Welcome to the 2018-19 academic year at the University of Alberta. I hope that all of you had a restful and restorative summer, and are coming into the new term refreshed. For those of you joining GFC for the first time: welcome to academic governance. I look forward to working with you in the months ahead.

September is a busy month at the university. Not only does our community return to its full size—we stand around 39,000 students and 14,000 faculty and staff this year—but September is filled with some of our largest events of the year: Week of Welcome, Green and Gold Day, Alumni Weekend. I hope you have had a chance to attend some of these great events, and I encourage you to participate in those still to come.

This September in particular has presented a unique challenge as the dispute between Canada and Saudi Arabia unfolds. As you may know, the U of A is home to many students and residents from Saudi Arabia. We are monitoring the situation closely, and working to keep any impacted students informed and supported.

At the same time, we continue to work on—and progress towards—several of our university’s strategic goals. I want to draw your attention to a few highlights from this summer, and for the year ahead:

- The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Scoping Group has drafted an EDI Plan—now undergoing revisions—which is scheduled to circulate through governance this Fall
- Later this month we will soft launch our first three Signature Areas
- University Relations is starting into Community Engagement Consultations, and we expect to engage a broad range of community members over the next twelve months

Lastly, I invite all of you to join me for this year’s State of the University Address:

Thursday, October 11, 2018
12 p.m. – 1 p.m.
Convocation Hall, Old Arts Building
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

Last year we established an institution-wide Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Scoping Group. The team was tasked with reviewing and assessing our equity processes and procedures for recruiting and supporting faculty and staff across all categories, and with developing recommendations to ensure a balanced academy and workforce.

Based on their findings, the Scoping Group has drafted an EDI Plan. While the plan is still undergoing revisions and changes, it is scheduled to begin circulating through governance for consultation this term.

Thelma Chalifoux Hall and Nîpisîy House

This month we celebrated the opening of two new residences on North Campus, both named to honour Indigenous history and our university’s location on Treaty 6 territory:

Thelma Chalifoux Hall opened in the Lister residence complex. The hall is named after the late Métis activist and former Canadian and U of A senator, and several of Ms. Chalifoux’s surviving relatives joined us on North Campus for its grand opening.

Nîpisîy House is the newest building in East Campus Village. Its name is based on the Cree word for willow, and was selected through consultation with elders and staff from First Peoples’ House and the Faculty of Native Studies.

KEY TALKING POINT:
We strive to build an inclusive learning and research environment where Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and scholars can move together on the path to Reconciliation both on and off our campuses.

U of A Brand Audit

University Relations is leading work on For the Public Good Objective 6: an integrated, cross-institutional strategy to demonstrate and enhance the university’s story. As a first step, we’re conducting a comprehensive market analysis of the university brand to look at how the university is perceived by its many stakeholders, and its positioning within the competitive post-secondary environments. The findings will help inform a re-discovery of the U of A brand platform (identity, image, and stories) and provide a benchmark that the university can use to track perceptions over time. We are arranging a specific focus group to consult GFC members near the end of September.
EXPERIENCE

Experiential Learning Survey: Initial Data

Last year, the Provost’s Office and the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) led a major survey and environmental scan of our experiential learning offerings. While the survey does not constitute an exhaustive list of curricular offerings (it was based on voluntary responses), it does provide a helpful snapshot of experiential learning at the U of A.

Within seven broad types of experiential learning [co-op programs, internships, service learning, study abroad opportunities, mandatory professional practice, and short- and long-term field experience], the survey identified:

- 589 different experiential learning activities
- 9,594 students engaged in experiential learning

The Council on Experiential Learning is currently working with the survey results to help improve access to—and participation in—a broad range of curricular experiential learning opportunities. The council is also finalizing an online portal to connect students with the numerous experiential learning opportunities available to them.

KEY TALKING POINT:

By providing our students with experiences that link them to their futures—whether at home or abroad—we will facilitate their success both within the curriculum, and beyond it.

Deans’ and Chairs’ School

To support continued excellence in academic leadership, we have re-instated Deans’ School and Chairs’ School. These two programs consist of day-long training and orientation sessions for academic leaders new to their roles, and are designed to set them up for success in their leadership positions. Deans’ School and Chairs’ School launched in late August, with follow-up sessions planned throughout the year ahead.

Residence Spaces

With the opening of the two new residences—Thelma Chalifoux Hall and Nîpisîy House—we have added 761 student spaces, including 461 spaces dedicated to first-year students. These spaces are part of our commitment to guaranteeing a place in residence for all first-year undergraduate students. More than 4,000 students moved onto campus at the end of August.
Signature Areas Launch

Over the past year, the Signature Areas Development Panel worked with groups across the university to identify areas of teaching and research that fulfill the criteria we outlined in *For the Public Good*. Three initial areas have been developed and endorsed, and will soft-launch this month.

Over the coming months, each area will define its organizational and governance structures, set up administrative supports, and prepare for individual official launches later this year.

Provincial Technology Seats

This September, the Honourable Rachel Notley, Premier of Alberta joined us on North Campus to help announce new seats in tech programs across the province. The seats fall under a five-year, $50-million commitment to expanding province-wide education in support of the province’s growing tech sector. This first round of funding included 25 new seats in the U of A’s BSc Computing Science (After Degree) program.

Research Funding

**WCHRI Donation**

A $5 million donation from the Stollery Children’s Hospital Foundation helped to establish a new Distinguished Researchers program at the Women and Children’s Health Research Institute (WCHRI). The program will fund seven distinguished researchers, and aims to improve pediatric health in Alberta and around the world.

**Trudeau Scholars and Fellows**

Over the summer the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation announced its 2018 research fellowships and doctoral scholarships, including four recipients from the U of A. Malinda Smith and Kim TallBear were named Trudeau Fellows, while Billy-Ray Belcourt and William Schultz were named Trudeau Scholars.

**Vanier and Banting Scholarships**

In early September, Canadian Minister of Science Kirsty Duncan joined us on campus to announce the recipients of the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships and Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships. The U of A is home to 10 Vanier Scholars and two Banting Fellows this year.
Aga Khan Garden

This summer we opened the new Aga Khan Garden at the U of A Botanic Garden—now the northernmost Islamic garden in the world. The garden was made possible by His Highness the Aga Khan with a gift of $25 million, and was envisioned as a space for connection, education, and cultural understanding. It symbolizes an ongoing partnership between the University of Alberta and the Aga Khan Development Network—a collaboration that has fostered intellectual, cultural and educational exchange for more than a decade.

If you have not yet visited the Aga Khan Garden, I encourage you to do so before the season ends.

Jonathan KS Choi Cultural Centre of Canada

On August 20, we celebrated the opening of the Jonathan KS Choi Cultural Centre of Canada on North Campus. Established by a donation from honorary degree recipient Jonathan Koon-Shum Choi, it connects the U of A to a growing number of cultural centres in Vietnam, France and Japan. The new centre is housed at the China Institute, and provides a space for students, researchers, business leaders and policy-makers to meet and collaborate on Sino-Canadian relations and cultural exchange.

KEY TALKING POINT:

Our strength in research, our capacity to innovate and create positive change, and our role as champions of learning and critical thinking all rest on the relationships we hold with our communities. Engaging with the communities around us is one of the most important things we do.

Community Engagement Consultation

Over the coming year, the Government and Community Relations leadership team will be assessing how the university engages with our communities. They are beginning a consultation process this month to gather input from internal and external stakeholders, and expect to engage a broad range of community members through online and in-person activities over the next twelve months. An Advisory Committee with representation from across the university—including students, faculty, staff, associations and the external community—has been struck to provide insight, support and counsel throughout the consultations. The final goal is to develop an informed Community Engagement Plan that enables community engagement in alignment with For the Public Good.
SUSTAIN

Sustainability Council

This September marks the launch of the Sustainability Council, a new academic leadership unit promoting and enabling sustainability scholarship at the U of A. The council is the successor to the Office of Sustainability.

Under the leadership of inaugural director Robert Summers, the Sustainability Council and its staff represent an inter-faculty initiative to better integrate sustainability into academics. It will focus primarily on developing curriculum resources, experiential learning opportunities, research supports and student leadership. Though the structure is not yet in place, the council will eventually be governed by a board representing the deans of all 18 faculties.

Cannabis Report and Recommendations

In preparation for the legalization of cannabis in Canada, we convened a working group to consult our internal community and develop appropriate policies. The group has now finalized its report containing 19 recommendations to address a wide range of issues, from consumption on our campuses to cannabis research. The administration team has tentatively accepted these recommendations. I look forward to discussing them with you at our meeting on September 24.

Leadership Transitions

Since my last report, Dr. Robert Haennel (Rehabilitation Medicine), Dr. Shanthi Johnson (School of Public Health), Dr. Deborah Burshtyn (Interim Dean of FGSR), Dr. Dale Askey (Chief Librarian), and Dr. Laura Beard (AVP Research) all began their respective terms. We also received notice that Vice-President (Advancement) Heather McCaw and University Registrar Lisa Collins have accepted positions at other universities, and that Dr. Jonathan Schaeffer will resign as dean of Science effective October 1. In their absence, Kelly Spencer will become interim vice-president, Melissa Padfield will serve as interim registrar, and Dr. Frank Marsiglio will act as interim dean.

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

Yours sincerely,

David H. Turpin, CM, LLD, FRSC
President and Vice-Chancellor