

State of the University Address -- Dr. Lloyd Axworthy

September 7, 2012

9:00-10:00 – RCFE Atrium

Good morning and a particular welcome to those who join us for homecoming. It is an opportunity to involve those of you who have come to celebrate with your former classmates in an overview of the University along with members of faculty, staff, students and the large circle of supporters that contribute time and resources to our Alma mater.

This last year has been a time for stock taking and for determining how we ought to adjust and set a different trajectory in order to meet the vastly changing environment that faces higher education generally and this university in particular. One of the unique features of this institution over its long history has been its resilience, meeting and adapting to change without altering the values rooted in our pioneer beginnings.

This resilience has since been layered -- generation after generation -- by its faculty and students in interaction with the community. It must now be applied to the changing, global landscape we now occupy. To this end, we have been engaged in a combination of discussions, consultations and assessments both within the University community and to the broader community constituency.

The next step of the strategic review is to have each of the faculties build on its initial views and will be released upon the completion of this important step. It was clear from the first round of consultations that there needed to be a voice representing the unique and distinctive perspective of faculty. In the end, we hope to apply their perspective to develop a useful navigation map for the future.

We are now a very different place. Through a significant amount of cooperative effort made by many of you here in this room --today we are an active and

growing campus and a key partner in downtown renewal and city wide economic and educational development.

One of the single most important things we have accomplished is creating a culture dedicated to removing barriers to education....whether they are physical, financial or emotional. We are dissolving the line between our campus and our neighbourhood.

We have, I believe, become a creative force in the community where we encourage interaction, innovation, and increased access. That becomes a defining character where we open doors, attract people and encourage action in a variety of new creative spaces. Our Global College, an oral history program, research on homelessness through the Institute of Urban Studies, a Master's in Indigenous Development Practice program, The Centre for Research in Young People's Texts and Cultures, an Indigenous Advisory Circle as an integral part our governing system are just a sample of what makes this place unique amongst Canadian universities.

A more specific example that highlights this creative convergence of policy, academics and community is through the Richardson College for the Environment's new Northern Sustainable Prosperity Initiative (NSPI). This new initiative will propose practical solutions to challenges in Manitoba's Northern region, provide opportunities for University of Winnipeg faculty and students to engage in applied research, and to advance the work and recommendations made by the Arctic Gateway Summit co-hosted by UWinnipeg and the Government of Manitoba in November 2010.

It intends to work with a variety of partners including academics, students, business, communities and Indigenous leaders to propose sound advice and ideas on how best to develop Manitoba's Northern region in a sustainable manner.

Academically, we continue to excel. I am pleased to acknowledge that we now boast five Canada Research Chairs. This spring the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council announced a total of \$7.5 million in new research funding for three national studies that involved members of our faculty:

- **Dr. Jino Distasio**, Director of the Institute of Urban Studies
- along with **Dr. Jim Silver** Chair, Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies,
- **Dr. Evelyn Peters**, Canada Research Chair in Inner-City Issues, Community Learning, and Engagement,
- **Dr. Dawn Sutherland**, Canada Research Chair in Science Education in Cultural Context. SSHRC has also funded work by
- **Dr. Alexander Freund**. The Chair in German-Canadian Studies is the project leader of an oral history project that tracks refugees to Manitoba.

Two respected faculty members **Dr. Wendy Josephson, and Dr. Catherine Taylor**, are tackling the issue of bullying through their research. **Dr. Craig Willis** received international attention this year for his team's important breakthrough on white-nose syndrome in bats. Their findings shed new light on how white-nose syndrome has killed million of bats in North America since 2006.

The Department of Education is being reconized locally and internationally for its work on reaching out and mentoring at risk youth. For example, **professor Alan Wiebe** has launched a pilot project where UWinnipeg educations students mentor young offenders and teach them literacy skills. Business and Economics, now housed in the Buhler Centre, remains our fastest growing faculty.

We are attracting a new generation of talented faculty members who will have the good fortune of receiving generous mentorship under the veterans we proudly rely on. This diversity of talent lends itself to an impressive academic mosaic, leaving us well positioned for the future.

Evidence that our efforts are proving successful can be witnessed in our ability to draw students. Enrolment has increased by 55% in one decade and we have become more diverse. We now have 22% of our student body self-identifying as a visible minority.

We have built on our reputation for academic excellence with enhanced research and new graduate programs. There are new faculties devoted to business and economics and kinesiology, and relevant new degrees in emerging fields such as human rights, Indigenous knowledge and disability studies.

To support this growth in enrolment and academic dynamism, The University of Winnipeg campus footprint has grown by 24%, while consolidating activities spread around the city in random fashion. The most significant project of this growth to date has been the Richardson College for the Environment and Science Complex, McFeetors Hall: Great-West Life Student Residence and the Buhler Centre which houses Professional, Applied and Continuing Education and the Faculty of Business and Economics and the Asper Centre for Theatre and Film.

We've spearheaded a number of initiatives to support learners who are members of underrepresented populations including Indigenous, new Canadian and inner-city youth through our Community Learning Initiatives. The Opportunity Fund has provided more than one thousand bursaries to students who need them.

We are celebrating the success of the Model School. In a neighbourhood where graduation rates are around fifty percent, the Model School has achieved ninety-eight percent. More recently, we've introduced the Tuition Waiver Program for former kids in care, of the child welfare system. The first cohort will be attending classes here this fall. These are but three examples.

The word *university* now has real meaning when applied to this place. Its distinction is drawn from combining local roots with global sensibilities, a high quality arts and science core with several professional degrees (including Kinesiology, Education, Theology and Business and Economics), innovative graduate and public programs, and service to traditional students with openness to under-represented groups better than any university in Canada.

We have come far. I am grateful for all the hard work, patience and determination you have each contributed to get us here. But we have work to do.

I have been pleased to learn, through a variety of conversations I've had with faculty, staff and students, of the strong level of commitment there is to making this a great place to learn and teach. Collectively, we believe in its strengths and in the prospect of it being a truly great creative space for learning and for community inclusion.

While most of us have been excited by the direction, some of us haven't been able to agree on the details. I want to acknowledge many of those concerns. We have leaped forward, but we have left some unattended holes in our foundation. That is what I want us, collectively, to work on next. The transition we have made in the past decade has elevated us to a new level, but it is time to reinforce our foundation so as to ensure that is where we stay, and that we move on in a sustainable way.

CHALLENGES

Keeping this progress in mind, I would like to explore some of the challenges we face in fulfilling our objectives:

Financial stability forms the heart of our concern. The provincial government provides approximately 50% of the University's operating revenues through a

grant. Student tuition and fees provide approximately 28% of the University's operating revenues. We have to work to fill the gap.

Our budget pressure has been building over a number of years due to three main causes:

a) First, we receive a smaller operating grant per student from the province than other Manitoba universities which is exacerbated as a result of our increasing enrollments, which have outpaced those of both other universities. Our provincial grant equates to \$6,500 per student, where Brandon University and the University of Manitoba each received \$12,000 per student. This is a discrepancy that goes back decades without good reason but is a growing inequality.

b) Second, we must honour significant pension commitments resulting from changes in actuarial assumptions and decisions made in the past. We anticipate the pension challenge to persist for the next several years. This puts an ever increasing pressure to divert resources from our learning responsibilities. We are not alone in facing this challenge, it is a widespread concern in both the public and private sector, but our particular situation limits the range of response.

c) Third, there is increasing competition in recruitment and responding to a wider variety of student needs for services such as health care, counseling, fitness, transition programs, mentoring and overall wellbeing. Increasing recruitment competition in a global arena requires skillful strategies to establish our own particular niche.

We face some difficult decisions ahead, but there is no doubt in my mind that the path to financial stability requires more earned income from both degree and non-degree programs. Auxiliary enterprises such as food services, housing and consulting can help as can commercialization of research. I will speak more concretely to this in a moment.

REFOCUSING

Despite these challenges, we believe that we can move forward while addressing the budget concerns that we all share. The University of Winnipeg is at a point of inflection and we have changed direction? While there is some understandable nostalgia for the past and a simpler institution, the amount of support for the changes that have occurred has been overwhelming.

Reflecting such an ambition, I submitted our key objectives which were approved by the table officers of our Board of Regents just this past month. In our immediate past, we worked on rebuilding our infrastructure, consolidating our campus, and growing our academic offerings.

In the next 3 to 4 years, we are focusing heavily on four key areas:

1. academic development with a more innovative use of on-line teaching and learning, a more varied and flexible use of teaching time to better provide a more diverse learning platform, and an increase in support and incentives for curriculum and program innovation, conferencing, staff enhancement and new partnerships
2. improving and integrating student services.
3. a more entrepreneurial approach to funding all of our activities
4. And a focus on administrative reorganization leading to better efficiencies and cost savings.

Underlying these goals is the need to meet the digital revolution. The use of the internet is one of the most powerful trends in education: emerging is a digital universe where universities around the world are now offering free classes taught by world renowned professors. We are working with a generation of students whose use and application of digital media is their primary source of information

and communication. Video games have become their source of learning and entertainment.

What is most transformative is the impact of this revolution, which not only requires constant and expensive upgrading of our information infrastructure but seriously challenges the traditional pedagogy and academic organization of the university.

In their book "The Power of Pull" John Seeley Brown, John Hagel , and Lance Davidson describe the Big Shift brought on by the new information age "as a fundamental reordering of the way we live, learn, socialize , play and work". They introduce the idea of an "open source university" that allow students to take courses online whenever they choose, in different sequences and groupings, giving maximum flexibility to the student. That is the big shift that we must respond to and embrace, with limited resources.

The impact on education is profound, and transformational with major implications for learning systems. We must now define our own distinctive pathway in this rapidly changing landscape. First, we need to determine what our own digital strategy will be and secondly, we need a major upgrade of technical capacity. Both are resource serious undertakings.

We are the only university in Canada with three state-of-the-art **CISCO TelePresence** suites that can connect our faculty to their peers and our students to lectures or other classrooms anywhere on the globe. We have some faculty members using this new technology, and that of our TV studio, for collaboration and teaching and we want to increase that take-up in the coming year by three-fold.

A stronger on-line teaching presence will allow us to dramatically increase our global reach and to attract students in virtual classrooms that can measure in the thousands, and thereby strengthen our resource base.

We've had some success on this front. This spring our Global College offered three Spring and Summer Institutes, one of which focused on Indigenous Property, Development and Resource Extraction with internationally recognized guest professors: Dr. Ginger Gibson, Dr. Maria Delgado, and The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair. The Institutes attracted 300 students with 60% being "distance" students. Student satisfaction was high and all the lecturers expressed a desire to return next year. The program also returned revenues to Global College, assisting with its operations. We want to encourage more offerings like this and will be putting incentives in place for interested faculty and departments.

In August, we made the move to consolidate student services, housing, food services, our bookstore, student health and counseling under one umbrella: the new **Vice-President, Student Life** will create cost efficiencies and provide for a more seamless student experience. This joint appointment is not resulting in any new cost to the University.

Last year at this time, we spoke of creating multiple pathways into The University. This refers both to the community aspects, in enhancing access to those who are underrepresented, but it also means creating greater interest in a variety of students, from across Canada and with shifting interests in education. As one example, we will work at making PACE more responsive to the needs of professionals who are looking to upgrade their skill sets.

Our academic function can be enhanced by broadening our offering of graduate programs, our interdisciplinary academic programs and in developing more professional and applied programs in partnership with other institutions, such as

Red River College and Winnipeg Technical College. Our relationship with the Winnipeg Technical College in the internet security diploma is a good example.

Our graduate programs in resource and development economics, Indigenous development, curatorial studies, bioscience, technology and public policy and others are bringing new students to campus. Equally the advent of the Faculty of Kinesiology has promise of attracting students nationally, as do our expanded athletic programs.

The University has historical strengths in the humanities, social sciences, sciences and professions like business, education but what about the creative arts? It has theater, dance and creative writing. Might it forge partnerships with other institutions to add visual arts and design into the mix? Downtown Winnipeg has a robust set of arts and cultural institutions which might benefit from close cooperation that the University might lend.

To make this work however, there has to be agreement and consensus on the changes and a clear case made for reform with faculty, the unions, and students. That is why I am proposing to make changes in the decision making system to encourage greater participation to bring in more involvement of deans, faculty councils and students.

There will be budget decentralization to the faculty level and a mandate for each faculty to create their own strategic plan. We have also realigned our administrative structure to better reflect our direction and priorities. This includes providing our academic and administrative leadership with responsibility and support to encourage the innovative outcomes we desire for our students and institution.

We have created a **President's Task Force on Academic Development** to offer support, to encourage innovation, special projects and faculty research.

Such a task force can be an incubator for new programs or cross disciplinary innovation. The Richardson College is one such an example. I could, for example, imagine the task force building on discussions already underway and support a focus on health policy and equity which would draw on faculty from the arts and sciences, professional programs and other universities.

We are ready to move on this now. To this end, we are launching a **Future Fund** with a goal of raising \$10 to \$15 million to specifically support academic units and innovation on campus that will add to the budget resources already designated for academic development.

The goal is to work with Deans and faculty to develop a gift opportunity list which will support activities such as faculty research, nurturing of young faculty, attracting distinguished lecturers, improving IT systems, facilitating knowledge transfer and commercialization activities and investing in distance learning programs.

Our budget process is also being refined to give Deans more responsibility along with financial incentives to experiment. Our Deans and key administrative units will develop strategic plans, from which an institutional master plan will be derived.

We need to remain nimble and open to attracting new revenue sources to offset diminished traditional sources of funding This is where the entrepreneurial approach comes in. One of our success stories is the creation of our **Community Renewal Corporation** which oversees campus development and manages profit-making centers on campus such as our bookstore, housing unit and innovative food service, Diversity Foods. The Renewal Corp is also involved in other knowledge-transfer projects to support the commercialization of research and community development projects in the city and province.

Diversity Foods is a unique concept among universities in Canada. We now offer nutritious, fairly-priced and ethnically diverse foods with a focus, wherever possible, on locally sourced foods, organic ingredients, and a commitment to fair-trade practices. We train and employ inner city residents, the majority new immigrants who now have meaningful work. And food sales on campus have gone up: students like good food, and we are turning a profit. One example of how developing a social enterprise can pay off.

We have also just created **UWin Inc.** - A new commercialization incubator on campus to allow for a more entrepreneurial approach to using campus resources. This allows us to pursue commercial enterprises to generate revenue from third parties that may wish to use, for example, our CISCO Telepresence systems. It will also allow for undertakings related to the commercialization of research such as our very promising medical isotope production project.

We are very serious about growing a third stream of revenue which we believe is essential to the University's long-term financial viability. It also allows us to tap into the talent we have on campus. It can spur new innovations and allow our faculty and students to engage in relevant, cutting edge research that has direct application in the real world.

HEALTHY CAMPUS

One final evolution I would like to outline today, is the building up of health, healing and wellness services and programs on campus that will establish a hub of healthy living, sustainability and recreation for campus faculty, staff, students and the community that surrounds us.

Our efforts to become a more sustainable campus continue on through the leadership of our **Campus Sustainability Office**. This includes remaining committed to reducing our overall greenhouse gas emissions on campus through initiatives such as a hybrid heating system, energy retrofits in older buildings, and building to minimum Silver LEED certification standards in new ones.

Earlier this spring, we celebrated the launch of the **UWSA Bike Lab**. The lab provides cycling education through community programs, including bicycle repair, while offering a space, tools and support to the campus community to learn how to work on their own bikes.

Demolition has already begun along Spence Street to prepare a future site for the UNITED Health and RecPlex that is scheduled to open in spring 2014. It will feature a multi-use field for playing sports such as soccer, football, ultimate and baseball. It will also house two event rooms, including a soundproofed room for drumming and pow-wow groups.

The new RecPlex will be connected via skybridge to UWinnipeg's existing Bill Wedlake Fitness Centre and Duckworth Centre, which is undergoing renovations to accommodate UWinnipeg's new Faculty of Kinesiology and a Health, Wellness and Healing Centre. That portion of the project will be ready by spring 2013.

A **Community Charter** is in development with a broad coalition of youth-serving agencies and community stakeholders. An open neighbourhood Town Hall was held in June to help develop the Community Charter Principles — which include openness, inclusion, accessibility, accountability, respect, sustainability, and health and wellness.

The Principles, ratified by UWinnipeg's Board of Regents on June 18, 2012, ensure access to community activities in the UNITED Health & RecPlex now and into the future. A full community charter and a Community-University Committee

will be selected and announced in the coming months to oversee community user-agreements for the facility on an ongoing basis.

The UNITED Health & RecPlex will be revenue-generating, with operations supported by a mix of user leases and parking fees and support from an athletic student fee which was approved in a student referendum. Construction of the new facility is possible because of generous government grants, with the Province of Manitoba contributing \$15 million and the City of Winnipeg contributing \$2 million.

This new construction will help us meet our community learning mandate by increasing UWinnipeg's Inner City Wesmen sports program allowing hundreds of area youth to play basketball, volleyball, soccer, baseball, wrestling and other sports at no cost. UWinnipeg currently supports 11 neighbourhood basketball and soccer teams involving 200 children and teenagers.

The goal of the University is to expand its community programming to include sports such as baseball and wrestling, attracting up to 500 neighbourhood children and youth once the RecPlex is completed.

It creates new research, teaching and student practicum and employment opportunities for all faculties and specifically in UWinnipeg's new Faculty of Kinesiology and it offers new home for UWinnipeg's popular Eco-U Summer Camp which attracts 1,200 inner-city children annually.

To sum it all up, I would assert that UWinnipeg is a paradox that works:

- Its strong liberal arts and sciences core gives us the freedom to experiment with new programs.
- Our success lends us a certain confidence and hence, we can take risks.

- Our faculty is strong in theoretical knowledge and thus can honour scholarship that informs practice.
- Additionally, our faculty has the freedom to deepen inquiry into traditional disciplines so the University can address contemporary economic and social needs of society without weakening its mission.
- Our strong academic foundations appeal to traditional students, thus providing a supportive environment for those students who have been underrepresented, such as Aboriginal peoples, new Canadians and inner-city residents.
- We are firmly rooted in local reality so we can embrace global challenges with greater insight.

This combination of qualities is what I believe to be the foundation of that resilient quality I spoke to at the beginning. It grants us the flexibility to overcome challenges, seize opportunities, and adapt to change while maintaining core values and intellectual integrity.

Students educated at The University of Winnipeg – undergraduate, graduate, the general public – are grounded in their fields, are committed to working for a more just and peaceful world, are comfortable with diversity and resilient in the face of constant change.

I look forward to our continued work together, as a united campus, to help define a continuing gift of learning this University can provide.

Thank you.