It’s hard not to feel energized in spring. The hours of daylight increase; the temperature creeps steadily above zero; and fresh air and sunshine work their way back into our daily routine.

On the campuses of the University of Manitoba, much like other universities and colleges, the springtime also represents a near seismic shift as thousands of students receive their parchment and begin the next chapter of their continued or post-university lives. Certainly for many of these students, spring and convocation afford them opportunity to take stock, to look back on where they’ve been as they fix their glances on what is to come. As president of the institution tasked with preparing these young men and women for the future, I too find myself in a reflective-yet-forward-looking frame of mind.

Part of this certainly owes to the fact that I am still in my first year at the U of M and have yet to experience a calendar year’s worth of events. And part of it has simply to do with the fact that, in glancing back on the past few months, we’ve accomplished a great deal and there is much to feel proud about.

With the news of the world presenting itself in varying shades of doom or gloom, I hope stories about the many positive steps our institution, faculty, staff, students and alumni, are taking into 2009 play like music to our graduates’ ears.

I also hope they raze the spectre of doubt regarding the U of M’s place among its peer institutions, for this is a centre for post-secondary educational excellence. I echo the sentiments of graduate Leo Pettipas, whose letter to the editor (opposite page) correctly suggests one good measure of the value of a University of Manitoba education necessarily rests in the contributions of our graduates to the betterment of our world.

As spring convocation ushers new U of M graduates into the world, they face the challenge of a global community reeling from investments gone awry. I say to them, and to all our alumni, the U of M remains a safe investment in your future; one that promises significant return.

David T. Barnard
president and vice-chancellor

David Barnard and UMSU president-elect for 2009-10 Sid Rashid were part of a crew of volunteers who prepared peanut butter and jam sandwiches for soup kitchens and Boys and Girls Clubs throughout the city.