Going to the dogs

Canines show great promise as cancer research model

COLLEEN MACPHERSON

A dog owner who shows up at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) with a pet that has lymphoma might be surprised to see a molecular geneticist and an internist from the College of Medicine on the team of specialists handling the case.

Professor Troy Harkness from the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology and Dr. Terra Arnason, a biochemist and clinical endocrinologist with the College of Medicine, have moved their research on drug-resistant cancer across campus, to the WCVM, to explore dogs as models for research designed to help humans. It is an intriguing step that challenges the traditional mouse model for cancer research, and it is showing exciting potential.

"Yes, you can learn a lot with mice," said Harkness, "how cellular mechanisms might work, how drugs might work. It gives you an indication that yes, this might work," but might is the key word in his statement.

"Everything we're doing is to try to figure out how human disease can be helped," he said, but time and again, promising results in mice show no benefit for humans. Arnason said Type 1 diabetes can be cured many different ways in mice but none work for humans, and a significant number of clinical trials on inflammatory mechanisms that worked in mice failed in humans. "The benefits you see in mice studies—the eureka moments—have been very disappointing in humans," she said. "Mice are genetically so similar that it's become such an artificial system. The true advantage of our dog system is that they're just like us, from completely different backgrounds. Basically we're all mongrels."

"Mice also don't share the environment we live in," continued Harkness. "They live in sterile lab conditions but pet animals—dogs, cats, gerbils, hamsters—all share our environment."

Human and dogs also both develop lymphoma spontaneously, the canine version being very similar to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in humans. Both respond to the same treatment and both develop resistance which is what Harkness, Arnason and their colleagues—Dr. Val MacDonald, a veterinary medical oncologist, and Dr. Casey Gaunt, a small animal internal medicine specialist, both from the WCVM, and Tony Kusalik, a bioinformatics researcher in the College of Arts and Science—are exploring in their trial which recently received $165,000 from the Canadian Cancer Society.

The research team includes, back row from left, Tony Kusalik, Terra Arnason and Troy Harkness. Front row from the left are Val MacDonald and Casey Gaunt. In the centre are Cooper and Elphie.

See Dogs', Page 2
Dogs’ short lives a boon for researchers

Troy Harkness and students work with drug-resistant breast cancer. In December 2011 about Harkness’ work a story in this paper in the WCVM. MacDonald had a phone call from MacDonald what she called “a serendipitous opportunity.” Researchers had not considered administering toxic drugs that may be ineffective. “It could be weeks or months of drug resistance is often too apparent and then you’re administering drugs.”

Harkness and Arnason agree their research would not be progressing as it is had they not worked at a university with a veterinary college. Dogs, said Harkness, “just aren’t that accessible. Not all vet schools in Canada actually have an oncology department, but ours does.”

Even with the veterinary college in such close proximity, it has not been an easy journey. First, there is a shortage of dogs for the trial. Harkness and Arnason have funding for 25 dogs a year but so far, they have only been able to enroll a few. In most cases, by the time the dog shows drug resistance, the owners have paid as much as they can for treatment. To lessen the financial burden, researchers are offering $1,000 per patient to offset the cost of drugs.

The time commitment to doing the research is proving to be another hurdle. “The clinicians at the WCVM still have full-time clinical practices,” said Arnason. “They can’t increase their numbers because they’re already saturated and they don’t have technical support,” but the human and veterinary medical researchers remain committed to the project.

“If we hadn’t connected on a personal level, I don’t think this would have happened,” said Arnason. “We really had to push for time, push for connections, push for money. Everything. It was just the determination of the group of five of us to do it.”

The WCV and the College of Medicine provided $20,000 in seed money for the pilot study. Arnason said he is seeing trial results spreading rapidly, asking, what does this mean for human and veterinary medicine.

“We’re trying to test whether the observations we see in the tissue cultures and in dogs actually apply to humans.”

With word of the dog trial results spreading rapidly, Harkness said he is seeing interest from other researchers in moving away from the mice model. And Arnason presented their research at a conference in Chicago in the hope of encouraging others to use dogs as a cancer model rather than going directly from mice to humans.

Even with their success using dogs, Harkness and Arnason believe there is still a role for mice in basic research. “We’re still amenable to using mice because they can answer questions,” he said, “but the difficulty comes in asking, what does this mean for humans? Whatever we see, we have to tread carefully in our interpretations.”

NEW TO US

Dr. Michael Schwandt describes public health as “slow motion medicine” compared to clinical practice, where a doctor can treat a patient and see immediate results. In public health, the patient is the whole community so the treatment of health problems takes time, but Schwandt finds the field gratifying.

“One thing that’s always excited me about public health is the big-picture aspect of it,” he said. “Being right at that interface between knowledge generation and knowledge application is very exciting.”

Diagnosing public health problems can bring surprising results. Schwandt described work with Kenyan colleagues that found the greatest determinant of whether or not a person would get HIV was not intensive information programs on things like safe sex; it was whether or not a person had completed high school. He predicted solutions to Canadian health problems like obesity and diabetes will likely be found outside clinics and hospitals. “This is the sort of thing where decisions made outside of the health-care sector are likely to have big impacts on actual health outcomes,” he said.

Growing up in Winnipeg, Schwandt was drawn to professions that would allow him to help people. “In high school, I wanted to be a teacher, but it turned out I had a bit of an affinity for science, and it became a natural combination to apply that to human health and to medicine.”

Schwandt finished a psychology degree at UBC, then completed his MD at the University of Manitoba. Further training in family and community medicine at the Women’s College Hospital with the University of Toronto was followed by a graduate degree from the Harvard School of Public Health. He joined the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology in the U of S College of Medicine in 2013 after a fellowship at the U of T.

NEW TO US highlights the work of new faculty members at the University of Saskatchewan. If you are new to campus, or know someone who is, please email ocn@usask.ca.
Remembering those who served
Great War commemoration underway

COLLEEN MACPHERSON

When the First World War broke out in August of 1914, the University of Saskatchewan was just seven years old and fewer than 50 degrees had been awarded to graduates. But the institution still made a significant contribution to the war effort, a contribution that will be recognized with a series of events over the coming four years.

“The Great War was an event that sent shock waves throughout Canadian society and had a profound impact on that generation,” said Bill Waiser, retired history professor and chair of the university’s Great War Commemoration committee. “At the U of S, about 75 per cent of the student body heeded the call to arms in 1914. Staff and faculty enlisted too and by 1916, the College of Engineering was temporarily shut down for lack of teachers and students.

Today, 350 university people are memorialized on the walls of the Peter MacKinnon Building for their war service but Waiser and his committee believe there is much more to consider and remember about that period in U of S, and Canadian, history.

The commemoration committee has plans for many events over the next four years, he said, and they fall into two thematic areas—the university and Saskatoon at war, and second, the war at the university and in Saskatoon.

The flagship commemoration event will be a series of public lectures, including one by award-winning Canadian author Joseph Boyden in October but among other possibilities the committee is considering are displays of archival materials and artwork of the day, a war food week, an Antiques Roadshow-esque opportunity for experts to assess personal memorabilia, and a Great War soiree featuring stories and songs, poems and letters.

“Yes, it is ambitious,” said Waiser, “but we’ve trying to make it as engaging and as educational as possible.”

Many of the materials that will be featured over the four years—documents, photos and memorabilia—come from University Archives. One example is the letters of Edmund Oliver, the university’s first history professor. Waiser said Oliver wrote very regularly to his wife while he was overseas and those letters “provide an almost daily glimpse into life at the front. In fact, the Great War was also called the postcard war because of the amount of mail that was delivered home from overseas. I’m talking about millions of pieces of correspondence.”

Outside the university, the 1914-1918 war resulted in profound and lasting change in all of Canadian society, he continued.

“Income tax was introduced in 1917 as a temporary measure—they forgot the ‘temporary’ part—and daylight savings time was introduced during the Great War. Thinking of what happened on the western front, the wristwatch was a war innovation because soldiers couldn’t be forever pulling their pocket watches out. And you had women’s suffrage succeed during the Great War, and the introduction of prohibition at home even though soldiers received a daily rum ration.”

Waiser said University Archives built and will maintain a war commemoration website throughout the coming four years with information about events and links to materials. The commemoration will conclude with a rededication of the Memorial Gates in 2018.

The university’s plans will tie in with other centennial activities in the city and province, he said, and although the committee is aware of activities planned by other Canadian universities, “we’re not trying to replicate them. This Great War had a profound impact on this university so we need to commemorate it in our own way.”

Details of the commemoration events will soon be available at greatwar.usask.ca. Follow the events on Twitter (@gwcp306) or Facebook (Great War Commemoration Project).

FROM THE ARCHIVES

A special soldier

When the Great War Commemoration committee set out to develop a graphic to distinguish its events and website, they only had to go to the University Archives to find exactly what they needed.

The red and black rememberUS graphic includes the image of a First World War soldier, head bowed and hands resting on the stock of his rifle. Patrick Hayes, archives technician, found it on the front page of the Nov. 6, 1936 issue of The Sheaf. It appears to have been created by the newspaper staff as part of Remembrance Day coverage, said Hayes, so to use it rather than a stock image gives the graphic special connection to the U of S.

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Thanks for donations

The Saskatchewan Environmental Society would like to thank everyone from the University community that donates to our organization through the U of S payroll deduction plan. Your generosity is sincerely appreciated! Your donations are supporting important work on sustainable energy and climate solutions, water protection, resource conservation, biodiversity preservation, and reduction of toxic substances.

As a charitable organization, the Saskatchewan Environmental Society works towards a world in which all needs can be met in sustainable ways: sustainability will require healthy ecosystems, healthy livelihoods and healthy human communities.

The SES has been active in Saskatchewan since 1970 and is committed to supporting sustainable living and sustainable resource use in Saskatchewan. We work with, and on behalf of, communities, organizations, businesses and policy makers to encourage informed decision-making that moves us towards sustainability. We undertake research, and use education, community outreach, consultation opportunities and demonstration projects to provide the people of Saskatchewan the information and tools they need to make these informed decisions.

For those of you contributing to SES through the payroll deduction plan, and are not currently receiving our newsletter, please let us know and we will gladly add your name to our mailing list by emailing info@environmentalsociety.ca or calling 306-665-1915. You can also choose to “Self Identify to Charity” on the Charitable Donations page in your My Employment channel of PAWS.

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Again, thank you to those of you who contribute to the SES through the U of S payroll deduction plan. We appreciate the difference our University donors are making! ■

Allyson Brady, SES Executive Director

In Memoriam

Leo R. Baird, FMD, April 20
Karen A. Heiber, April 21
Hubert C. Johnson, History, April 22
Margaret O. Murphy, Dentistry, May 5
Herbert D. Peters, Psychology, May 14
Dufferin S. Spafford, Political Studies, May 14
Olga Geist, Library, May 17
Karl F. Seemann, Anatomy, May 19
John Hilts, Chemistry, May 20
James D. Horel, May 28
Garth H. Thomas, Mathematics and Statistics, May 29
Alexander Livingston, Veterinary Medicine, June 7
George E. Lee, Agriculture, June 10
James G. Ellis, Agriculture, June 13

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

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ON CAMPUS NEWS

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Advertising rates are available online or on request.

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ISSN: 1795-7554

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PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40065156

The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man’s Search for Meaning, Lewis Thomas’s The Lives of a Cell. So this is my love letter to Theology where they kept her letters and complete short stories. Through prof’s suggestions and those of friends, I also found Frakel’s Man’s Search for Meaning, Lewis Thomas’s The Lives of a Cell.

Sure, there are and have been other bookstores in town, but campus is where I spent, and still spend, most of my time, so the U of S Bookstore is often my go to place. Pros put books on reading lists for their students, but I am often the unintended beneficiary. Now I’ve noticed in the TransformUS ranking of departments at the university that the General section of the Bookstore has been put in the fifth quintile. As in other departments so ranked, no one knows exactly what will happen to it. Regarding my favourite part of the Bookstore, no one’s called me up to ask for my opinion, but when I saw it put on the endangered species list (I’ve bought a lot of bird books at the U of S Bookstore, as well), I thought about how much I’d miss it if it was taken away.

So this is my love letter to my favourite part of the U of S Campus. Nostalgic? Probably. Sentimental? Somewhat. But an honest reflection on a good and wide-ranging education that would not have been near what it became without all parts of the U of S Bookstore. That, too, to paraphrase one credit card company’s advertisement, there are some things on which you cannot put a price. ■

Bill Robertson teaches creative writing in the Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP),
**Preston Smith**

Relentless, flexible in restructuring medicine

To be sure, the new dean of medicine at the U of S sees many changes on the horizon for the college but Dr. Preston Smith wonders if there is a group of professionals better prepared for change than doctors.

“Our faculty members don’t treat heart failure the same way as in the past; they fully expect the medicine they practice to be as cutting edge and evidence based as possible, and the medicine we teach should be as well.”

Because medical knowledge and research changes so quickly, too should the schools teaching it, said Smith who stepped into a five-year term as dean June 1, adding he is ready for the challenges and changes that come with his new role.

“There are a lot of drivers for change in medical education,” said Smith. “Accreditation is one. Student success on the medical council exams is another. The final (SSHA) Medical Student Residency Matching Service competition, and our students’ ability to compete for residency spots across the country. That’s all about the clinical skills.”

But for Smith, it comes down to how fast medical knowledge changes and grows.

“The body of knowledge over time has grown exponen-

tially,” explained Smith, who most recently held the position of senior associate dean of education at Dalhousie University’s Faculty of Medicine. “The estimate by some is that the medical database, in terms of research and new information, is doubling every three years.”

In order to keep pace and to address longstanding

structural issues that landed the U of S college on probation with the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools, a vision implementation plan called The Way Forward, was created. Turning plan to reality is Smith’s immediate priority.

“We must be relentless and flexible as we move forward in implementing our strategic plan. The Way Forward is the entire basis of what we are going to do to change the College of Medicine, get off probation and start becoming a highly compet-

tive research operation,” said Smith, who worked on similar issues at Dalhousie to those faced by the U of S.

“I am certainly at an age and stage in my career that tonight I was ready for this challenge. The job I had at Dal for the last...
For non-users, a communications medium that offers only 140 characters might seem marginal at best, but for users in the U of S’s research community, Twitter is revealing itself to be a valuable tool.

“If you want to stay current, I would argue there is no choice,” tweeted Andy Potter (@aap53), director and CEO of the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-International Vaccine Centre (VIDO-InterVac).

“Nowadays an online presence is as important as publishing your research,” she tweeted.

These benefits also extend into the professional world, although the jury is still out on their extent. A paper published in 2011 in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* reported that “highly tweeted articles were 11 times more likely to be highly cited than less-tweeted articles.” While this was disputed in later work published in 2013 in the *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, research and discussion on the value of Twitter continues. For example, one article-in-progress in *PeerJ PrePrints* examines the value of the social media tool in helping scientists create and publish ideas throughout the life cycle of a publication.

While hard data may still be forthcoming on its professional benefits, researchers in the U of S community are finding Twitter valuable in other ways, including the ability to touch audiences directly, across boundaries of discipline and even ideology.

“You can directly communicate your research to the public and then observe the ripples it makes,” Korbas tweeted, while Potter cites “engagement with those who have different viewpoints, e.g. anti-vaccine folks,” as one of the most valuable things he’s gotten from Twitter.

“(I’ve gained) a better appreciation for current research in other disciplines, particularly microbiology,” tweeted Matt Lindsay (@mbjlindsay), an assistant professor in the Department of Geological Sciences.

“(It’s) well worth the effort. (It’s) also a great way to remain productive at airports, etc.”

Another concern is the amount of time Twitter can add to already busy schedules, but this need not be an issue. “(Twitter takes) minimal time – heck, I am lying on my bed right now! (It’s) well worth the effort. (It’s) a great skill to have,” Cummings tweeted.

“Definitely a good skill,” tweeted Grant Ferguson (@geosomething), an associate professor in the Department of Civil and Geological Engineering. “I’ve made students compose tweets offline to see if they grasp a concept.”

Like any social media tool, Twitter has its hazards. Stephen Urquhart (@urquhart), a professor in the Department of Chemistry, warns that anti-vaccine folks, “(It’s) challenging to differentiate between opportunities for real debate and trolls.”

“Like any social media tool, Twitter has its hazards. Stephen Urquhart (@urquhart) warns that anti-vaccine trolls can add to already busy schedules, but this need not be an issue.

“Some times a hard call, (but) we have a professional responsibility to defend and clarify the scientific process.”

McBeth suggested users deny trolls the attention they crave by ignoring them.

“There is no bad publicity,” she tweeted. “By engaging, we bring (trolls) credibility, and I don’t want to do that!”

Another concern is the amount of time Twitter can add to already busy schedules, but this need not be an issue. “(Twitter takes) minimal time – heck, I am lying on my bed right now! (It’s) well worth the effort.”

For researchers that are intrigued but unsure of how to proceed, McBeth advised finding a mentor to help you build a network and learn the culture,” she tweeted.
New server makes registration a breeze

Mark Roman acknowledges that registering for classes at the University of Saskatchewan hasn’t always been a walk in the park, but that all changed this year. “Thousands of students attempting to register for classes at the same time put a colossal strain on our registration system—until now,” said Roman, chief information officer and associate vice-president of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) at the U of S.

ICT staff recently signed a new campus-wide software license agreement and implemented a major server upgrade, he explained. These changes allowed ICT to harness enough power to ensure most students who registered for fall and winter classes would find it to be a fairly effortless process.

“By implementing this new licensing model, the ICT team maximized our server capacity enabling us to have the most successful registration in our history of online registration,” said Roman. The upgrade allowed the new server to be solely used for student registration. This in turn allowed a greater number of students to register in a shorter time period. The new system was put to the test, reaching its limit on a couple of occasions, but never came close to crashing, said Roman.

To reduce the risk of the registration system crashing, students are given a registration access date and time. This year there were 12 registration windows.

About 1,000 students were successfully registered in their classes just 15 minutes after one of the registration windows opened; it took an hour for those numbers to be reached last year, according to Roman. “I’m told we had a few worried students phone in,” said Roman. “Registering for classes was so easy they thought something had gone wrong, but it hadn’t.”

Word of the efficiency of the system spread across social media, affirming the positive experience. “Delighted to say class registration was a record time this year, only took me 10 minutes,” said @carlyVnorris on Twitter.

“It’s a good feeling to be registered in the classes I wanted” said @shortie_emma on Twitter.
New ‘old’ seats in Airplane Room

It’s out with the old, and in with the new “old” as the lecture theatre Thorvaldson 271, familiar to many as the Airplane Room, undergoes a seating renovation.

The almost 300 wooden seats in the room, which are as old as the building itself (what was then called the Chemistry Building opened in 1924), are being replaced with exact replicas as part of the university’s classroom enhancement program. Produced by Hy-Grade Millwork Ltd. of Saskatoon, the new chairs of stained maple bottoms and birch plywood backs will maintain the historic character of one of the best-known spaces on the U of S campus.

Andrew Wallace, associate director of space planning in the Facilities Management Division and an expert on historic preservation, said the accepted approach for replacing features like the Thorvaldson 271 seats is called replacement “in kind,” meaning the materials and design are as close a match as possible to the original.

Unfortunately, the old seats are elm and regulatory limitations mean that wood is not available for the replacements. But, carpenters are carefully disassembling the old chairs and reusing the original metal brackets that connect the seat, back and writing tablet together and then to the original metal pedestals.

The $140,000 replacement project, funded from the annual capital renewal fund, was necessary because the screws that secure the chairs to their pedestals were stripping and pulling out at a rate that was difficult to keep up with, Wallace said.

He added no decision has been made yet about whether the new chairs will be numbered like the old ones. “We are still looking into whether the numbers are original. The plan is to wait until the project is finished and see how it looks before making a decision.”

Dedicated to supporting Aboriginal students

Many people ask Graeme Joseph how he ended up at the University of Saskatchewan, and the answer is simple: he wanted to work for an institution where Aboriginal education “is a very clear priority.”

Joseph assumed the position of team leader of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Student Success in the Aboriginal Student Centre (ASC) May 15, having spent the previous 14 years engaging with Aboriginal students at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. And he views his new role at the U of S as a continuation and expansion of that work.

“I’ve dedicated my life to serving Aboriginal people and supporting Aboriginal students,” he said, “looking for ways to provide them with a quality education while helping them maintain their cultural identity.”

As team leader, Joseph sees three main responsibilities in his work. First is providing leadership to the student services team in the ASC. The second is building on existing relationships between the ASC and others across campus who also provide services to Aboriginal students.

“What we want is a continuum of support,” he said, “starting when they are prospective students all the way to when they are alumni. There are much wider conversations that need to take place” to develop an integrated strategy to ensure the university is recruiting well-qualified students and that social, academic and financial barriers to post-secondary education are overcome.

“We need a greater understanding of the student experience using student data,” he said, with the goal of strategic, systematic and sustainable supports “built right into the fabric of the institution, is just part of its character.” One heartening sign is that since he joined the ASC, “there has been a lot of change and that’s challenging, but the Aboriginal priority hasn’t fallen off the table.”

Surveys help pinpoint red tape hot spots

Red tape, that ubiquitous reality of doing business, can be annoying at best and, at worst, a frustrating hinderance to getting done what needs to get done. At the University of Saskatchewan, it is an issue being tackled by the Red Tape Commission and while the group does not promise it can untangle all the snags, it hopes to help streamline some processes or explain why others are necessary.

Law Professor Beth Bilson chairs the commission, which was established in the current integrated plan. Its mandate is to identify the pressure points for employees and students, and do what it can to find resolution “but we’re under no illusion we can address everyone’s pet peeves,” she said.

Using the results of two recent surveys—one for faculty and staff, and one for students—the four members of the commission have been able to identify some of what Bilson termed “hot spots” when it comes to red tape. For students, those spots seem to be processes like registration, transfer credits and course overrides. The survey responses also mentioned academic advising and trouble with things like getting appointments, she said, concerns she has discussed with academic advising groups on campus.

Faculty and staff identified a wide range of issues in their survey responses, she said. They include the speed (or lack of) with which expense claims are paid, the new travel system “which has what you might call mixed reviews,”

“We’re under no illusion we can address everyone’s pet peeves.”

Beth Bilson

PCard accounting and the complexity of the purchasing system. Over the coming months, committee members will be meeting with various stakeholders to identify and target the most significant of the survey responses.

“We are looking forward to hearing from you.”

Beth Bilson

See Red, Page 10
Curriculum to emphasize clinical training

Enhanced resources a priority for Wasan

I need to work with our faculty members and help them get the dollars they need to do great research.

When people in Saskatchewan read about us in the paper, they will take pride in the accomplishments of our medical school.

Dean knows expectations of the province

I think we have an opportunity, and it’s a rare one, to produce the best teachers.

When all of that comes together, Wasan said it is very important to focus on sharing all the good news with the campus community.

"The great thing about the U of S and college is we are amazing, humble, down-to-earth people. That’s what I love. But it hurts too because you don’t brag about yourselves and the great things that are happening. I’ve told everybody that I will be the chief bragger and show off for you because everyone needs to know.”
Red Tape Commission will conclude its work with report, recommendations to provost

From Page 8 administrative departments to share the results and discuss potential solutions.

There were also a number of instances where the commission was not able to fully certi-
fi ed in research processes like the complexity of setting up research accounts and admin-
istration of those accounts. The number of signatures needed on various forms also got quite a few reactions. “People accept the need for signatures as a rational for accountability,” she said, “but they question whether the way the system works now satisfies that objective.”

She added a recent meeting with research services managers to talk about the survey findings was fruitful, “any avenue they might pursue to streamline things they’re very interested in.”

Eliminating red tape appears, in some cases, to be relatively straightforward, said Johnson. One example she gave related to copyright compliance and the need to complete paper forms rather than fill them online. “Isn’t that a bit of an old fashioned?” she wondered. But there are processes that require other forms and original signatures in order to satisfy the university auditor; in cases like those, change is simply not an option.

Bislon said the measures for success of the commission will be in either providing an explana-
tion for why red tape exists “that people find compelling” or being able “to make a good enough case for doing things a different way.”

“It’s not realistic to suppose we’re going to transform the face of red tape and eliminate all bureaucracy; we don’t have the power to do anything but propose a series of things to people with the unrealistic idea that any requirements for forms, rules or standards are a bother but most people see that and the organization has to have parameters.”

She added there is “a fair bit of consensus whether the university is actually listening.”

Being able to address some red tape issues will be a step in dispelling that idea.

The commission is working on a website to allow more comments about red tape, and it is considering using focus groups to glean more detail about pressure points in people’s lives. One particular interest to Bislon and her colleagues is the situation of young faculty and ensuring “what the univer-
sity has set up to support them is not simply creating more hurdles for them.”

After it has completed mining of the survey results and meeting with the appropriate people across campus to discuss red tape, the commission with make its recommendations in a final report to the provost.
The following announcements have been made by the Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic:

- Tom Steele appointed head of the Department of Physics and Engineering Physics for a five-year term ending June 30, 2019.
- Dr. Gill White extended as acting vice-dean, medical education for the period of up to one year beginning July 1.
- Jim Handy reappointed as head of the Department of History for a two-year term effective July 1.
- Jay Wilson named head of the Department of Curriculum Studies in the College of Education for a five-year term.
- Beverly Brenna appointed to the position of acting associate dean, undergraduate education, partnerships and research in the College of Education until June 30, 2015.
- Lisa Vargo reappointed as head of the Department of English for two years starting July 1.
- Dr. Barry Blakely appointed acting head of the Department of Veterinary Microbiology and Veterinary Pathology until Dec. 31.
- Peter Alward appointed head of the Department of Philosophy for a five-year term effective July 1.
- Dianne Miller extended as head of the Department of Educational Foundations to June 30, 2015.
- Joe Garcia appointed head of the Department of Political Studies until June 30, 2015.
- Aaron Phoenix extended as acting associate dean academic in the College of Engineering to Dec. 31.
- Martin Phillipson extended until Dec. 31 as vice provost, College of Medicine organizational restructuring.
- Dr. John Campbell reappointed head of the Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences for a three-year term effective July 1.
- Leon Wegner appointed head of the Department of Civil and Geological Engineering for a five-year term effective July 1.
- Mobinul Huq appointed as acting head of the Department of Economics until Dec. 31.
- Ken Van Rees appointed acting head of the Department of Soil Science until Dec. 31.
- Dr. Gillian Muir appointed head of the Department of Veterinary Biomedical Sciences for a five-year term starting July 1.
- Douglas Thorpe appointed head of the Department of Drama for a two-year term until June 30, 2016.
- Mary Ellen Andrews extended as acting associate dean, North and North Western campus and rural and remote engagement, College of Nursing, until June 30, 2015.
- Dr. Meredith McGuire appointed acting assistant dean, academic, College of Medicine for a term of up to six months.
- Dr. Gordon McKay extended as acting vice-dean, research, College of Medicine for a period of up to six months beginning July 1.
- Dr. Sheila Harding extended until June 30, 2015 as associate dean, undergraduate medical education, College of Medicine.
- Dr. Joseph Blouenau reappointed as acting unified head of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, College of Medicine, effective July 1 for up to one year.
- Raj Srinivasan extended as head of the Dept. of Mathematics and Statistics, College of Arts and Science until July 30, 2015.
- Lawrence Martz appointed acting vice-dean, social sciences, in the College of Arts and Science until June 30, 2015.
- Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine extended as acting assistant dean, quality, in the College of Medicine for up to one year.
- Dr. Athena McConnell appointed acting assistant dean, Philosophy for a five-year term effective July 1.

A wild boar captured on a trail-cam in Saskatchewan

Sounding the alarm about wild boar threat

MICHAEL ROBIN

They only come out at night, harassing livestock, spreading disease and rototilling parks, fields and wildlife habitat before vanishing into cover before dawn.

“I don’t think many people in Saskatchewan are aware of how severe the impacts of feral wild boar can be,” said University of Saskatchewan researcher Ryan Brook, who has just published what he believes to be the first peer-reviewed scientific study of the animals in Canada.

“Feral boar are quite elusive and primarily nocturnal so many people have boar (in their area) and don’t know it.”

Brook has been sounding the alarm about the dangers of feral wild boar since he arrived at the University of Saskatchewan in 2010. His latest research, in collaboration with colleague Floris van Beest from the University of Aarhus, Denmark, shows how widespread feral wild boar have become over the province. Brook and van Beest surveyed all 296 RMs in Saskatchewan with the objective of identifying the presence of feral wild boar and thus providing a baseline assessment of feral wild boar distribution over the province. The area in and around Moose Mountain Provincial Park is a particular hot spot, where local ranchers and farmers have banded together to hunt them in a formal eradication program.

But little was known about wild boar distribution over the entire province until Brook and van Beest surveyed all 296 Saskatchewan rural municipalities. Although the animals are mostly active at night, there were enough sightings to determine that feral wild boar likely exist in a surprising number of areas.

“Feral boar are widespread but most likely at low densities so as of right now, total impacts are probably generally low,” Brook said. “The big concern is what will happen in the near future if the boar population continues to expand and increase.”

Imported as an alternative livestock option for farmers in the 1990s, wild boar have easily adapted to Saskatchewan’s harsh climate. They have one of the highest reproductive rates of any large animal, with sows producing two litters of six or more piglets every year.

“If nothing is done then we risk having more feral boar than people in the province and at that point the costs of taking action are far greater,” Brook said. “Early action will have huge economic savings.”

Wild boar have made their presence known in various parts of the province. The area in and near Moose Mountain Provincial Park is a particular hot spot, where local ranchers and farmers have banded together to hunt them in a formal eradication program.

But little was known about wild boar distribution over the entire province until Brook and van Beest surveyed all 296 Saskatchewan rural municipalities. Although the animals are mostly active at night, there were enough sightings to determine that feral wild boar likely exist in 70 per cent of the province’s RMs. The researchers also observed that control plans are spotty and sporadic across the country, and call for “aggressive and co-ordinated actions” both across Canada and the neighbouring U.S. states to meet the threat. Brook explained that sport hunting has little impact on population growth, so provincial and municipal authorities will need to consider aggressive options such as hunting from aircraft, at night, using trained dogs and ground trapping. “We’ll probably need all of these in the tool box to be reasonably effective,” Brook said. Since some of these options are not currently legal in Saskatchewan, the solution will require both legislation and a public policy response. There also needs to be tighter regulations on how wild boar are farmed in the province.

“Certainly right now the production of domestic wild boar is really unregulated, so you have some operations that are very well run and follow or exceed provincial guidelines, while others have major security issues,” Brook said, citing one 2013 example where about 400 wild boar escape from a ranch in southeast Saskatchewan.

Brook stressed that any solution must include active partnerships with farmers, hunters and other rural stakeholders, especially since they are the eyes and ears of an effective control program.

“When people are actively engaged in the issue and their knowledge is used and respected, they are much more likely to be actively involved in addressing the problem.”

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Around the Bowl

Tom Steele

Dr. Gill White

Jim Handy

Jay Wilson

Lisa Vargo

Dr. Athena McConnell

Dianne Miller

Joe Garcea

Aaron Phoenix

Martin Phillipson

Dr. John Campbell

Leon Wegner

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Ken Van Rees

Dr. Gillian Muir

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Dr. Meredith McGuire

Dr. Gordon McKay

Dr. Sheila Harding

Dr. Joseph Blouenau

Raj Srinivasan

Lawrence Martz

Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine

Michael Robin
Ken Van Rees is a professor and director of the Centre for Northern Agroforestry and Afforestation. His specialization is in forest soils, and in the course of his research, he has had the opportunity to explore a variety of boreal ecosystems, including that of Canada’s far North.

In July-September 1927, Group of Seven member A.Y. Jackson was part of the first Canadian government expedition to the Arctic. His painting and chilling sketches of “the land beyond summer” illustrate the same geography that Van Rees experienced decades later.

These two forces—the art of science and the science of art—both occurred in the same desolate space, and converged in the University Archives and Special Collections. Van Rees enthusiastically compared his own memories of the area to its depiction in Jackson’s sketches, such as those contained in the book shown here.