



From the Editor / L. Ian MacDonald

## Canadian Universities

Welcome to our special issue on Canada's universities, for which we have partnered with Universities Canada, which represents nearly 100 universities across the country. In 2015, there were 1.7 million full and part-time university students in Canada, while Canadian universities accounted for \$35 billion of economic activity, employing 250,000 people.

In this extensive cover package, we examine a wide range of challenges and opportunities facing Canadian universities, from R&D and innovation, from STEM to STEAM, from fundraising to infrastructure renewal, from the challenges of indigenous higher education to student aid.

We begin with a remarkable Q&A with Governor General David Johnston, who in a previous life was principal of McGill University for 15 years, and president of Waterloo University for another 12 years. "Welcome to our humble abode," he said as we met at Rideau Hall.

The GG has made higher education one of the touchstones of his vice-regal term. There were no "governor generalities" in our conversation; he was impassioned in his advocacy of universities.

Universities Canada Chair Elizabeth Cannon, president of University of Calgary, sees Canada's universities as incubators of excellence. UC President Paul Davidson proposes three key ways the federal government can work with universities to set Canada on the road to prosperity, picking up where the 2016 federal budget left off.

Pollster Bruce Anderson of Abacus Research was in the field in 2015, asking Canadians about the reputation and expectations of universities. Their reputation is high: "77 per cent say their view is positive," Anderson reports.

University of Regina President Vianne Timmons looks at the gender gap in Canadian universities and concludes they still have a long way to go. Where women comprised 18 per cent of university presidents in the mid-1990s, two decades later they still account for only 23 per cent.

Kevin Kee, Dean of Arts at the University of Ottawa, considers the issue of STEM to STEAM through the eyes of his son, Jacob, who he says is made for BA studies. But it's a different universe than the one his father experienced in the library in the 1980s. Jacob's library is the internet and "his challenge is seemingly limitless information."

Contributing writer David Mitchell, a former chief fundraiser for three Canadian universities, asks why fundraising "now assumes such a pre-eminent position in higher education?"

Simon Fraser University President Andrew Petter writes that Canada can close an economic innovation gap by leveraging the strengths of Canada's globally competitive universities. BMO vice chair Kevin Lynch, a former board chair at University of Waterloo, offers a detailed prescription for how Canada can leverage the economic, intellectual and innovation hub of the Toronto-Waterloo corridor into a world-class supercluster.

UQAM Rector Robert Proulx writes that Canadian universities play an instrumental role in developing a dynamic innovation system to provide for Canada's social, economic and cultural advancement. Public Policy Forum Vice President Julie Cafley, who has studied the high turnover rates of university presidents, thinks that UBC's new president, Santa Ono, could turn "the oft-failed job of a Canadian university president into a campus stroll on a sunny day." He's

got the management and communications skills, wears a trademark bow tie, and besides, she writes, "he's cool."

Western University President Amit Chakma writes that more Canadians students need to spend time studying or volunteering abroad. He notes that only three per cent of undergrad students participate in such programs offered by 97 per cent of our universities.

McGill Principal Suzanne Fortier writes that the big challenge facing universities is how to transfer knowledge and skills to students that will serve them long-term, at a time when the pace of change is dazzling and only increasing. In a clarion call for university education for indigenous students, Indspire President Roberta Jamieson notes that despite a high school graduation rate of only 37 per cent among aboriginal students, "our experience at Indspire is that when students we support financially and in other ways get into university, 93 per cent graduate."

On where a university degree will take graduates, University of Ottawa's Ross Finnie shares the data of a study tracking on their earnings from 2005-13. The numbers show they did well despite the global financial crisis of 2008-09. And on the question of student aid, Patrick Snider of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations writes that after a record turnout in the last election, student issues are taking a prominent place with the new government.

In *Canada and the World*, Jeremy Kinsman looks at the UK and EU after the Brexit vote.

Finally, Robin Sears writes an affectionate tribute to Liberal activist and visionary strategist Mike Robinson. A gentleman and a player. And columnist Don Newman looks ahead to the US presidential election. **P**