Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research at the University of York, effective May 1, 2020. Walter Dixon, Associate Vice-President (Research) will serve as interim vice-president until a new vice-president is appointed.
- Dr. Brenda Hemmelgarn started in the role of Dean of the Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry on January 1, 2020.

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

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

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