

State of the University

September 4, 2013

Convocation Hall

In their book, *The New Culture of Learning*, John Seely Brown and Douglas Thomas make an important point. We have all heard the proverb about teaching a man to fish, rather than simply giving him fish. According to the authors, this is no longer sufficient.

They say:

“... It is hardly cutting edge. It assumes there will always be an endless supply of fish to catch ...our contention is that the pool of unchanging resources is shrinking, and that the pond is providing us with fewer and fewer things that we can identify as fish anymore.”¹

That is the learning challenge of this century and it takes on many forms. How we keep pace with the multiple, convergent shifts that are re setting the world we live in? How do we cope with the explosion of information through the Internet with increased surveillance of privacy; a global economy, that is fostering increasing inequality; or climate change and associated issues such as food insecurity; an international governance system that seems incapable of stopping individual governments from murdering their citizens?

In this, my last university statement, I'd like to frame this presentation around how we ready our institution of higher education to prepare our students for a new learning culture. How do we move beyond conventional wisdoms and act collaboratively to build this institution as a modern, relevant place of innovative, active learning that prepares students for living and working in the 21st century?

¹ Douglas Thomas & John Seely Brown, “ A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change.” 2011. P. 40

A state of the university address is intended to make a statement – drawing together major themes and trends and presenting them together, with the expectation of setting a clear course forward. I hope today's statement presents a blueprint for action over the next year -- in the face of a series of challenges – creating a resilient institution that helps design a learning context for our times.

As many of you know, these are difficult times for universities. Across the country there are a variety of institutional, curriculum, staff reductions and cutbacks that are affecting the role of higher education. These are mainly shortfalls in public funding. This is ironic as we are increasingly being urged to meet the skills shortage gap, by business and political leaders, in particular, who see skills gap as a primary weakness in the economy. Yet, the resources available to meet this demand are continually shrinking relative to the need.

I've spoken about this growing funding gap in previous years. As a reminder, it should be stated that the provincial government provides approximately 50 percent of the University's operating revenues through a grant. Student tuition and fees provide approximately 28% of the University's operating revenues. In the most recent provincial budget a promised, and therefore expected, budget grant increase of 5 percent was cut short to 2.5 percent.

As a result, we are torn between providing new educational opportunities that attract higher enrolment and meet labour market needs -- a 55% increase over the past decade – while being asked to do more with less. Government operating grants simply do not cover the basic operating costs, let alone support innovation. Particularly troublesome for this institution, the provincial grant system is not linked to student enrolment. As a result, we receive substantially less per student than other institutions. We should, therefore, be proud of what we have been able to achieve despite this disparity, and continue to become more self-sufficient.

There also new and significant shifts in the demographics of education: the aging of the baby boomers and our students; the significant responsibility to meet educational aspirations of Indigenous peoples, and immigrant families who are coming to our own community in large numbers. These populations, in particular have a hunger for post-secondary education.

There is also the accelerating, tsunami-like influence of digital technology which is challenging each and every university professor and administrator to rethink how best to respond to the capacity – that is growing exponentially – and the demand for delivering learning to thousands more students.

Just this past week, the Oxford dictionary added the acronym “MOOC” (massive open online course) to its online dictionary. A year ago there was some bemusement and certainly indifference to the idea. Now MOOCS have become common vernacular and a happening that is dominating education discussions.

I'd like to go over the objectives we set out last year, to help guide us for the next few years. We have already accomplished much. These prescriptions were not random. They were based on a system of evaluation that included deans and members of faculty. They were based on conversations with friends of the university and the community.

We are focusing on four key areas:

1. academic development with a more innovative use of online 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, faculty development and new partnerships;
2. improving and integrating student services;
3. a more entrepreneurial approach to funding all of our activities, and;

4. a focus on administrative reorganization leading to better efficiencies and cost savings.

Updates

These objectives continue to provide the foundation as we move forward. In the coming years, we need to remain relevant and financially sustainable, while staying true to our mandate, history and values. We are already making progress in this regard.

First, we are meeting the fiscal challenges presented to us head on. We have started make some swift and necessary changes to administrative operations and employment strategies that have allowed us to achieve an impressive level of efficiency. PACE has become an integral part of the Faculty of Business and Economics; the Faculty of Theology has transitioned into the new United Centre for Theological Studies. Additionally, a number of senior administrative positions have been eliminated. Senior administration salaries have been frozen or reduced in three of the past four years. We are revamping purchasing and joint use of services such as printing and we are seeking suggestions from various departments' reorganization.

This means savings of **\$400,000 this year and \$700,000 next year**. However, fiscal realities mean we can't stop there. One of the clear recommendations in this statement is that we must continue the restructuring, and aim at saving \$1 million from operational costs. With this goal in mind we can continue to meet the gap left in tuition and grant revenue. It also means we can set aside funds to cover any new operational costs occasioned by discussions of **a joint venture with a Manitoba First Nation in operating the existing National Research Council site**, offering several faculties opportunities for research and teaching in a ready-built, purpose designed facility.

I would be remiss if I didn't single out for thanks the work of our Vice-President Academic, our deans, staff and faculty who have approached these changes in a cooperative, innovative way. And I want to especially mention individuals in our

administrative ranks who have spent their summer (forgoing vacations) putting in place the real time restructuring that has been required.

One example is Lindsay Martin, our academic scheduler, who took on the task of implementing a more flexible and relevant timetable and worked with unbelievable commitment to adapt new scheduling, with student needs as a foremost concern. Similar extraordinary efforts were made by the staff in TSC and its advisory group in implementing a new email system. The events and conference team should also be applauded for work on reaching out to the arts, through the creation of the *Artsfest: UWinnipeg Cultural Treasures* being held later this month and for organizing the events around our 100th convocation in October.

We often refer to the work of our faculty as exhibiting the finest calibre of people serving the university. We need to also pay homage to those in administrative trenches and their particular skills.

We need continued cooperation between our faculty and administration in resetting the direction of the University, especially as we embark on our common journey. We are navigating an age where information is instantly available. The task of teachers is to use, transmit and interpret a new kind of literacy. This task requires collaboration in designing online programs, and developing other partnerships, such as those within the Winnipeg Technical College (in introducing joint academic and applied programs), and with the Winnipeg Art Gallery. We are responsible for transferring the skills needed in the 21st century – including new ways of connecting technological innovation – but also, and more importantly, helping each other and our students to co-exist in complex networks of competing and shared values and actions.

Creative academic development can be seen in the success of the Faculty of Education's post baccalaureate strategy. Faced with pressures from the government to begin limiting enrolments in the regular undergraduate program, Education has

introduced a new level of professional development credits, these post-bacc credits enable teachers in existing positions to engage in upgrade programs designed to enhance their skills in a variety of special fields, emerging from an ever-changing public school environment.

Another positive contribution to our current challenges is an additional fee introduced to tackle information and communication s technology system needs. This new fee gives us the opportunity to both upgrade and secure our information and record-keeping systems and provide a broader Wi-Fi coverage of the campus. Such upgrades are long overdue and will remain an ongoing priority for this and coming years.

Some of the cost efficiencies that we have achieved and new revenue centres that we have created, allow us to bolster our faculty strength. This year we were be able to hire 19 new faculty members in addition to 53 faculty members hired in the past two budget years. An additional 10 sessional instructors have been converted to permanent faculty.

Last October, as promised, we launched the **Future Fund** to support academic units and innovation. To date we have raised \$1.1 million. The Future Fund helps us to purchase needed scientific equipment and provides support for a growing number of experiential learning projects, attract new faculty with special talents and areas of research and it provides the necessary support for bringing on student interns. There are just a few examples of how the university is redefining its task.

We also established a President's Task Force on Academic Development, made up of a cross section of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community reps. The Task Force tackled two primary issues over the past year. One of these was to take a broad look at online learning and how this university can map out its own distinctive pathway in the rapidly changing field of digital learning.

I don't want to mince words or understate the impacts that online learning opportunities will have on both the role of universities and the methods they employ to teach.

Everyone is already familiar with the massive open online course (MOOC) offerings such as Coursera. Recently, the Georgia Institute of Technology announced a new master's degree in computer science with AT&T, which will provide full proctoring and evaluation for far less tuition than their onsite program.

We are in an era where digital learning is becoming a game changer in the way that learners access education. The field of digital learning is a quickly evolving landscape, without any sure and tested navigational guides.

As administrators, we must take a serious look at what new modes of digital learning present and understand the impacts on how we fulfil our mandate as an educational institution. As educators, I believe they represent a challenge and an opportunity. WE need to grapple with how we compete, and identify our particular niche in a context where we are able to sign into a course offered by another university half-way around the world.

For us this can represent an exciting opportunity for increasing access to education to a wider selection of students. This year's budget offers incentives for developing various pilots so we can settle on what will be the effective course of action. A \$200,000 fund is available to faculty members to support initiatives such as digital learning, academic partnerships, joint programs, co-op and internship opportunities.

I want you all to know that I will be taking up the challenge myself. This winter I will again, be teaching, a second year course as part of UWinnipeg's Master's program in Indigenous Development Practice. I have decided to offer the course as an online option. It will be a pilot project, so that I can learn -- as many of you must -- the challenges entailed in offering such a course. It's through such exploratory initiatives that the possibilities for future applications can be realized.

The MDP program is already unique in that it is part of a network of 22 programs located in universities around the world. By developing this capacity and trying it out, we will hopefully contribute to a template where students in any one of the other global programs could take a credit course through The University of Winnipeg and vice versa. Suddenly the richness and accessibility of the program increases

In the coming year the Task Force on Academic Development will make further recommendations on the issue of gender equity among faculty members. This fits with the hiring of a new Human Rights Officer and the planned approach of our Human Resources Department to engage more broadly in an enhanced equity and harassment program on campus.

The other will be to explore how to greater promote the value of the arts and humanities and integrating them into all aspects of the university experience.

There is a slow and creeping, but observable truth that the Arts and Humanities are experiencing. It is a truth that Martha Nussbaum calls “a silent crisis”. In her *book Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* she writes that the Arts and Humanities are increasingly, “seen by policy-makers as useless frills, at a time when nations must cut away all useless things in order to stay competitive in the global market,” as a result she continues, “they are rapidly losing their place in curricula, and also in the hearts and minds of parents and children.”²

This past month, CIBC came out with a report about the “decreasing wage premium” of a university degree. It argued that degrees in the humanities and social sciences are “low-return fields” as compared to engineering, business and health professions. While we welcome students who are interested in one day become doctors and lawyers, and our business faculty is thriving with a 16% increase in enrolment this fall, not everyone is interested in following those paths. The truth is that any wage premium associated

² Martha Nussbaum, “Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities.” 2010, p. 2.

with a university education is but a bonus to the individual. The greater benefit of these degree programs is to impart wisdom, good judgements, self-awareness and moral consciousness to our students and to society, in general, -- contributing to the collective democratic project in which we are all participating.

Indeed, part of our goal as a university is to not only provide relevant educational opportunities that contribute to the future personal success of our students, it is also to create good citizens. For these, we have required, and will continue to rely on the lessons and insights provided by the humanities and social sciences; they are an invaluable component to a high functioning university. For this reason, the task force will endeavour to explore new spaces and opportunities to promote humanities and social science education.

Discover. Achieve. Belong

As you look around you on campus this week you will notice that we have unveiled a new identity that encompasses these changes and our future progress (with thanks to our communication staff who worked in-house to create the new look).

We have updated UWinnipeg's brand messaging and visuals with a new three-themed tagline — Discover • Achieve • Belong. This new message celebrates our accomplishments over the past decade and past year and builds on feedback we received this past spring when we reached out to our key stakeholder groups — including students, alumni, faculty and staff. It is a message that aims to capture the strengths of The University of Winnipeg.

We learned that, thanks to our longstanding 'You of W' moniker, we've done a great job letting people know that this is a friendly, accessible place where students matter. But we found that we could be more effective in conveying the many other key strengths of UWinnipeg, strengths like our quality academic programs and research, our excellent faculty, our community-minded initiatives, our diversity, and our convenient downtown

urban location. It's challenging, if not impossible, to succinctly express all that makes The University of Winnipeg such a unique and important place. And while a word like 'Discover' may symbolize to some the important research taking place on our campus, encapsulates the essence of broadening the mind through learning. 'Achieve' signifies the many and varied accomplishments of our students – past, present, and future – our faculty and staff, and our community as a whole.

And speaking of community, the word 'Belong' evokes a sense of unity, of feeling a part of something – it is shorthand for the caring, accessible, student-focused environment we have here at UWinnipeg, and which makes us a unique community based institution of higher learning in this city. I believe we demonstrate that sense of community in our classrooms and labs, when students and faculty connect in a meaningful way, and when we reach out to our inner city neighbours and welcome them through outreach programs and learning initiatives.

And when you bring these themes together — Discover • Achieve • Belong – we begin to convey the totality of the true UWinnipeg experience. Let me give you some examples of what I mean:

Discover

At the heart of “Discover” is the work that every one of our faculty members do in their own research and in enabling the discovery of new ideas and possibilities in our students. Faculty members are now attracting significantly more research dollars to campus, up from \$4.4 million to \$7.1 million in the last five years. This represents more than a 60% increase in external research funding.

We hear examples almost every week of new and innovative research projects. For examples, Canada Research Chair in the Culture of Childhood, **Dr. Mavis Reimer** –

worked with a collaborative team of scholars, public archaeologists, an Aboriginal storyteller and illustrators over the past five years to develop beautiful picture book.

The story is based on the discovery of the remains of a young Cree woman at Nagami Bay, South Indian Lake, who had lived there in the mid-1600s. The illustrations are truly beautiful and the book is both a work of art and a celebration of culture and history. The story is accompanied by sidebars on Cree language and culture, archaeology and history, maps, songs, and more.

Again, **Dr. Craig Willis** -- our resident “batman” – has been featured in media around the world for his breakthrough work in understanding White Nose Syndrome, which is killing little brown bats across North America. Dr. Willis and his collaborators recently received nearly \$400,000 US over two years from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In an example of an innovative partnership, the Faculty of Business and Economics created a position unique in Canada and a first in Manitoba: a **Chair in Co-operative Enterprises** aimed at strengthening the co-op movement and developing socially responsible entrepreneurs. The Chair position is launched with a total of \$625,000 by a collaborative partnership with the Manitoba government, the co-op sector and UWinnipeg.

The **Oral History Centre** – under the leadership of professors **Nolan Reilly and Alex Freund** is a key academic initiative within the Riley Centre was launched this past year and has already received a major contract from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for gathering oral evidence. Late last year it received a \$500,000 research grant from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation for a project which documents survivors’ experiences in the residential school system through digital storytelling.

I am also pleased to announce that we are following through on an initiative we had committed to in 2006. It was then that the Richardson family donated \$3.5 million to

help launch a university institution – known as the Richardson College for the Environment -- that would promote interdisciplinary and community collaboration as well as offer solutions to some of the environmental problems facing our community and the world.

The Richardson College provides opportunities for the Sustainability Office, Institute of Urban Studies, Indigenous Studies, the MDP Program, the Global College, Business and Economics, Environmental Studies, Biology and Chemistry to work together on specific initiatives; it will continue to develop as an action research centre, facilitating the university family in collaborations with business, governments and NGOs on community sustainability initiatives in unique and creative combinations This collaboration allows us to tackle the big issues of our time such as climate change, the Arctic, urban sustainability and water stewardship.

Achieve

I believe that with our unparalleled aptitude for innovative thinking, we have a special role to play in achieving a more sustainable future. One of the key elements of this process is that of Universities being bold enough to take risks -- to be among the first to implement the new technologies, new accounting practices, new levels of transparency, and new management models required to achieve real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

We are doing just that. This summer **we exceeded our Kyoto commitment to reduce campus greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below 1990 levels**....equivalent to heating approximately 55 fewer houses in the neighbourhood. It is also good economics - saving approximately \$180,000 annually on our main campus energy bill.

We are also in the process of completing a significant physical transformation of our campus. The most recent piece, currently underway is the UNITED Health and RecPlex which we anticipate will be open over the summer of 2014.

The RecPlex forms the bedrock of our new healthy campus initiatives that we announced last year. These new efforts have already garnered the attention of outside funders. **Sun Life is donating over \$100,000 to UWinnipeg**, which will fund a new pilot program intended to help prevent diabetes among local inner-city youth.

And in the same spirit of discovery, I sat in last week on workshop sponsored by Indigenous Studies where are students were working with local health officials in Fisher River First Nations on a research program to discover the value of traditional foods and herbs and distribute information to all the residents of the community of the beneficial use of their home grown harvests.

We are also working to help our new graduates achieve success. This summer, recognizing that getting your foot in the door is sometimes the biggest hurdle in finding successfully employment, The University of Winnipeg launched the **Graduate Opportunities (GO) program**.

In the few short weeks that it was up and running, we hired 5 temporary workers who assisted approximately 200 graduates through appointments, email correspondence and organized network events. A total of 52 employers were contacted regarding hiring graduates of the University of Winnipeg.

Our Collegiate is introducing an innovative addition to its offerings, by developing a music and arts program that will substantially expand its reach and inclusion for hundreds of high schools. Through dual credit system makes the university experience available to collegiate students as well. This exciting new initiative will be further

outlined in October, coinciding with a performance of the Royal Winnipeg Symphony on our campus.

Belong

One of today's overriding desires is to have the security of belonging - to family friends, community, clan or tribe, even institutions and nations. Some even go so far as to identify with a global network of those they play video games with, or connect on Facebook or Twitter. The University has a special role to play, as we are convening a community of learning, and have as our mission the invitation for all to join, regardless of class, income or distance. The modern world gives us the means to reach out. Now we must find the way to make this belonging to our community more of a reality. To use Kevin Chief's phrase, everybody needs a tap on the shoulder, inviting them to join.

Our Community Learning Initiative started in 2005. This is working. We are succeeding in reaching out to 3,000 unique learners per year. I am particularly proud of the strong working relationships we have built with our First Nations and Metis partners.

Last fall I was honoured with a sacred Pipe Ceremony with three respected First Nations elders, Fred Kelly, Dr. Tobasonakwut Kinew and Dr. Phil Fontaine. The University of Winnipeg has worked over the past 10 years to open our doors First Nations, Metis, and Inuit youth who live both in Winnipeg, and also in more rural and northern areas of Manitoba. As one elder said, this was because they trust what we do at UWinnipeg.

As a university president I see first-hand the important contributions and great potential of the Aboriginal population. The University of Winnipeg has one of the biggest Aboriginal student populations in the country at 12 percent. The number of graduates and the range of academic interests are remarkable.

In an effort to model strong Aboriginal mentors, we recently appointed Wab Kinew, well-known broadcaster, record producer, and hip hop artist as the University's first Director of Indigenous Inclusion. In 2012, Wab and his father began to offer very popular, free *Let's Speak Ojibwe To Our Kids* classes for parents and children to learn together with Elders.

In his new role, Kinew is gathering expertise on developing, recruiting and retaining Indigenous talent as well as developing strategies to work effectively and respectfully with Indigenous communities. A specific focus for Wab is nurturing Aboriginal entrepreneurship and business training.

Our original initiatives continue to produce great successes. So far we have had 29 of our **Model School** students graduate from this program and a full 20 of those students are now pursuing post-secondary education, many of them at The University of Winnipeg. Forty students are registered this year.

To deal with the fundamental issue of financial need we created an **Opportunity Fund**. There are three streams- The Opportunity Fund tuition credit accounts for students in grades 4-12 in which the University will register credit for specific academic or community achievement.

Children earning these credits can apply them toward tuition and text books at the University of Winnipeg when they graduate from high school. The second stream is the Opportunity Fund fast-track bursaries which have supported 1158 Indigenous, new Canadian, and other students without the means to attend University. And 172 of those have since graduated. Just over a year ago we also announced the third stream, **tuition waiver program for children formally being raised in the child welfare system.**

We are entering into our second year of the program. Two other post-secondary institutions in Manitoba and several on other provinces are following our lead. I encourage and challenge all other post-secondary institutions to do the same.

Despite these successes, we continue to face challenges in funding these programs in a sustainable manner. We must actively fundraise in the private sector to keep these programs going. We have faced some criticism regarding the sources of some of the external grants we have received, and so we are faced with the prospects of suspending one program that offers science education to groups of inner city children if we don't find another donor. I would encourage our faculty and staff and other supporters to make donations to these life-changing programs.

Final Thanks

The 21st century student will exist in a time of constant learning, changing skills and attitudes, with flexible learning accessible from home or work. Our job is to help students of today and the future thrive on the edge of learning, promoting a world of equity, fairness and security and teaching them to be capable of managing the risk of shifting pathways in an ever-changing landscape. I believe we are on the right track and, by pitching in together; we will be a model for higher education for the foreseeable future. A true community university where we value the right to discover, achieve and belong.

Thank you for attending. I trust this gives you a sense of the purpose and mission of the university over the forthcoming year. And as in all statements of this kind I close with a special thanks to faculty and staff for their understanding during the various phases of transition over the past few years.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite all faculty, staff and alumni to join us at the UWinnipeg Artsfest taking place later this month. You will also want to join us in

celebrating our 100th convocation in October. Today kicks off homecoming week and encourage everyone to check out the program and I challenge all to be at the bocce tournament on Saturday afternoon where the President's Office will be in defence of the championship trophy. Registration proceeds go to supporting the Opportunity Fund.

Thank you and Miigwetch.