

Vice-Provost Faculty Relations Newsletter

What's New?

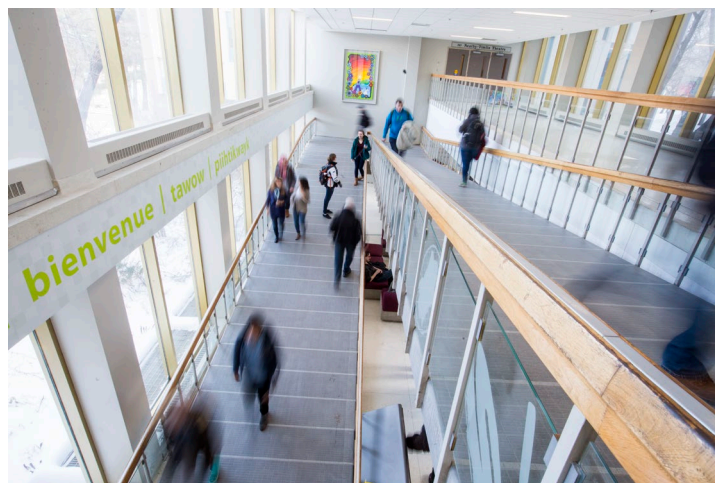
The Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty Relations monthly newsletter is distributed to all faculty. The newsletter's purpose is to offer helpful tips, send out reminders, answer Frequently Asked Questions, and to highlight items of interest to faculty.

Office Updates

The President's Review Committee has completed a review of cases put forward by colleges for the 2019-2020 period and meetings to review appeal cases will begin shortly (the deadline to submit appeal cases was February 28). Any questions about PRC can be directed to Jacque Zinkowski at jacque.zinkowski@usask.ca

Due to COVID-19, we will be continuing to offer our Leadership Networking Sessions for Department Heads virtually. Please check our "Upcoming Dates and Deadlines" section in the newsletter

regularly for upcoming sessions. Sessions run monthly until the end of April, and new sessions will be announced in the newsletter and on our [website's homepage](#). If any Department Heads are interested in RSVPing for a session or would like more information, please contact Anna Okapiec at anna.okapiec@usask.ca.



Please note we did not send out a newsletter in February due to technical difficulties, so our second issue for 2021 is the March one.

What's New Cont'd...

In February our office sent out a notice to all Deans, Executive Directors, and Department Heads about the Faculty Recruitment and Retention Program. Due to budgetary changes, the program has decreased its matching funding from a maximum of \$30,000 to \$20,000. This change was effective immediately and will apply to all new and future applicants. For more information on the Faculty Recruitment and Retention Program, please see our [website](#) and feel free to contact our office if you have any questions at vpfaculty.relations@usask.ca.

USask's Wellness website has some great resources for staff and faculty regarding Covid-19, including webinars, workshops, and a video series on mental health. Check out upcoming wellness [events](#), and their [Covid-19 resource page](#) for helpful information and tips.

A memo was sent out in February to all faculty, Deans, and Department Heads regarding Faculty Vacation Entitlement and the COVID-19 pandemic. In summary, consistent with the terms of the [Collective Agreement](#),



vacation entitlement and usage will remain unchanged, despite the pandemic. Salary shall not be paid in lieu of unused vacation time, and vacation entitlement will not accumulate from one year to the next. Although vacation looks significantly different than normal under these times, we encourage all faculty to use their vacation time, even if it means simply taking some time off to relax and recharge at home. If for some reason you did not receive this vacation memo, please contact your Department Head/Dean, or our [office](#) for a copy.

Reminders & Events

Upcoming Dates & Deadlines:

- **March 25 from 2-3:30pm:** [LNS for Department Heads](#) on Annual Reviews and Giving Formative Feedback (virtual event).

See the [collegial process calendar](#) for more information on these dates and specific dates on tenure, probation, renewal, and salary review.

**Vice-Provost
Pick of the Month**

***A Letter from Dr. Ken Wilson, Vice-Provost
Faculty Relations, to all Faculty:***

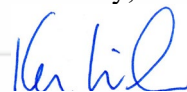
For this month's pick, we hear from Ken on his thoughts regarding how COVID-19 has impacted the upcoming processes of tenure and promotion, annual review, and assignment of duties.

Dear colleagues,

As March follows its steady pace, it is hard to believe a year has passed since the pandemic hit, and our lives changed drastically. The year seems to somehow have gone by very quickly and yet taken forever. We transitioned to remote teaching, meeting online, and working from home almost instantly. And while the world seemed to stop in its tracks, facing unprecedented lockdowns and limiting everything that once seemed normal, the pace of work exponentially increased for all of us, placing equally unprecedented demands on our time. In a recent meeting I heard a comment that *"if we had planned this shift, it would have taken eight years and required forty committees."* While this may be true, I like to think that thoughtful and purposeful change would have allowed for a very different outcome. As we are heading into the last four months of our academic year, there are processes that need to unfold. Coming up we have assignment of duties for the 2021-22 academic year. These will be challenging as we try to balance the needs of units with those of individuals. This is especially relevant for faculty facing critical stages of their careers. Those striving to meet the standards for tenure and promotion are under the most unprecedented and exceptional circumstances, while balancing equally unprecedented and challenging personal needs and home lives. The ability to have open dialogs about needs and expectations are critical elements to support the success of this process, however this year, given the many competing demands that faculty members, department heads, and deans face, this need is more crucial than ever. If you need help, please ask. There are many ways we can help, but we need to know when and what is needed.

Dialog will also be important as we prepare for annual reviews of progress towards tenure and promotion. Further extending the probationary period is not a viable solution and will be counterproductive because it will slow down faculty career progression. Instead, we need to refine our approach to assessment in the context of the current environment. As we strive for academic excellence, we need to recognize excellence in the context of a pandemic, and in the long term, we need to recognize excellence in the context of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The members of the University Review Committee are reflecting on these concepts as we are revising the standards for promotion and tenure. This spring will be a good time to discuss how your department and/or college will need to thoughtfully assess cases going forward for tenure and promotion in the context of these unprecedented demands and long-term goals.

Sincerely,



End Notes: Faculty Spotlight

A new study led by Dr. Gabriela Mángano and Dr. Luis Buatois in the Department of Geological Sciences has found evidence that trilobites (hard-shelled animals whose fossils dominate the record of early life on Earth) existed in estuaries, during the Ordovician Period approximately 460 million years ago. They were previously thought to have lived only in oceans. Read more about this exciting discovery [here](#).

Using Fort McMurray, AB as a model, USask researchers have developed a novel methodological approach to help manage the ice-jam flood mitigation process. Their findings evaluate various factors like water flow and ice thickness, and provide a framework for assessing three different methods that can be used to help mitigate flooding. To read more about their findings, check it out [here](#).

USask was announced in late January as one of the 15 winners of the North American TD Ready Challenge presented by TD Banking Group. The award consists of a \$650K grant which will go towards working with First Nations and Métis communities to address the impacts of COVID-19. The research is being led by Dr. Caroline Tait in the College of Medicine and a member of Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S), and Dr. Simon Lambert, an Indigenous (Māori) researcher in the College of Arts and Science. Read more about the grant and research work [here](#).

In early February, VIDO began COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials for COVAC-2, which is the COVID-19 vaccine developed by VIDO. This is an incredible milestone, and we would like to say thank you and congratulations to all faculty and staff involved in COVID-19 work. Read about the trials [here](#). More information about the incredible COVID-19 research happening at our university can also be found [here](#).

The Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund has provided more than \$6.5M to support livestock research at USask, including funding to the Prairie Swine Centre, VIDO, and 19 individual USask research projects, including forage crop breeding development at USask's Global Institute for Food Security. More information on the funding and individual projects can be viewed [here](#).

A USask-led research team in the Department of Psychiatry has found that an alternate form of brain protein that causes Alzheimer's can actually protect against it, which could eventually help clinicians identify patients that may be at higher risk for it. Read more about the findings [here](#).

If you have something you'd like to see highlighted in Faculty Spotlight, send your suggestions to vpfaculty.relations@usask.ca.

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