



**Report to the Community
DRAFT**

**May 9, 2011
4 pm – 6 pm
Program at 5 pm**

**Manitoba-Saskatchewan Room
Westin**

**I.V. Samarasekera, OC
President and Vice-Chancellor**

Thank you, Brian.

Honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, alumni and friends,

Thank you so much for joining us this afternoon.

The University of Alberta is our province's flagship university and a major point of pride for the citizens of Edmonton. We are, without a doubt, YOUR university.

For more than one hundred years, the people of Alberta have strongly supported the teaching and research activities of the U of A—and we, in turn, have done our utmost to serve the province and enhance the educational, cultural, social and economic foundation of Alberta's communities.

Today on behalf of the faculty, staff and students of the university, it is my pleasure to report to you on the U of A's accomplishments and challenges of the last year—and to give you an outline of our main plans for the year ahead.

Major investment from and collaboration with our community partners has enabled so much of what we do. Let me give you a few examples of what that support has made possible in the last year.

The University of Alberta is now educating more students than ever.

Our student body numbers more than 38,000. In September we welcomed just over 7500 freshmen.

And we saw 8,606 graduates leave and enter the workforce, professional programs, or graduate studies.

Inside our classrooms, we have been upgrading to ensure that essential information and communication technologies can sustain the U of A's first-rate teaching and research environment.

At the same time, we continue to put an emphasis upon face-to-face contact between students and professors.

I am pleased to report that more than 60% of our undergraduate classes now have 25 students or less and more than 80% of our undergraduate classes have 50 students or less.

We continue to receive accolades for the high quality of undergraduate teachers on campus.

This year, two more faculty members received Canada's highest teaching award, bringing our total to 34—13 more than any other university.

U of A students have access to some of the world's leading thinkers in fields as diverse as carbon sequestration to Islamic studies to print-making.

In the spring of 2010, the U of A boosted our faculty and research capacity when we succeeded in securing four, new Canada Excellence Research Chairs—the greatest number of any campus in the country.

In this new federal funding program, each of the U of A's four CERCs will receive \$10 million over seven years to build on—and push to the next level—U of A's already established excellence in oil sands, Arctic, virology and diamond extraction research.

Over the last year, we have also moved quickly to expand the Helmholtz Alberta Initiative, a partnership formed in 2009 with the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centers.

Supported by a \$25 million investment from the Alberta Government, this partnership initially focused on research related to the sustainable development of the oil sands and other heavy hydrocarbon resources. But now, the agreement is moving into areas such as infectious diseases and neuroscience.

In addition to strong government investment, we received tremendous—indeed historical—support from donors in the past year.

A \$28 million gift from Mr Li Ka Shing—the largest cash donation in our history—established the Li Ka Shing Institute for Virology as well as an exchange program with Shantou Medical University College in China.

We also received the largest gift of land ever given to a Canadian university when Edwin and Ruth Mattheis donated their 5,000 hectare ranch in south-east Alberta.

This incredible gift propels the U of A into a leadership position within North America in rangeland ecology and management research.

Then, when Sandy and Cecile Mactaggart gave us their beloved Edmonton, they capped a philanthropic legacy now equal to an unprecedented \$100 million in donations and gifts in kind.

Tomorrow I will be Fort McMurray to make another very exciting gift announcement—one that promises to have a great impact on the health of thousands of young Albertans. So watch for more news about this in the coming days.

The fact that donors, governments and other partners are willing to invest so much in the U of A is humbling—and we are very grateful.

My thanks to all of you here who provide support to student scholarships, research chairs and institutes, lectureships, and many, many other projects and initiatives. Thank you!

With your support, the U of A's impact continues to grow within this city, across the province and country, and increasingly throughout the world.

Let me give you some idea of the scope of our economic impact alone.

Currently, 77% of University of Alberta graduates stay, find employment, and create businesses in Alberta.

Distinguished U of A alumni have founded, led, and are leading Alberta powerhouses such as PCL Construction, Stantec, the Katz Group, BioWare, the Citadel Theatre and Venture Publishing.

In partnership with TEC Edmonton, the U of A continues to aid in the diversification of the province's economy with 76 active spin-off companies.

The university is itself a major economic engine within the province, especially here in Edmonton.

Think of this:

We are Alberta's fourth largest employer, employing approximately 14,500 people with an annual payroll of more than \$795 million.

Employee spending power—coupled with that of our more than 38,000 students—is estimated at \$5.2 billion annually.

Like many other Edmonton institutions, businesses and organizations, however, the U of A has faced some significantly financial challenges over the last year.

I am pleased to report that we have weathered them better than expected.

Dedicated efforts were made in every unit, department, and faculty on campus to meet a budgetary shortfall of nearly \$60 million.

Those efforts enabled us to find and reallocate resources in ways that have prevented some of the worse-case scenarios we feared 18 months ago.

Fortunately, we have been able to continue to fulfill the university's core teaching and research mission to very high standards.

As we look to the future, however, it will be critical for the university to secure increasing resources to maintain and enhance the quality of education and research we now deliver.

Why is this investment so critical?

Alberta is preparing for the next generation economy. Experts predict that 70% of the jobs in the new economy will require post-secondary education.

So, as Alberta's economy continues to recover, increased investment in talent is vital—indeed essential—to ensuring economic, social and cultural prosperity tomorrow.

In the last year, I have travelled to India and China where the growth in universities and post-secondary education is occurring at breath-taking speed.

I can tell you that the international landscape of postsecondary education is changing in ways that will impact our university, our students—and this province—and it important that we respond to changing trends.

And, in partnership with the provincial government, we're moving in the right direction.

In the coming year, the U of A will be opening two new buildings thanks to multi-million dollar government investments in infrastructure:

the Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science

and the Edmonton Clinic Health Academy.

These buildings aren't just about adding much needed space to campus—they're about new ways of teaching and learning—modeled on the ideal of interdisciplinary collaboration.

In the Edmonton Clinic Health Academy, for example, students in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, rehabilitation, public health, and the humanities will be learning how to practice and deliver holistic, interdisciplinary health care.

Treating the whole patient rather than specific symptoms.
Breaking down the silos that too often create barriers in health care systems.

These two buildings also reflect our belief that, as a research-intensive university, the U of A should offer undergraduate students a qualitatively different experience than that of Alberta's smaller universities.

In the Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science, classrooms and lab space are situated side-by-side to bring current research up close and personal—allowing for increasing undergraduate participation in research projects.

These two new buildings illustrate that when it comes to capital expansion, we are guided by the goals of our academic planning and our mandate as Alberta's flagship university.

In an increasingly global higher education landscape, that mandate includes expanding our international engagement.

Indeed, the U of A aims to become a top global university.
Why?

Only as a global university with the capacity to contribute at the leading edge—will the U of A be the university future Albertans will need.

As a top global university, we'll have the expertise, equipment, programs and international connections that can effectively prepare Alberta's students for the global workplace that lies ahead.

Last year, more than 850 U of A students chose to study or work abroad. We'd like to see those numbers increase.

The newly established Alfred Sorenson Global Experience Fund—part of a \$5 million gift from Mr Sorenson to the Alberta School of Business—is helping to open up more international experiences for students in that faculty.

We're also thinking differently about international research and teaching partnerships—creating agreements that involve academic and industry researchers, graduate students and undergraduates.

Recent agreements in India, China, Africa and elsewhere are multi-leveled and multi-faceted.

They involve international universities, industry, foundations and organizations—they focus on multi-disciplinary connections within and across sectors.

Where possible, these agreements bring our local partners into the global arena. Building strong international ties goes hand-in-hand with building stronger communities and organizations right here in Alberta.

Whether on the local or international level, we actively seek opportunities to work with you and for you—to bring learning and research off campus where it will have the greatest impact.

There's tremendous enthusiasm throughout local communities for engagement. More than 6500 people joined us for the 2010 Festival of Ideas last November.

Over the past year, more than 625 students were welcomed into non-profit organizations in Edmonton, Camrose and Fort McMurray as part of our growing community service-learning program.

The Faculty of Engineering's award-winning DiscoverE program brought science workshops and camps to 150 schools in 65 communities.

Our Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences is working with various government agencies, such as Agriculture and Agri-food Canada . . . Alberta Sustainable Resource Development . . . and the Canadian Forestry Service, to conduct research in areas as diverse as livestock genomics and wild fire science.

And, this coming summer, the Faculty of Extension is mounting conferences and activities throughout Edmonton in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Marshall McLuhan.

I could go on but I hope these few examples give you a sense of the breadth and depth of the U of A's connection to this community.

Let me repeat what I said at the beginning of this speech: the U of A is YOUR university.

It is because of the steadfast support of Albertans that the University of Alberta continues to go from strength to strength—

continues to promote excellence that is noticed around the country and the world—

and continues to provide exceptional educational opportunities for young and lifelong learners alike.

The University of Alberta is not your average university.

That's because the people who built it and the people who support it continue to be bold and pioneering in vision—

believing strongly that this city and province must be deeply connected to . . . and able to demonstrate leadership within . . . a big, broad human community that stretches from the North Saskatchewan all the way to the St Lawrence to the Nile and beyond.

Thank you so much for coming today. And thank you for being our partners today and into the future. Thank you.