

December 14, 2015

Dear Colleagues and Students,

The first half of the academic year has been a remarkable whirlwind of activity for me, both on and off campus. While I've devoted a majority of my time to participating in a wide array of local faculty, staff and student events, I've also continued to be actively engaged in several external advocacy roles on Western's behalf.

For example, since my last President's Update, I've attended the annual meeting of the American-based **Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities** in Indianapolis, on which Western is one of a growing number of Canadian member schools working to raise our profile in the U.S. The weekend following, I attended the annual awards ceremony of the **Royal Society of Canada** in Victoria, B.C., where I had the pleasure of celebrating the induction of three new Western Fellows and four new Western members to the RSC's College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists. And the week following that, I was in the United Kingdom at a meeting of the **Association of Commonwealth Universities**. As an elected council member of the ACU, I'm working to position Western as a leader in student mobility with a goal to create more opportunities for our students to participate in exchanges in Commonwealth countries. While in London, I also attended the annual meeting of Western's **UK Foundation board**, on which we are fortunate to have several prominent alumni helping us with our international fundraising activities.

Another important external body on which I represent Western (along with Schulich Medicine & Dentistry professor Chil-Yong Kang), is the **Science, Technology & Innovation Council**. Dr. Kang and I serve as council members on STIC, which was created in 2007 to advise the federal government on ST&I policy issues critical to Canada's economic development and societal well-being, and to produce regular public reports measuring Canada's ST&I performance against international standards of excellence.

On November 27, STIC released its most recent "[State of the Nation](#)" report. I had the pleasure and the privilege of co-chairing the STIC Working Group which produced the report with Dr. Harvey Weingarten, President of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario and former President of the University of Calgary. The report includes some disturbing findings. Despite some efforts to improve during recent years, Canada's lagging business innovation performance is actually falling further behind global competitors on several key performance indicators – most tellingly in the level of private-sector investment in research and development. The report highlights that between 2006 and 2013, Canadian businesses' R&D investment (as a percentage of GDP) declined significantly, dropping Canada's rank from 18th to 26th position among 41 of the world's most advanced economies.

Canada also performs poorly in absorbing science, technology and innovation talent into the labour force, ranking 22nd out of 43 countries. These findings are particularly disappointing when

... 1 of 2

considered against the fact that Canada doubled the number of doctoral degrees granted in science and engineering (per 100,000 population) between 2006 and 2013, moving our international ranking up from 19th to 17th position.

Another troubling concern is that while Canada's higher education expenditures on R&D has been increasing over time in real dollars, its intensity as a share of GDP has remained steady. Meanwhile, as other countries have increased their spending on R&D at higher rate, Canada's ranking on this indicator has fallen from 3rd in 2006 to 8th in 2013.

STIC's report was not without some good news. For example, with 96 researchers ranking among the top 1% of the most cited in their respective fields, Canada's research "star power" ranks sixth in the world after countries with much larger populations. And Canada still ranks among the world's leaders in terms of educating our youth in reading, math, science and creative problem solving. However, despite the solid foundation of our educated population and the relatively high quality of our knowledge production, we are not competitive in the realm of business innovation.

Among the report's recommendations to begin closing this growing gap, it calls for more investment from business and government in order to keep pace with global competitors so that Canada's university researchers get the support they need to excel on the global stage.

The full text of STIC's ***"State of the Nation 2014 Report: Canada's Innovation Challenges and Opportunities"*** is available [online](#). I encourage you to read it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amit Chakma', with a stylized, flowing script.

Amit Chakma
President & Vice-Chancellor