

Speaking Points

Dr. David T. Barnard, President and Vice-Chancellor

State of the University Address

Wednesday, September 25, 2013

Fairmont Ballroom, 11:30 to 1:30 p.m.

Thank you, John, for your kind introduction. (*John Emans from TD Bank*)

Good afternoon.

I want to begin by thanking the Chamber of Commerce for the opportunity to speak with you today about the part of the post-secondary system in Manitoba that I know best. I'd like to recognize the head table, including Brian Scharfstein, and President Dave Angus, an alumnus and friend of the University of Manitoba.

Several other members of the University of Manitoba community are here today and I particularly want to acknowledge Patricia Bovey, chair of the board of governors.

It's Homecoming 2013 at the University of Manitoba. Each year we invite 130,000 alumni to come back, to reconnect and celebrate our collective achievements.

Looking around the room, I see many alumni and friends of the University. I would say that we are bringing Homecoming to you today. We have more than 50 events taking place as part of Homecoming and I'm going to take the liberty of declaring this yet another event in our week of activities.

Just to demonstrate, please stand if you attended or have children attending the University of Manitoba. This is reflective of our deep reach into this community. Thank you. Count yourselves as participants in Homecoming 2013.

Please be seated.

Emily Dickinson, the American poet many of us met in school, wrote a diverse collection of poems, including these lines:

Between the form of Life and Life
The difference is as big
As Liquor at the Lip between
And Liquor in the Jug
The latter - excellent to keep -
But for ecstatic need
The corkless is superior -
I know for I have tried.

The thrust of the poem, I think, is clear: we should strive for the ecstasy of real engagement with life rather than being satisfied with mere formality.

As Manitoba's premier university, the University of Manitoba is inextricably intertwined with the growth, prosperity and vibrancy of this community and its people.

We take that relationship seriously. We strive to be active contributors to finding solutions to the challenges faced by our province and its citizens.

We cannot work in isolation. We must - and will - explore opportunities for cooperation and collaboration both within the university and beyond. Your priorities are our priorities.

We understand the need to discover and innovate to ensure Manitoba's challenges are met and opportunities are fully realized.

We understand that this province and our university must reflect, involve and support its Indigenous peoples if we are to thrive as a community and as a province.

We understand the need to provide a learning environment for students that will attract and nurture the next generation of local and global leaders.

We understand the need to adapt, to change and to challenge ourselves. We at the University of Manitoba are committed to being responsible stewards of the resources, both public and private, invested in this university.

As the province's only research-intensive university, the University of Manitoba drives innovation in this province – focusing our attention on issues and challenges unique to Manitoba and on opportunities for global impact.

I am sure most of you today are carrying a smart phone. These devices are portable and convenient because of antennae developed by Dr. Lotfollah Shafai and his team.

Dr. Shafai's other achievements include satellite technology that enables remote television broadcasts to and from the North or from distant warzones.

He credits much of his success to the work of his 76 graduate and undergraduate students.

Through hands-on opportunities, these students have contributed greatly to research and innovation in Manitoba and Canada.

Worth noting, the Communications Research Centre in Ottawa, Canada's lab for telecommunications research is staffed primarily with Dr. Shafai's former graduate students.

Some of his students have gone on to start companies that have contributed millions to the Canadian economy.

Graduate student Dimitry Bugus and his partners started a \$600 million wireless company that was sold to Nortel Networks. Moe Barakat sold his satellite company for \$200 million.

While Dr. Shafai's research was directed to the skies, other scientists focus on issues closer to home.

One of those issues is water.

Sometimes we have too much water. In times of flooding, Dr. Jay Doering provides expert advice on flood forecasting and no-nonsense independent analysis on provincial flood-fighting efforts.

The University of Manitoba is now sharing this knowledge with Calgary, as it works to prevent another devastating flood.

Because we live in a city of rivers, we often travel over water. The cost to replace bridges and other infrastructure is an important issue facing our municipalities.

It's a priority for us, too. Researchers at the W.R. McQuade Structures Lab in the Faculty of Engineering are finding more affordable and safe alternatives to metal bridges and infrastructure.

We also face issues of water quality, especially on First Nations lands. Dr. Annemieke Farenhorst is leading a collaborative team as part of H₂O CREATE. Her students are assisting First Nations, water treatment system manufacturers and engineering firms at a crucial time when residents of 113 First Nations across Canada are unable to drink their tap water.

These examples demonstrate the impact of the 8,800 faculty and staff I am privileged to call my colleagues.

As a research-intensive university, the University of Manitoba is an economic engine. We create jobs, including the direct and indirect employment of more than 17,000 people in Winnipeg.

The University of Manitoba generates at least 1.8 billion dollars in economic activity and attracts nearly 160 million dollars annually in sponsored research income, much from outside the province.

However, support for research in this province lags behind that in other provinces. For example, our neighbours in Saskatchewan invest \$45.96 per person in provincial research funding. In Manitoba, government investment in research is \$15.59, the lowest investment outside the Atlantic Provinces.

To remain competitive and drive innovation, Manitoba requires additional strategic investments in its only research-intensive university.

Industry understands this. Our partnerships with you in the business community continue to flourish.

We have recently introduced the Transformational Partnerships program -- empowering businesses to manage intellectual property owned by the University of Manitoba and not incur costs until an idea is fully commercialized and profitable. This enables good ideas to be developed more efficiently, creating wealth and economic opportunity.

I recently spoke with a Hong Kong businessman who told me our Transformational Partnerships is the best program of its kind and that he promotes it to other universities he works with. He praised the University of Manitoba's leadership and creativity in innovative IP collaboration.

We want to work more closely with you. We are open to partnership with business. We will only be successful in driving innovation in partnership with you, members of Winnipeg's thriving business community.

We understand that we Canadians have put challenges and barriers in the way of Indigenous peoples' success. We must remove the barriers. We must work together to overcome the challenges.

One of the greatest opportunities for cooperation and collaboration among all of us is working -- with Indigenous peoples leading the way -- to ensure we recognize the great potential of First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth in Manitoba.

Our province's Indigenous population is the youngest and fastest growing segment of our society. It represents nearly 17 per cent of our total population. Over 75,000 people who identify themselves from a Metis or First Nations background live in Winnipeg.

This is a community of intelligent, dynamic individuals with a strong connection to our province. Our Indigenous youth are leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, scientists, professionals and critical thinkers. They are the key to the future of this growing, thriving province.

Completing or achieving higher education is the leading life aspiration for urban Aboriginal peoples, says the 2010 Urban Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

A variety of Indigenous leaders have referred to education as the new buffalo. It is a transformative force that nourishes minds, elevates families and sustains communities.

The University of Manitoba has the largest population of Indigenous students of any post-secondary institution in Canada and the largest number of Indigenous faculty.

In June, we participated in a signing ceremony with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada establishing the University of Manitoba as the location for the National Research Centre on Residential Schools.

This centre, the legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, will advance the critically important conversation about the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to help us move forward on a path of reconciliation and healing.

We have set ambitious targets for enrolment and completion rates that are reflective of the demographic makeup of our province.

We want First Nations, Metis and Inuit students better represented and succeeding in every faculty and academic discipline at our university.

Wanda Wuttunee, the director of the University of Manitoba Aboriginal Business Education Partners program said it well: “The University of Manitoba has allowed me to study, to learn and to teach Aboriginal people that the progress we achieve need not come at the loss of our cultural identities – and to build allies with other Canadians who share our goals.”

I encourage us to listen, learn, understand, and most importantly act on building a new relationship, a new future with our Indigenous peoples.

We understand that students are the lifeblood of our enterprise. They also represent our future business, cultural and community leaders.

This fall, we reached record enrolment in excess of 29,000. We are excited as historical data tell us that 80 per cent of these students will stay and work in Manitoba.

They will be the future professionals and engaged citizens ready for success in a modern, integrated economy.

Earlier this month, I spoke at our pep rally for first-year students. More than 6,000 students attended!

I asked those who were the first in their families to attend university to raise their hands. I saw hundreds of hands. Those students, in their U of M T-shirts, brought back great memories.

I, too, am the first person in my family to attend university, aided by the financial support I received from a scholarship. I know the transformational power of education and the need to support students so they can pursue post-secondary opportunities.

Unfortunately, we are losing some of the best and brightest minds to other provinces.

For example, half of the individuals we accept as graduate students decline an offer to study here, leaving the province because other universities offer better financial incentives.

Manitoba is behind in its support for graduate students compared with other provinces.

Manitoba provides the lowest amount of financial support to masters and doctoral students in the country.

Gifted graduate students come to university with a drive to see a better world. They leave as the business, community and government leaders our province needs for tomorrow.

Attracting more graduate students, teaming them with the sharpest minds, and surrounding them with leading-edge facilities will power Manitoba's economy, enhance our vibrant culture and grow our international research reputation.

As proof, I invite you to attend the annual 3-Minute Thesis competition in February 2014, which challenges graduate students to consolidate and present their ideas and research discoveries to a non-specialist audience in three minutes or less.

If you want to get excited about the future of our province, it is a must-see event.

This year's winner, Leah (Wong) Guenther, is finding a better synthetic replacement for synovial fluid to increase the lifespan of artificial hips and knees.

Cam Kaye is another brilliant graduate student. He is researching microwave technology that can be put in an ambulance to provide quick and potentially life-saving diagnosis for stroke patients. On Monday, Cam received a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship. He will receive \$150,000 during the next three years toward his graduate research.

The discoveries of these two brilliant young people have the potential to improve our health care system, reduce the cost of expensive procedures, save the lives of many people and improve the quality of life of others.

One of the great myths surrounding our Faculty of Graduate Studies is that its primary purpose is educating the next generation of professors.

This is one, but only one, of its functions, and the vast majority of graduate students succeed in other areas.

In Manitoba, they are some of the most prominent leaders of our community.

Diane Gray received her master's degree in public administration at the University of Manitoba.

She is now CEO of Centreport Canada, responsible for developing a 20,000-acre inland port designed to take advantage of Manitoba's links by air, rail, highway and water to markets around the world.

Mark Evans earned his PhD in computer science from the University of Manitoba.

He founded Emerging Information Systems, the largest international supplier of software for financial planners, and has worked to keep that company and its 200 high tech jobs in Manitoba.

Gerry Price also received a graduate degree with us.

Gerry is recognized as one of our province's top business leaders. He is chairman of E.H Price, a group of companies that develops H-VAC systems and employs 800 people in Winnipeg. Gerry was named Distinguished Alumni Award recipient in 2012 because of his tremendous impact on our city.

Our province is richer because of individuals like Gerry Price, Mark Evans and Diane Gray. Our province will be richer still when we are contributing more to support the great minds that will help shape the next big ideas in Winnipeg and beyond.

We understand that to succeed in our mission of shaping leaders, enhancing our community and conducting world-changing research, we must challenge ourselves to adapt and change the way we do business.

While we are proud of our enormous contribution to this province, we know we can't stand still. We recognize the need to be in a constant state of evaluation and re-evaluation.

Our success depends on leading change, responding to it when needed and challenging it when it doesn't make sense.

One of the issues that limit our capacity to address these challenges is available resources.

Historically, we have been underfunded compared to other Canadian medical doctoral universities.

While we appreciate that we have had relatively generous funding from the province in the past three years, there is a lot of catching up to do.

But, like all of you in business, we must manage within our fiscal constraints and be the best possible stewards of the resources we have.

In 2009, I engaged the university community in an ambitious business transformation known as the Resource Optimization and Service Enhancement (ROSE) project, the largest current business transformation initiative in Manitoba.

I am grateful to the hundreds of staff who have been involved in service-oriented projects that continue to improve the way we do business.

When we complete the ROSE initiative, we will have realized millions in annual financial savings, including 6.1 million dollars to date. These savings are re-invested in our core activities – learning, discovery and engagement – and key strategic initiatives.

In 2012, I asked the community to reimagine the University of Manitoba's academic structure to improve efficiencies in our faculties and schools, and asked the provost, my colleague Joanne Keselman, to take this project on. Currently, the University of Manitoba has the same number of faculties as the University of Toronto with less than half the student body.

A proposal to create a new Faculty of Health Sciences is currently being discussed at the University. This will lead to a better education model that, ultimately, will improve the care Manitobans receive at the bedside.

Modern health care relies on a multi-disciplinary team of health professionals to ensure patient needs are met. We want to mirror that model by ensuring all health sciences students – in medicine, nursing,

pharmacy, dentistry, dental hygiene, medical rehabilitation and other health professions –work together.

We also know that we need to rethink how we teach this and future generations of students.

We are taking full advantage of innovative methods and new technology while recognizing the reality that the way students learn and consume information is constantly changing. Our structure, infrastructure, and business methods must be modern, efficient and sustainable.

We understand that great minds ought to have great spaces to explore, create and innovate.

We are currently refreshing our campus space plans at the Fort Garry and Bannatyne campuses to better serve our students, faculty, staff and the broader community.

The Visionary (re)Generation Open International Design competition is re-imagining the Fort Garry campus and the former Southwood golf course as a new kind of community – forward thinking, sustainable, stimulating, livable and fun. I am proud to serve with alumni Kiki Delaney, Ovide Mercredi and Michael Robertson on a team to recommend a winner of this competition.

I also want to thank Manitoba Hydro and CEO Scott Thomson for working with us on this important project. Their construction of a ground-breaking downtown headquarters demonstrates a commitment to energy efficiency and we are pleased Hydro is sharing its expertise as we work to ensure our own plans meet the highest sustainability standards.

Our competition sought out the best design minds in the world to make submissions on how we can make best use of those lands. Last week, we met to choose the finalists.

The results will be announced on November 4 and a public exhibition will take place at the university November 5th through 10th.

We see opportunities for many people in this room to work with us as partners once we develop the large area master plan for these lands.

At the same time, we are developing a master plan for our Bannatyne campus that takes advantage of the diverse neighbourhood it serves.

We are truly at the beginning of a period of substantial transformation on our campuses and our physical connections to the community.

Some of that change is already in place. Two years ago we opened the new, state-of-the-art student residence, Pembina Hall. Last year we opened ARTlab, a classroom and laboratory space for future “Wanda Koops and Ivan Eyres”.

While our primary focus is to serve the needs of students, faculty and staff, we have also turned our attention to the fact that many of these facilities can and should be used by the broader community. For example, the ARTlab also houses a gallery space, recognized as one of the finest campus galleries in the country. As part of our Taché Arts Project, we are building a performing arts centre in the historic former student residence. We expect to offer exciting opportunities for the entire city to experience cultural events there.

Similarly, in 2015, we will welcome the community to the Active Living Centre. This Centre is more than a fitness and recreation facility. It houses a research Centre to examine some of the most common, yet challenging health issues we face, such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

And speaking of welcoming our community to campus: this year, through our partnership with the Winnipeg Football Club, the province and the city, our campus community enjoyed the energy of hundreds of thousands of sports fans and concert-goers.

Investors Group Field has indeed stirred excitement on our campus community. Typically, we would see about 500 - 1000 fans at a Bison Football Game. On August 30, 10,199 fans converged for our home-opener to cheer on the Bisons' victory over Alberta 65-41.

When phase two of rapid transit is completed, we will have improved access to our campus, and we encourage all levels of government to work together to make this a reality.

But don't let that stop you from attending this Saturday's Homecoming game when we host – and defeat – the University of Regina.

The University of Manitoba is inextricably intertwined with the growth, prosperity and vibrancy of this community.

In the core area of our city, our university is engaged in more than 200 community programs, including the Inner City Science Centre, Basketballs for Kids, and the Rec and Read program.

Our Faculty of Medicine volunteers recently built their first Habitat for Humanity home in a parking lot on the Bannatyne campus, subsequently to be moved to its final destination.

Faculty of Music students and staff appear regularly on the stage as part of Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra performances.

Our Bison athletes serve meals at Siloam Mission.

University of Manitoba faculty and staff are among the top three in giving to the United Way and number one in terms of leadership level giving.

We are proud of the early partnerships we've established with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, including a special public lecture series, Fragile

Freedoms, coordinated by our Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics Director, Arthur Schafer.

Tonight, the University of Manitoba begins the third year of its award-winning Visionary Conversations with a discussion about how a population of one million may transform Winnipeg. It promises to be a thought-provoking evening and is one of six Visionary Conversations planned for this year.

Alumni and friends, a new era in Manitoba's history has begun. I challenge us to ask each other: how far can we go?

We believe more is possible.

We know that Manitoba can lead.

At the University of Manitoba we know we must do more so that this becomes possible.

Let's work together to harness Manitoba's new sense of optimism and transform it into action.

The University of Manitoba has the vision, the drive and the people to make it happen, right now.

The best and brightest student learning from world-class researchers in facilities that foster innovative and dynamic thinking all this in partnership with our alumni and community.

Now is the time. This is the place.

From here, we can go anywhere.