At the end of November, the task forces delegated with prioritizing all academic and support service programs at the University of Saskatchewan delivered their respective reports to President Ilene Busch-Vishniac. On Dec. 9, the TransformUS reports were made public. On Campus News Editor Colleen MacPherson sat down with the president in late December to talk about her reaction to the reports, the response so far and where the TransformUS process goes from here.

What was your initial response to the reports?

IBV: I was very pleased with them. I was as anxious as everyone on campus has been and I was worried that doing their work, the task forces might discover pockets of excellence and pockets of struggling programs so that it could look as if we would then have a bull's eye written on someone's back. Instead of that, they indicate that in any given unit, parts of it have been going reasonably well, sometimes great, and parts of it are going not so well, so the fact that the marks or grades were distributed more or less evenly across campus was a very pleasant surprise.

Was there anything that surprised you?

IBV: There was little there that was terribly surprising. A number of the themes in the academic task force report I’ve been noting myself. A number of the themes in the support services report are perfectly understandable; you could see exactly where they were coming from. It is clear the task forces did a huge amount of work with the information that was available to them. We now need to look at all of them (the recommendations) carefully, contextualize them in the broader view of the whole institution and then figure out exactly how to move forward with those recommendations and additional information at hand.

Do you think it was a challenge for the task forces to balance various units’ ability to fill out the required template and provide the necessary information?

IBV: There will have been some variability because of that but certainly at least one of the reports noted that when they just didn’t have enough information, they put that unit or program in quintile five. That means we have to look at things in quintile five very carefully. Are they there because people just didn’t have enough information or because maybe we don’t need to keep doing this? We will take every recommendation very seriously but we also know that we now need to filter them through the lens of keeping this institution running effectively and efficiently. So we will try to understand the context in which those recommendations are applicable.
Reports end first phase of TransformUS

From Page 1

might have been made and if that context fully captures the broader view.

 IBV: There were things that were missing that we knew would be missing. The task forces looked at a fine level of granularity and they didn’t do it, we asked them to do it, was to necessary consider, for example, what the implications are for change recommended over there, or what are the implications in arts and science, taking our biggest college, if we were to follow all of the recommendations.

 So then considering all those implications is the next step?

 IBV: That’s right. It’s what I describe as contextualizing on a larger scale.

 How would you characterize the feedback you’ve received so far?

 IBV: Since the publication of the reports, I have had very little feedback. It’s been much quieter than we anticipated. I have seen some comments on social media, typically directed at a particular unit asking how did this end up there. I have, at the various parties and events I’ve gone to in the last couple of weeks, had people stop me and about the same number said they were pleasantly surprised as those who said they had problems with unit x or unit y.

 Any speculation on why the response so far has been muted?

 IBV: I think there are a number of things going on. First of all, the reports came out during final exams. We were torn originally about whether to do that but we thought asking people to wait until January would just prolong. We talked to the students about it and the students requested that we just put it out once we had it. Second of all, the fact that there is a distribution of marks rather than a target put on any particular unit has a tendency to force people to actually think about it instead of reacting immediately. There’s a huge amount of information in the reports and our community is doing the appropriate thing about it before responding.

 Could the quality of the reports have contributed in any way to the lack of immediate feedback?

 IBV: I think that would have had a huge impact, both the fact that the task forces did a huge amount of work and that what they could to avoid bias and that the process was very clean. There was no one involved above the level of department head so there was no one pushing for any kind of reaction.

 What do you expect the next period of time, with town halls and other opportunities for people to comment, will be like?

 IBV: What we expect is it will vary all over the map. I would expect people associated with units that didn’t fare as well as they expected will react defensively and they will tell us why the data doesn’t tell the whole story or what’s wrong with the data. And I’m sure there will be those who attack the entire process, which is also fine. I think what is important is for everyone to remember that the reports are not recommendations. What I hope we get out of the listening phase is more information that helps us draw those reports together and understand the context of broader university goals.

 From start to finish, TransformUS is a very long process. Do you have any concerns about how you are sustaining morale on campus?

 IBV: We’re now at the point where, a year ago, we were laying people off, we lost about 230 positions and we were in the middle of it this time last year. We now have TransformUS and continuing anxiety about jobs. It is very tough to sustain good morale on campus when we are in the process of eliminating positions. On the other hand, we have to live within our budget so we had exactly two options—across-the-board cuts which would also have resulted in job elimination or trying to be strategic. We opted to try to be strategic. It will undoubtedly have made the process longer but the outcomes will be better we hope both for the individuals employed here and the university as a whole.

 Do you think there are any particular risks to the university’s reputation by going through a process like this?

 IBV: Everything we do has an impact on our reputation so the risk to our reputation with TransformUS is that we will be seen as being in worse financial shape than we are. People will read this as “Oh my god, we’re clutching at straws, things must be really horrible.” In fact, we have been treated much more generously by the provincial government than our peers and we are being deliberate, not to cope with a current deficit but to avoid one in the future. We are frankly in much better shape than many of our peers and we are being deliberate about avoiding problems in the future. That’s a nuanced message that’s very hard to get people to hear correctly and I think the actions we’re taking now will be read by some incorrectly as a sign that we are in dire financial straits.

 There is also consultation underway on the university’s new vision document. How do the vision and TransformUS tie together?

 IBV: That was one of the reasons why things rolled out the way they did. We put the vision document out at the beginning of October in draft form. I have personally been in front of over 700 people now to talk about TransformUS. I’m sure there will be lots of comments that came in writing. We knew TransformUS would sort of swamp our ability to have conversations internally so we’re consulting externally now. I am very pleased that while there have been truly great suggestions, generally the vision document was very well received. So yes, there will be a new version released, probably some time in the spring so that we can get it to Senate in April, the board in March or May, and to Council because that time period too. But I think the changes will be small enough that having that draft will help us develop the implementation plan for TransformUS. They have to be linked because we can’t in the position of making changes that will move in directions that are different than where we’re trying to go.

 What is the most important message about TransformUS you would like to deliver to the university community?

 IBV: What I would say is it’s important that everyone understand that these reports are the end of the first phase, not the end of the process. Everyone should take a deep breath and understand that we’re not taking any action just based on the reports. We’re just launching a process, it will be meaningful, and we will be looking at implications like if you change a program in college x, what will it mean in unit y. We will be looking at all of that and what people see coming out of the implementation plan. It will very much reflect comments that are made, cross implications and what we want to be as a university in the future.
Change in store for grad studies
Move away from college model, committee recommends

Dr. Preston Smith, who is currently senior associate dean of education at Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine, will begin a five-year term July 1 as dean of the University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine.

Smith's appointment was announced Dec. 17. In a U of S release, the incoming dean committed to "work collaboratively with the great faculty and staff to lead the college to be amongst the best medical schools in Canada. I see a huge opportunity in a college that is energized and poised for change and a university, community and province committed to seeing the College of Medicine succeed."

The new dean completed both his undergraduate and postgraduate medical education at Dalhousie University, and is a fellow in the College of Family Physicians of Canada. In 2010, he completed a master of education in curricular studies, with a focus on medical education.

Smith has extensive involvement in accreditation success, curricular reform, distributed medical education and new educational programs. He participated in the development of Dalhousie's new undergraduate medical education curriculum and worked on the team that developed the Research in Medicine course printed in the 1924/25 calendar.

In the 1920s, students were required to take two years of Physical Training in addition to their regular classes. There were three lectures and five practice periods per week. Below are the details as printed in the 1924/25 calendar.

(a) Lectures on the general structure and functions of the human body with a view to an understanding of the various physical exercises and to a satisfactory preparation for the later teaching of the subject.

(b) Lectures on the theory of educational gymnastics.

(c) Practice teaching with written criticism; free standing and apparatus in Swedish gymnastics; folk dancing, practical work and class teaching, coaching in basketball and other indoor games; teaching and supervision of swimming.

A certificate of proficiency will be granted to those who successfully pass the above course.

Facilities for Physical Training are provided by the university, and, as far as these facilities will permit, all students are required to take some form of physical exercise, including gymnastics, college sports, military drill and gymnastic exercises are approved forms.

The above image is a “certificate of proficiency” for Mary Gladys Moffatt of Regina. Dated May 2, 1925, she earned a BA the following year. The university employed two instructors – E.W. Griffiths for the men and Janet Crawford for the women.
It was the mid-19th century, and in London, the heart of the mighty globe-spanning British Empire, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing. Factories poured out goods of all descriptions, from telegraph cables and iron ships to refined sugar, clothing, and soap.

Historian Jim Clifford studies the impact those factories had not only on Greater London but on environments around the globe.

"Where do the raw materials come from for the industry to expand exponentially from little shops where an individual would stir a pot of soap using tallow bought from butchers locally to these massive eight-acre factories that are producing hundreds of tons of soap per week?"

Clifford is using tools developed with colleagues in computational linguistics to mine more than 11 million pages of historical documents to trace the environmental consequences of industrialization. For example, entire tropical forests were cleared to make way for coconut and rubber plantations to feed demand for soap and bicycle tires.

A native of Surrey, B.C., Clifford completed his BA at Bishop’s University in Lennoxville, Quebec before pursuing his MA at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo. He finished his PhD at York University in Toronto before taking his current post at the U of S in July 2013.

Clifford credits both Saskatchewan’s booming economy - his partner started a new job with the city the same day he did - and the university itself for drawing him here.

"I’m really happy with the scale of the university; it’s a bit smaller and the class sizes are great," he said. "The history department is really phenomenal as well. There are a lot of people I knew of before applying for the job, particularly in terms of the strengths in environmental history. They are well known in Canada and beyond."

NEW TO US

Station 20 West story unfolding every day

KATHY WALKER

Station 20 West is more than just bricks and mortar—it’s a building with a story, and that story continues to unfold every day. The story begins with a run-down corner of the city beside the railroad tracks at the intersection of 20th Street and Ave L. The spot was occupied by a pawnshop, bar, old warehouse, weeds and two guard dogs, according to one report. It likely would have remained unchanged had it not been for the raised voices from the neighbours and other city citizens who refused to give up on their goal of building something better for the community.

These same people grew in number, collaborated, and took action, and that corner got something better—Station 20 West. Today, within its two storeys are a number of community-driven organizations and programs as well as a tight-knit group of volunteers, workers and visitors. The occupants of the building call themselves co-locators and include the CHEP Good Food Inc., Quint Development Corp., Good Food Junction Co-op, the Saskatoon Health Region’s Mothers’ Centre and Kids First, and the U of S Community Outreach and Engagement office.

One year after opening its doors, the building continues to define its present and promises to drive its future. For one of the co-locators, Station 20 West serves as a jumping off point for collaboration, community participation and action in research and teaching.

See Research, Page 6

Academic calendar lacks fall break week

University Council got its first look at the academic calendar for 2014-15 when it met Dec. 19 but despite vocal lobbying by the U of S Students’ Union (USSU), no fall break week is included.

The calendar, which was presented to Council for information only, includes a full break day Friday, Oct. 10 prior to the Thanksgiving weekend but there was not enough time to resolve the various challenges of a full week off before having to release the calendar, said accompanying documents.

According to the Office of the Registrar, there is very little flexibility in dates of the fall term but two possibilities were presented: to schedule a shorter exam period prior to Christmas, which would mean holding exams on Sundays; or to take a different approach to orientation in September, meaning classes would start immediately after Labour Day rather than starting after two days of orientation. A combination of the two might also allow for a full fall break week.

It was pointed out the registrar and the USSU will do a student survey to determine support for either of the possible approaches and the issue will be discussed with associate deans to explore other alternatives.

While the Academic Programs Committee of Council agreed to approve the 2014-15 calendar without a fall break, it committed to undertake an exploration of the issue with an eye to implementing such a break in 2015-16 "if the university community supports this change."
Could biomaterial scaffolds heal spinal cord injury?

Chen established the Tissue Engineering Research Group (TERG) in 2007. It is a multi-disciplinary group that brings researchers from engineering and life sciences together in a quest to produce biomaterial "scaffolds" to help heal damaged tissues or organs such as spinal cord injury.

"A scaffold is a three-dimensional structure with interconnected pore networks that supports cell growth in damaged areas," Chen said. "We use the word scaffold, which is an engineering term, for a structure that helps patients build new tissues. Our research is looking for ways to build scaffolds from biodegradable, biocompatible materials that are also capable of incorporating living cells."

The principle behind Chen's research is that cells obtained from a patient's tissue could be seeded onto a scaffold, growing into functional tissues or organs that could be transplanted at the site of an injury for healing. The implications for human health are profound. Biomaterial scaffolds could one day help the body self-repair various kinds of damage.

"There are a lot of applications, but we are currently working on scaffolds for repair of peripheral nerve, articular joint cartilage (the tissue covering the ends of joint bones), spinal cord injury and damage caused by heart attack," explained Chen. "We need to fabricate different scaffolds for different tissues and organs, so we are researching what kinds of materials are best for specific applications."

Chen and his team fabricate the scaffolds in his Bio-Manufacturing Lab using an advanced 3D Bioplotter.

"We start with a biomaterial solution and build the 3D scaffold layer by layer. From a technical point of view, one of the most significant challenges is fabricating a scaffold with the vascular network necessary to transport nutrients and metabolic waste. This is very important."

Another challenge is integrating the living cells into the bio-fabrication process so they retain their cellular properties and function. He relies on research collaborators in medicine and life sciences for the cells. Research to date is promising, with the scaffolds working well in models of peripheral nerve, spinal cord and heart attack damage.

"Could nanocoatings lead to lifetime artificial joint replacements?"

Using nanocoated scaffolds to improve the durability and performance of biomedical implants is just one area of Yang's research program, but it is generating great interest in the health community.

Every year in Canada, more than 60,000 people undergo hip or knee-replacement surgery but here's the rub: the average lifespan of an artificial joint is 15-20 years. Component wear leads to device loosening, which limits joint lifespan, said Yang. "Artificial hip and knee joints provide stability and carry body weight so they have to be strong and flexible. But the biggest problems with metals are low wear resistance, high friction coefficient and limited corrosion resistance. These limit the life of artificial joints."

But what if you could apply a nanocoating that would increase wear and corrosion resistance, while keeping friction low? The possibility intrigued Yang.

"When you know the surface of materials, you can develop nanocoatings that improve wear resistance and extend material lifespans."

One thing to know about Yang's research is its scale—in her world, things are measured in nanometers (nm), one nanometer is a billionth of a meter. To put that into perspective, a human hair is about 60,000 to 80,000 nm.
Research expands view for students

Anthropology professor Natalia Khanenko-Friesen with St. Thomas More College has used the U of S engagement office to connect with local people and to teach undergraduate students. It is all part of her five-year research project titled Oral History of 20th Street: Many Faces of a City Core Neighbourhood.

“I knew that there was more to this street than there appeared to be,” said Khanenko-Friesen. “In this particular project, I want to generate a bigger perspective on urban landscapes.” Her project involves collecting the history of the Riversdale neighbourhood around 20th Street through interviews with local residents. She draws on undergraduate students from her third-year anthropology course to do the interviewing.

“I expect them to come with some field work, but often times it’s the first time they learn to go into the real world and talk to real people,” said Khanenko-Friesen. Courtney Black is one of these students. She is in her fifth year of university, majoring in both psychology and anthropology. When Black signed up for Khanenko-Friesen’s course, she thought she would be learning about oral history and storytelling from a historical perspective with a focus on creation stories. She did not imagine she would be learning how to collect ‘living memory.’

“I expected PowerPoint slides of story origins and underlying meanings, not group projects and interviews,” said Black. “I may not end up being an oral historian, but learning how to build rapport, put yourself out there, and ask good questions are now skills I can utilize.”

The students’ work is documented through audio and video, which then becomes part of the recorded oral history of 20th Street. A video on YouTube developed in collaboration with local residents, students and production company Bamboo Shoots showcases some of the stories and living memories.

In the video, one long-time resident takes a walk down 20th street with a student interviewer, recalling “two babas” used to live on the street, both survivors of the same concentration camp. Two other residents talk of the more recent past and how they learned to stay “arms length from negativity,” primarily through their love of music.

The neighbourhood history is not all that is documented; people in the video also talk about their hopes for the future, which sometimes involves conflicting visions.

The hidden aspect of engaging in this type of research is that student interviewers often learn a lot about themselves and their own lived memories, said Khanenko-Friesen, just as the former underwent a transformation, she often sees positive change in her students.

“I ask them to write a short blurb every two weeks on what they have learned. As we move through the course, I modify requirements—has anything changed within yourself? Sincerely, a transformation takes place in many of them.”

Courtney Black is one of them. Naturally shy person, Black said the class has pushed her out of her comfort zone and positively affected the way she views herself and social situations. It has also changed her perspective of the Riversdale area.

“Before, 20th Street always conjured up negative images. I assumed it was just a dangerous area and that it was crazy for us to go down there and seek out interviews,” she said. “As we learned about the interviews other classes have collected and about Station 20 West, I realized that it’s a part of town that has a diverse community and is full of interesting people. Every neighbourhood has good and bad and Riversdale is judged just on the bad and the good is ignored.”

Kathy Walker is manager of student programs and services in the International Centre for Northern Governance and Development.

Do you have feedback on the recommendations in the reports of the TransformUS task forces? We’re listening.

For more information and to provide feedback online, please visit transformus.usask.ca

Feedback closes January 31, 2014

CLS key in scaffolds, nanocoatings

When she applies a nanostructured coating to the surface of a material, each layer of coating is a few nanometres thick.

“The coating we have developed is a diamond-like coating combined with nanoparticles,” Yang explained. “It’s very low friction with really high wear resistance and corrosion resistance. It could improve the lifetime of artificial joints up to 40 years, maybe longer.”

The major challenge right now is getting the nanomaterial to adhere well to the metal so it will last. But challenge is what drives most research. “For me, the most exciting part is when we overcome a challenge,” Yang said, “and we overcome them one by one.”

Both Chen and Yang rely on the Canadian Light Source (CLS) synchrotron to advance their research. Chen and his group have developed new synchrotron based imaging technologies to characterize scaffolds and tissue samples. Yang and her team use the CLS to investigate nanostructured diamond-like films. “The nanostructure plays a key role—that is a major hurdle—and we need the CLS to know we’ve got the structure,” said Yang.

It is hard to predict how soon tissue scaffolds and nanocoatings could become viable treatments; medical research is painstakingly slow. A process has to work consistently and predictably at every step, and researchers have to fully understand how and why it works before they can move on to the next step. Still, both Chen and Yang are hopeful they will see their work evolve into viable treatments for improving human health from the inside out.

Call for Nominations for Awards for Distinction in Outreach and Engagement

For further information on the nomination process, please visit the faculty awards section of awards.usask.ca
Stress Conference
The Saskatchewan Interprofessional Stress Conference takes place Jan. 17-20 from 7:30 to 4 p.m. at the Saskatchewan Law College. The conference will provide a professional development opportunity for all U of S faculty and staff as well as a forum for discussion of the current social issues in medicine. For more information, visit usask.ca/stress

Threading the Naïve
February 7-9, 2014 will see a survey of works from 17 artists. The show opens Jan. 24 and continues until April 27. For more information, visit kwag.com

University Events
For a complete list of events, call 306-966-7775

Gala of Engineering Excellence
The College of Engineering is holding its annual celebration at the TCU Centre. The conference will feature much more information, visit usask.ca/cme

Education Career Fair 2014
Local schools, colleges, universities and orga- nizations will be on hand Jan. 23 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the College of Education gym for the 2014 Education Career Fair. A list of exhibitors and registration is available on the Career Development and Employment Centre website. For more information, visit usask.ca/cjmcj洱

Teaching Awards
Feb. 15 is the deadline for submitting nominations for the following awards for excellent teaching practice offered by the College of Education.
- The Provost’s Award for Excellence in Teaching Award
- The Provost’s Award for Excellence in Interdisciplinary Teaching Award
- The Provost’s Outstanding New Teaching Award
- The Provost’s Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award
- The Provost’s Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award for Graduate Students
- Sylvia Wallace Sessional Lecturer Award

University Club Events
For a complete list of events, call 306-966-7775

Business and Leadership Programs
For a complete list of events, visit www.usask.ca/TIE

For information on how to register for these courses, please visit the University Club’s events page.
Room with a View

This year’s back-page feature explores the view of campus from various office windows, and the people who enjoy them. Do you have an interesting view? Let us know at ocn@usask.ca

Small window, big view

Kim Fontaine has a very small window in her Williams Building office but it has offered her quite a range of views.

The original scene looking east from the fourth floor “was pretty quiet – a fence and field” but then began construction of new student residences, including Graduate House. For more than three years, it’s been noisy and it’s been dusty but Fontaine, a marketing and communications co-ordinator in the Centre for Continuing and Distance Education, has enjoyed watching progress on the projects “and the construction workers on hot summer days.”

With completion of the residences, Fontaine is looking forward to being able to open her window and let in dust-free air when the weather warms up, and to keeping an eye on activities in College Quarter. Early this winter, she heard laughing and noticed two international students from residence, one of whom had fallen into a snow bank. “I think it was their first experience with snow but they were having fun with it. Frankly, I’d rather watch people than gophers.”