

# President's Message

## The strength of community

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*One of the wonderful things about the University of Manitoba is the extent to which we speak of this university as a community. This can be an unusual sentiment to have about a workplace or a place of study, but it is one which I believe we embrace to our benefit – it suggests we all belong to a larger whole, all contributing in our own way. On the heels of Homecoming 2009, I am again reminded that this community extends to all corners of the world through the many relationships we continue to foster with you, our alumni.*

You will recall in my last president's message, we looked at the planning framework, approved earlier this year by Senate and by the Board. As always, alumni will play a key role in helping us shape the university's future and I would like to update you on where we are today.

For months there have been reports about the global economic slowdown and its effects. Although in Manitoba we so far have been protected from the worst of these effects, the province and the University of Manitoba are not immune. As you have no doubt seen in local and national news, the University of Manitoba faces significant funding challenges heading into the future. A combination of factors, including the need to make extraordinary pension payments, have resulted in a need

for an additional \$36.4 million to sustain our current programming levels into the coming year. This significantly exceeds the level of increase the Province provided to us this year, and we know that demands on the provincial budget make an increase of this magnitude unlikely next year.

I am working closely with the new Premier and the provincial government to ensure that they are aware of our needs and opportunities, and my team is committed to making the best use of the resources available to us in a time of budgetary constraints. Earlier this fall, we launched two projects intended to help us improve services and programs, make optimal use of our resources, and address our budgetary constraints: Optimizing Academic Resources (OARS), and Resource Optimization and Service Enhancement (ROSE).

By taking certain immediate steps, and acting on recommendations that come forth from both the OARS and ROSE initiatives in early 2010, we believe we will have more options available to us when funding levels are announced in the spring. We will move forward with our four development goals – academic enhancement, student experience, Aboriginal achievement and being an employer of choice – and we will make the decisions necessary to ensure we do so regardless of economic conditions.

We are fortunate to have engaged alumni who care deeply for their alma mater. As we move the University of Manitoba forward through economic uncertainty, I thank you for the many ways you support our institution – as donors, as ambassadors, as volunteers – and assure you that our efforts to respond to challenging times will not come at the expense of providing current and future students with the best possible education.

We invite your feedback on the steps we are taking to improve this institution and we will keep you informed on how we are progressing towards our objectives.

This institution has built its legacy of excellence thanks in great part to the contributions of you, its graduates. To me, that is a history well worth repeating. As partners in this enterprise, we ask that you continue to believe in the value of a U of M education and encourage future generations to discover their potential on our campuses; that employers hire fellow U of M graduates; and community leaders remember that earning a post secondary education in Manitoba boosts the health of our province.

Like any community, we can handle challenges if we work together. And so we should, because there is much for us to be proud of at the U of M. For example: we've recently added a trio of new Canada Research Chairs; three of our professors were inducted into the Royal Society of Canada this year; our pharmacy students were the best in the nation with a 98 per cent pass rate for the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada Qualifying Examination; and in fall we graduated 1,325 students while enrolment increased by 4.3 per cent.

In Atul Gawande's book *Better*, he says this, which is, I think, very helpful in our current circumstances: "Arriving at meaningful solutions is an inevitably slow and difficult process. Nonetheless ... better is possible. It does not take genius. It takes diligence. It takes moral clarity. It takes ingenuity. And, above all, it takes a willingness to try." Let's all work together to make the University of Manitoba better.

**DAVID T. BARNARD**  
President and Vice-Chancellor