

President's Message – June 2014

June is always a special month at the University of Regina, in large part because the month inches us ever closer to the summer weather that sees Wascana Centre – the home of our main and College Avenue campuses – at its best.

June is also significant because of Spring Convocation – the ceremony that honours approximately three-quarters of our yearly graduates. For many students, this marks the end of their post-secondary journey and is the culmination of years of dedicated commitment to their studies. For others, the journey continues as they move on to graduate and doctoral programs.

This Convocation is special for another reason: it marks the 40th spring graduating class since the University of Regina became independent from the University of Saskatchewan in 1974.

Convocation is the traditional occasion at which we honour many of those in our University community who are deserving of recognition. Most notable are the students who have distinguished themselves while studying at the University of Regina.

Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting one of those distinguished students, Matthew Dipple. Matthew is the recipient of the President's Medal, an award that is presented at each Convocation to the undergraduate student who has demonstrated the strongest combination of academic excellence and extra-curricular leadership during the course of his or her first degree.

Matthew, who graduates from the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, is more than worthy of this honour. He graduates with Great Distinction in a very demanding discipline with an average above 91 per cent. But that's not where Matthew's academic achievements end. He will also receive three other awards: the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists Gold Medal, the Johnson and Perry Award in Cooperative Education, and the Dean's Medal in Engineering and Applied Science.

Matthew's academic achievements are even more impressive given the time he devotes to extracurricular activities and community volunteerism. As president of the Champion College chapter of the Alpha Sigma Nu Jesuit Honour Society, he has dedicated considerable time to enhancing the educational experiences of his fellow students. He has also served on the University's Executive of Council, on the Champion College Students' Union, and with the Campus Catholic Outreach. He has also been a volunteer gardener for the Regina Public Interest Research Group and worked as a teaching assistant for a first-year engineering design class.

Matthew has also demonstrated a dedication to the spiritual life of his fellow Champion College students. He served as a lay presider and a lector for the Champion College Campus Ministry, and was a member of the Champion College Vocations Committee.

Matthew's volunteerism extends well beyond the University and Campion College. The Marian Centre, Madonna House Apostolate, AIDS Program South Saskatchewan and Ignite Summer Camp are among the organizations he has served in different capacities.

Matthew also enjoys sports, having played in the University's Intramural Ultimate Frisbee league and the Regina Church Hockey League. He is a dedicated musician and has been a long-serving member of the Halcyon Chamber Choir and the Holy Rosary Cathedral Music Ministry.

Another major award, the Governor General's Academic Gold Medal, is presented to a graduate student who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement. The award is presented this spring to Amber Fletcher, who is graduating with a Doctor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Amber's outstanding coursework is reflected in her average, which is in the 90s. She has received numerous graduate awards and scholarships, including a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council - SSHRC Joseph Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship. Amber was also one of only six women across Canada, and the only one under 30, to receive the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the goal of equality for women and girls in Canada.

Amber's dissertation combines the disciplines of Political Sociology, Women's and Gender Studies, and Public Policy, making her research truly interdisciplinary. Since 2012, Amber has published six peer-reviewed publications – four peer-reviewed book chapters and two international peer-reviewed journal articles.

This spring's Governor-General's Academic Silver Medal – which recognizes academic excellence demonstrated by a graduating student receiving a first degree – will be presented to Kevin Williams. Kevin earned a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science with a minor in Psychology through Campion College. He graduates with Great Distinction, having maintained an average above 96 per cent.

Kevin has received many scholarships in recognition of his academic achievements. In 2010, he was granted a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada – Undergraduate Student Research Award for research that led to a refereed conference paper. Computer Science faculty members have described Kevin as a natural leader who helps his fellow students get the most out of their studies. He is a meticulous student, going above and beyond to incorporate additional research into his assignments.

The other top academic award recipients at the University's Spring Convocation are:

Catherine Ready – Bachelor of Education After Degree Convocation Prize

Mason Alexander Gardiner – Faculty of Business Administration Dean's Medal

Melissa Enns – Faculty of Arts Dean's Medal

Barbara Goretzky – Faculty of Fine Arts Dean's Medal

Craig Soutar – Faculty of Science Dean’s Medal
Sanjit Singh Uppal – Leon Goldman Scholarship

In addition to recognizing outstanding students, we will also bestow honorary doctoral degrees on four outstanding individuals: Ted Jaleta, William Shurniak, Ken Mitchell, and Jean Freeman. You can read more about our Spring 2014 honorary degree recipients in May’s message from the President at <http://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/5326>.

I offer my heartfelt congratulations to our honorary degree recipients, our award-winning students, and all of our Spring 2014 graduates. I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

At the same time, I would like to thank all of our faculty and staff for the work they have done to help our students succeed over this past year and throughout the course of their programs. With summer just around the corner, I hope that together with your family and friends, you have a chance to enjoy everything that Saskatchewan has to offer at this time of year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vianne Timmons
President and Vice-Chancellor