

2016 State of the University — Dr. Annette Trimbee

October 17, 2016 | 12:30 p.m.

Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall

- Good morning.
- I'd like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered on Treaty One land in the heart of the Métis nation.
- Thank you all for being here today.
- Fall is always an exciting time at University. There's an incredible energy at this time of year, with new students arriving, and departing students celebrating their accomplishments at Convocation.
- Around campus, you can really sense this energy is growing more and more positive — we have much to be proud of, and taking a look at some of the highlights from last year confirms this.
- We've been fortunate enough to have more brilliant speakers on campus to share their wisdom with us.
- Speakers like Nobel Laureate Dr. Art McDonald, who visited us in June to share his breakthrough physics research.
- He was an inspiration — a humble man with a great sense of humor. He accomplished great things because he was curious, collaborative and hard working.
- Our Axworthy Lecture Series continued in May with a talk from Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi. Mayor Nenshi shared with us his optimistic vision for the future of diverse cities such as ours.
- We've played host to important forums for discussion, such as a workshop on the environmental issues affecting Lake Manitoba. In June we hosted the heart-wrenching at times Pathways to Reconciliation conference, which was attended by over 400 people from across Canada.
- We've celebrated outstanding students, staff and alumni at our Spring and Fall Convocations. We've presented honorary degrees to deserving recipients such as Susan Thompson, George Bain, Robert Enright, and — just a few days ago — Ida Albo.
- And of course, we were proud to start this new academic year with an initiative that has been long in the works, our Indigenous Course Requirement — or as we now call it: the ICR.
- The ICR, which was initiated by our students, continues to receive positive national and international attention. I know how much hard work all of you put into this, and it's really gratifying to see it become a reality.
- So it's been an historic, memorable year here at our campus.

- But it's also been a fascinating year outside of our campus.
- When I addressed you at this time last year, we were just a few days removed from electing a new federal government.
- We're now just starting to get a sense of how this new government will shape our country in the years to come.
- In April, Manitobans elected a new provincial government — the first in nearly 17 years.
- These new governments will no doubt have an impact on The University of Winnipeg, and we are in the process of engaging with them to help shape that impact.
- But there's something else that both of these elections had in common — they both resulted in historic shifts from the previous governments.
- They both represented a desire for change.
- You can really sense that desire everywhere you turn.
- It's impossible to turn on the TV — or check Twitter or Facebook — without seeing or hearing it.
- We're seeing political ideologies clashing, both at home and abroad.
- Big ideas are being shared and discussed — ideas on topics like the urgency of transition away from fossil fuels and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
- And with the continued emergence of online and social medias, communities who were previously unheard are finding ways to make an impact and share their thoughts.
- It all sounds a little bit like another time in our University's history — the 1960s.
- Of course, there was no Twitter or Facebook in the 1960s, and while the exact issues may be a bit different, the two times are linked by a tremendous sense of social awareness.
- There's a reason I bring up the 1960s.
- We have a big anniversary coming up.
- In 2017, our institution will mark 50 years since it received its charter to become The University of Winnipeg.
- This is an exciting time on campus, as we prepare to celebrate our proud history of excellence in academics, research and community engagement.
- I'd like to use this occasion to reflect a bit on our past, and see how far we've come today.

- I will do so by asking two questions:
- *What did it mean to be a university in 1967?*
- *And what does it mean to be a university in 2017?*
- I think by looking at some of the threads that tie our history together, we can begin to understand our purpose going forward.
- So, what did it mean to be The University of Winnipeg in 1967?
- Here's what it meant to our first president, Wilfred Lockhart:
- "Becoming a university does not mean suddenly blossoming forth with a number of faculties, regardless of demand or need. For us, it means the freedom and responsibility to become that kind of institution of higher learning which is best suited to meet the needs of the changing scene at the heart of a great metropolitan area."
- I think this quote really speaks to what is at the heart of The University of Winnipeg.
- There's no one reason why our University was founded — in fact, it was a combination of events that were mostly out of our control.
- We happened to be located in a distinct, urban location at a time when Manitoba's existing university was stretched by increases in both students and specialized fields of study.
- But as Lockhart expresses, our institution has never simply grown for the sake of growing.
- Throughout our history, we've viewed our environment as an opportunity to do something more — an opportunity to be agents for change in our city.
- And that is still true today.
- You can look outside and see it in the new Downtown Commons, a high-quality rental housing building for residents of varying backgrounds and circumstances — genuine mixed housing.
- You can look down Selkirk Avenue and see it in the construction site at Merchants Corner — our new inner-city education hub — which is on track to open next summer.
- And you can see it in the community programming offered through our Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre.
- Here's one more quote I'd like to share. It's from Henry Duckworth's inaugural address in 1971, and it really affirms the vision Lockhart had laid out several years earlier:
- "A great city is now our campus, and the community is our constituency... the problems of the urban world are at our doorstep for constructive study and action, our specialized facilities are conveniently located for community use, and other specialized public facilities are readily accessible to our students."

- Decades later, Dr. Jino Distasio and alumnus Kyle Wiebe are performing research that will have an impact on the availability and affordability of healthy food in Winnipeg's inner city.
- And Jim Silver, our Urban and Inner-City Studies Chair, is researching low-income housing issues in Winnipeg and using the results to build strategies to reduce urban poverty across the country.
- As these examples show, our commitment to our community has always defined who we are.
- But as we approach our 50th anniversary, how can we expand this definition?
- What does it mean to be The University of Winnipeg in 2017?
- The UWinnipeg of today plays a crucial role in the larger context of Canada and the world.
- This isn't to suggest that we're leaving our community roots behind.
- To borrow from Dr. Duckworth — the city is still our campus.
- But the way in which we impact our community carries significance for all Canadians.
- Just take a look at some of the topics that have created headlines in Canada over the last year.
- For almost every one of them, you can draw a line back to someone at UWinnipeg who is working within our community to influence change.
- Take climate change, for instance. Last December at the Paris climate conference, Canada joined 194 other countries in adopting the first-ever legally binding global climate agreement.
- Here at the University, our new Prairie Climate Centre is gaining significant regional and national interest, particularly for its innovative Prairie Climate Atlas.
- If you haven't checked out the Prairie Climate Atlas online yet, do so. It's fun, engaging, informative, and most importantly — incredibly accessible.
- And it's going to keep improving, as the Manitoba government recently renewed its support for the Centre, at \$400,000 over two years.
- Another example: the Syrian refugee crisis.
- We've been moved by the powerful images and stories of the thousands of refugees arriving to Canada over the past year.
- Our own Dr. Jan Stewart is studying ways to help these refugees navigate school and transition into meaningful careers.
- It's been really amazing seeing our community join together to support incoming refugees.

- For instance, our RecPlex hosts a weekly soccer game for refugees that also serves as a meeting place for them to connect on issues like housing.
- One final example: LGBTQ rights and education.
- In July, the nation watched as members and supporters of the Steinbach LGBTQ community took a stand against discrimination and held the first Pride Parade in the town.
- Standing front and center on that day was UWinnipeg's Dr. Catherine Taylor, telling the large crowd in attendance that no gay student should have to feel isolated, cornered or despised in their school.
- Earlier in the year, Dr. Taylor released her national study that found the vast majority of Canadian K-12 teachers approve of inclusive education.
- It's clear that the exceptional work being done at UWinnipeg has far-reaching impact.
- Last year, we unveiled our Strategic Directions, which have five pillars:
 - Academic Excellence
 - Student Success
 - Indigenization
 - Knowledge Mobilization
 - and Financial Resilience
- With that in place, we went to work to develop specific actions to execute these directions.
- And in consultation with members of the University Community, which was led Neil and Jino, we developed our Integrated Academic and Research Plan — which we now call IARP.
- If the Strategic Directions are the *what* and the *why*, the IARP is the *how*, in particular for three of the five directions — academic excellence, student success and knowledge mobilization.
- This type of plan is a first for UWinnipeg, and it emphasizes our strong belief that research and classroom activities complement each other in a way that benefits both faculty and students.
- I'd like to thank everyone who participated in consultation sessions or shared their feedback over the past year — your ideas and voices were essential to its development.
- A town hall is being planned for late October where the details of IARP will be shared.
- I'd like to speak to two of the directions that have scopes beyond the IARP — Indigenization and Financial Resilience.

- Earlier, I referenced the University's beginnings in the 1960s, and our context within the community at that time.
- But this reflection on our history must also acknowledge the realities of Canada's history.
- In 1967, Indigenous children were still being torn from their families and cultures under the guise of a better education.
- So in 2017, we ask ourselves — what role do we as educators play in reconciling with Canada's Indigenous peoples?
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report has been — and continues to be — our guide to answering this question.
- As mentioned earlier, we are incredibly proud to have the Indigenous Course Requirement officially underway.
- This undertaking has been an emotional and fulfilling start to our journey to reconciliation.
- But it is just that — a start.
- I think back to last November, when we presented then-Justice Murray Sinclair, the author of the TRC report, with the Duff Roblin Award.
- Justice Sinclair challenged everyone in attendance to pick just one of the 94 recommendations to act on, and see how that changes the world.
- Recently, Chief Wilton Littlechild suggested that 72 of the 94 Calls to Action are about Education, meaning that as a university we have a very important role to play in reconciliation. The ICR is a start.
- Imagine what could happen if we consider how to act on more recommendations.
- The TRC report talks about the importance of preserving Indigenous languages. We have successfully introduced Ojibwe and Cree language courses, and we will continue to increase these offerings.
- We must keep finding new pathways for Indigenous students to both enter and succeed at UWinnipeg.
- I'm thrilled that our Indigenous enrolment has remained strong this year at 12% of our incoming students, which makes UWinnipeg among the strongest in Canada for Indigenous participation.
- But the retention rate of Indigenous students is still below the rest of our student body. We need to understand why this is, and put the proper supports in place to improve it.
- Over the coming months, our Indigenous Advisory Circle and Office of Indigenous Affairs will be developing a more focused strategy to improve retention.

- And they'll be doing so with the leadership of our new Associate Vice President of Indigenous Affairs, Kevin Lamoureux.
- Kevin is a gifted teacher, and a passionate advocate for Indigenous communities. We are in good hands.
- The other strategic direction I'd like to address is our Financial Resilience.
- Financial resilience is essential for us to preserve and continue to enhance the work we do at the University.
- How far and how fast we move on the five strategic directions depends on our funding.
- Last year, for the first time, we developed a three-year budget strategy.
- It allows us to be more strategic and plan where we want to be and the decisions we need to make around resources to get us there.
- I spoke earlier of the new provincial and federal governments we have. We are seeing signs of change on both fronts.
- Provincially, the new government is engaging with us to create a strategic framework for post-secondary education funding.
- It's been encouraging to see that this new government shares our commitment to providing accessible education to all, including Indigenous and international students.
- Federally, we are seeing their priorities emerge.
- Many of these priorities align with our Strategic Directions, and the faculty research that is already taking place here.
- This means that going forward there will be even more opportunities for us to have a positive impact nationally.
- We also need to understand where we are right now as a University and how we are being viewed by others.
- What are others saying about UWinnipeg?
- We hear from others that we are being deliberate with our decisions. That we have a coherent and intentional plan. And that we are consistent in what we say and how we represent ourselves.
- What have we accomplished since releasing our strategic directions plan?
- We are on a path to remove the structural deficit with the three-year budget.
- We launched the Indigenous Course Requirement, and are receiving fantastic support nationally.

- We developed the IARP.
- We settled new collective agreements with UWFA and AESES. Thank you to Dr. Jacqueline Romanow, Lisa McGifford, Laurel Repski, and all of the others who dedicated their time to make this happen.
- We are launching a new Masters in Management in Innovation, Technology and Operations.
- Because of the efforts of our students, the UWinnipeg Foundation and the Pension Trustees are, for the first time, developing endowment investment policies that will consider the environmental, social and governance practices of the companies they invest in.
- We are developing a new sustainability plan and creating our first strategic enrollment plan.
- We are also developing a campus master plan and getting ready to launch a new Capital Campaign.
- All of these accomplishments are directly tied to our Strategic Directions.
- How do we know we are making progress as a University?
- We are engaging. We are listening. There is a feeling of hope. Our University community is re-connecting.
- It's a good time for our 50th anniversary.
- I've talked about using anniversaries as an opportunity to reflect, and they're very good for that.
- But there's something else that anniversaries are good for — celebrating.
- So be assured that in addition to the reflecting, we'll be doing much celebrating.
- We'll be honoring 50 years of exceptional faculty, staff, students and alumni, with a particular focus on the impact they've had.
- When we measure the impact these people have had—the knowledge they've shared, the policies they've influenced, the lives they've changed — that's when we begin to see how far we've come over 50 years.
- That's when we understand what it means to be The University of Winnipeg in 2017.
- A University that uses its collective strength and community roots to be a defining voice during a fascinating time of change for Canada.
- As we head into another year, our central goal remains unchanged — we are here to grow leaders.
- Our Strategic Directions are all connected to support and complement each other, with this goal in mind.

- This means that everything you do directly impacts the success of our students.
- All of our staff and faculty — every lesson you give, every paper you grade, every meeting you have or email you send — these actions, in their own small ways, have an impact on the future of community and the future of Canada.
- Because our students — our future leaders — will be taking those lessons and using them to define what it means to be a Canadian for the next 50 years.
- And in the process, they'll be defining what it means to be The University of Winnipeg as well.
- Before we open it up to questions, I do have one more exciting piece of news I'd like to share.
- I've spoken today about how our strategic directions are designed to see us grow intentionally and deliberately.
- A good example of this type of growth is Leatherdale Hall, which is quickly rising outside Wesley Hall, and on track to open next year.
- Yes, Leatherdale Hall will be a new physical addition to our campus, and that's always exciting.
- But even more important than the spaces we create, are the experiences and the environment that those spaces offer for all of our community.
- That's why I'm so pleased that Leatherdale Hall will offer our faculty an environment to come together, share their findings and work on new ideas.
- Today, we're announcing a new fund to support this and other types of knowledge mobilization.
- To help me with that, I'd like to invite up to the stage one of our alumni, Russell Anthony, who has made a very generous gift to the University.
- Russell's gift of \$250,000 is being matched with \$250,000 by the University through funds received from the estate of Wallace Schram, a graduate of United College.
- That \$500,000 will form a fund used to support our researchers as they take their expertise out into the field to share and collaborate with the broader community.
- It is the very essence of knowledge mobilization.
- Russell has chosen to honor his uncle, Paul Swaity, a United College alumnus and dedicated UWinnipeg donor, by naming his fund after him.
- I'm incredibly excited that we can formally unveil the new Anthony-Swaity Knowledge Impact Endowment Fund.
- I'd now like to invite Russell to say a few words.