

LUMINUS

WAVES *of* SUPPORT

Learn how Memorial's alumni, faculty, staff and students supported COVID-19 Student Emergency Funds, alleviating multiple strains caused by pandemic life.



MEET MEMORIAL'S NEW PRESIDENT

Dr. Vianne Timmons

AND

FLASH FORWARD

How Memorial made the rapid shift to remote learning

*Sultan Sadik,
Graduate student*



Dr. Vianne Timmons recalls her first months as Memorial's new president.

TO MEMORIAL'S ALUMNI FAMILY, I was delighted when offered the opportunity to bring greetings to Memorial alumni in this abbreviated edition of *Luminus* magazine.

It's been an interesting few months in the president's chair, that's for sure. I began my tenure self-isolating for two weeks and like many of you, spent the following months largely in my new home (I don't recommend moving across the country, starting a new job and buying a house during a pandemic!).

But I was happy to be home, having grown up in Labrador City. I spent those first months meeting (virtually) with faculty and staff, with government and community leaders, and most importantly, with students. Though I couldn't physically move around the campus as I would have loved to do, I started to get a feel for our university, how much it means to the people of this province and to its social and economic prosperity.

When pandemic restrictions relaxed, I hit the road on an amazing month-long provincial tour. Web meetings are all well and good, but I needed to meet people face-to-face, even if we were six feet apart. I needed to get a feel for the province once again, visit Memorial's many campuses and locations and talk to people about what's working and what's not.

It exceeded my already high expectations.

The journey allowed me to see Memorial's footprint across Newfoundland and Labrador, including Grenfell Campus, the Marine Institute and the Labrador Institute, now a campus and home to Memorial's newest academic unit, the School of Arctic and Subarctic Studies.

More importantly, the voyage introduced me to literally hundreds of people who are so invested in the success of the province's only university, many of whom are part of our broad network of alumni. My days on the road also allowed me the privilege of seeing the province in all its majestic beauty, and helped me further understand why people feel a special connection to this wonderful place.

Venturing beyond the overpass will be a regular part of my responsibility as president of Memorial. If I missed you and your hometown this time, let me know and I'll make every effort to include you on the itinerary on one of my future road trips.

And then we turned our attention to the fall. We announced in May that students would return to a primarily remote teaching and learning environment for the fall semester. (*cont'd on following page*)

Vianne Timmons

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Luminus is published once a year by Alumni Engagement at Memorial. Comments, story ideas and letters to the editor are welcome. Submissions are subject to editorial committee review for relevance, length and CP style. Send all correspondence to:

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ON THE COVER
Sultan Sadik is one of approximately 680 undergraduate and graduate students who received support from the COVID-19 Student Emergency Funds. Employees, students, alumni and donors have all worked together to contribute.

ISSN 0381-6575

Publication Mail Agreement No. 40022409

Return undeliverable Canadian address to:
ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT
MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND
ST. JOHN'S, NL A1C 5S7

026-19002

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(cont'd from previous page)

This shift was a once-in-a-lifetime event that I hope is never repeated (though we can never say never). We had some time to consider program delivery for spring and summer teaching and learning. However, fall, with a full cohort of new and returning students, required intense preparation. Thanks to the incredible efforts of our faculty, staff and, of course, our students, we were ready for September.

Finally, we began our new strategic planning process in June. The next few months will be critical as we plot the future of Memorial University. Moving through the plan's development, all members of our community – employees, students, alumni, donors and the public – will be asked to help build an aspirational, shared vision that reflects the diversity and complexity of Memorial.

Our alumni, standing at approximately 100,000 people worldwide, are absolutely critical to the past, present and future of Memorial. It is because of you that our connections remain strong, long after you graduate. Whether you remain connected through your professional development, your professional networks, by providing philanthropic support, by attending events and reunions, or the many other ways you can remain involved, your interest and investment in our university and in turn, our province, is invaluable. You are the heart and soul of Memorial, and we thank you for remaining connected.

COAST LINES

Memorial University Book Club

Introducing a brand new forum for alumni and friends to explore and celebrate Newfoundland and Labrador's world class literary arts, coming to you this fall.

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FLASH FORWARD

Education's future is now

BY COURTENAY GRIFFIN AND HEIDI WICKS

IMAGINE A WORLD where education takes place not in buildings, but in a whole other world—the cyber world. Classroom learning or physical office hours no longer exist. Instead of reading body language, students and professors read instructions on how to use online tools in order to communicate and see each other's faces.

As the COVID-19 health pandemic shook the globe, the past, present and future collided. Suddenly, traditional, face-to-face interpersonal connection was snatched away and replaced almost entirely with online interaction.

While Memorial University has an established, 50-year history in distance and online learning, never before has its community experienced such a rapid, large-scale shift to a remote delivery model.

Valerie Power (B.Sc.'85, M.Sc.'00) has been teaching biology laboratories for over 30 years. Normally, students typically spend three hours weekly in a lab, doing experiments and studying organisms and techniques relevant to their lecture material in order to become future biologists. Imagining how to move this instruction into an emergency remote online lab exercise was beyond daunting for Ms. Power.

"To say it's been very challenging would be an understatement," she said, adding that she and her fellow departmental lab instructors—Fiona Cuthbert (B.Sc.'85, M.Sc.'90), Elizabeth Diegor (B.Sc.'00) and Ed Whelan (B.Sc.'88), as well as course professors Drs. Margaret Caldwell and Piotr Trela—spent hours discussing, planning and collaborating together online to formulate plans.

When the global pandemic and quarantine was implemented on March 14, the faculty and staff at Memorial's Centre for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL) was working around the clock.

"Knowing we could never replace the experience hands-on learning brings, we completed any and all training sessions offered by CITL. They helped us greatly in mastering techniques such as how to use Brightspace (an online learning tool) and make quizzes online," said Ms. Power.

Dr. Gavan Watson, associate vice-president of teaching and learning and associate director of CITL, recalled the preparation for an interruption that would impact not only the department's operations, but the continuity of teaching and learning across the entire institution.



Valerie Power

"Early in March we recognized an imminent, wholesale shift to remote instruction and remote work. Our goal was to provide educators with the resources and supports they needed so they could, in turn, focus their efforts on students' success with reassurance and ease," said Dr. Watson.

In addition to developing tailored teaching resources, and instructional training sessions, since going remote, CITL's Support Centre has fielded a 240 per cent increase in faculty inquiries alone from this time in 2019.

"Our work has never been more vital or more central to the success of the university," said Dr. Gavan Watson.

Ms. Power was surprised that it takes at least two weeks to convert each lab into an online version.

"This includes rewriting the lab into an online format, video recording any experiments we personally do while at home, linking to YouTube videos, taking photos of departmental specimens, making the assignment, document or quiz, making narrated Powerpoint slides to introduce lab concepts or give answers so that students can review topics later," she explained, emphasizing that the team from CITL, along with other lab instructors, relied on each other for advice and ideas, acting as editors and as cheerleaders.

Despite physical distance, the team stayed sturdy.

"Without the guidance, support and respect we have for each other, and our desire to ensure our students get the very best education we can provide, our jobs would have been infinitely more difficult without each other," Ms. Power said. (*cont'd on p. 7*)

BEARING FRUIT

Memorial alumni support food security from farm to fork

BY REBECCA COHOE

2020 HAS BEEN an eye-opener in many ways, but perhaps one of the most notable is how this year has focused attention on our relationship with food, both individually and as a society.

In some cases, the changes that we've made to stay safe have also exposed challenges related to one of our most basic needs. From putting meals on individual tables, to addressing food insecurity nation-wide, a number of Memorial alumni are finding ways to help.

Fittingly, it was around their own table, during the initial lockdown, that one St. John's family came up with an interesting concept: a mobile food bank that could go directly to people in need. The group included recent Memorial graduates, and engaged couple, Mehnaz Tabassum (BBA'19) and Saif Ahmed (B.Eng.'20), along with Ms. Tabassum's siblings.

After dubbing their initiative Project Food for Thought, the team began delivering packages of food directly to the doorsteps of those in need. Many of the people who have received help are experiencing both food shortages, and underlying conditions that make it more risky for them to visit public places.

With a number of future projects planned, including partnerships with Island Eats, a food delivery service, and Second Harvest, the largest food rescue organization in Canada, the team shows no signs of slowing down.

"Through having conversations, I felt connected to the respondents that we were serving, and I realized it was not only food, but genuine human interaction that helped a lot of the individuals," explained Mr. Ahmed. "Through this project, not only did I get a chance to impact someone else's life, but I have also enhanced my own well-being and my vision for my future as an engineer."



NL Eats team: From left are Saif Ahmed, Sazied Hassan, Shourov Islam, Adib Rahman and Lindsay Newman.

Annette Gibbons (BA'88), another Memorial graduate, is deeply involved in some of the same issues as the Project Food for Thought team.

As the associate deputy minister with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), Ms. Gibbons is actively addressing many food-related issues on the national stage. She's also Memorial University's new deputy minister champion, a role that involves building relations between the Public Service of Canada and Memorial University to identify shared priorities, align and promote relevant research and build awareness of career opportunities in the public service.

Prior to joining AAFC in October 2018, Ms. Gibbons served as an assistant secretary to the cabinet at the Privy Council Office, assistant secretary to the Treasury Board at the Treasury Board Secretariat and assistant deputy minister at Natural Resources Canada. She holds an MBA from the University of Ottawa, an MA (public administration) from Carleton University and a BA from Memorial University.

"I'm enthusiastic about offering support and guidance to help strengthen relations between the Public Service of Canada and Memorial," expressed Ms. Gibbons. "I'm also excited about letting students know about the vast array of meaningful career opportunities they have, particularly with the federal public service."

"I am delighted to be the deputy minister champion for Memorial," expressed Ms. Gibbons. "Reflecting on my time at Memorial and how it influenced my career path has been rewarding."

Ms. Gibbons' insight into the work being done in the agricultural sector can provide Memorial students some perspective on the most important issues in Canada, and the work being done to ensure food security well into the future.

"Now more than ever, Canadians are realizing the great importance of farms and the food system in our lives," said Ms. Gibbons. "Over the last months especially, we have been working very hard to ensure Canada's food system is functioning for all Canadians to have access to safe quality food."

Some of the innovative policy responses include the \$50 million Surplus Food Rescue Program to help redirect existing food surpluses to organizations addressing food insecurity, and another \$100 million distributed to food banks through the Local Food Infrastructure Fund. (*cont'd on p. 7*)

WAVES OF SUPPORT

Student Emergency Funds keep students afloat

BY LISA PENDERGAST AND HEIDI WICKS

WHEN GRADUATE STUDENT Sultan Sadik's studies crashed to a halt, his semester disrupted by a global pandemic, he worried about his parents, living in Dhaka, Bangladesh. On top of his concern for his family, he became ill himself, and then worried about contracting COVID-19. Mr. Sadik is one of many students who suddenly found their world turned upside down this winter. On March 17 all in-person classes were suspended in response to COVID-19 restrictions, with Memorial quickly shifting instruction to remote and online learning. Student residences also had to vacate that same week, a change accompanied by travel bans that prevented many out-of-province students from returning home. Many students had nowhere to turn for help.

While still processing all of this upheaval, Mr. Sadik was laid off from his job at Walmart.

"I needed those two-week paycheques to be able to pay my rent and bills," said Mr. Sadik. "I was also running low on groceries, and didn't want to go into debt to fulfill my basic needs." Enduring so many changes in such a short time created a real hardship for students. Luckily the Memorial University community—faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors and friends—all joined forces to help. This support came in the form of the Student Emergency Funds for undergraduate and graduate students. A priority for support were those student parents who were unable to support their families, students with extenuating medical conditions and those facing housing and food insecurity.

Dr. Aimée Surprenant, dean of the School of Graduate Studies, put this wave of support in motion with her own contribution and a challenge to her colleagues to do the same. She was soon joined by Dr. Donna Hardy Cox, associate vice-president (academic), students.

"Many students have carefully budgeted for their education, leaving little margin for error along the way," said Dr. Surprenant. "These funds have helped students, in some small way, during a critical time and to help ease the immediate financial worries arising from events outside of their control."

As of the end of November, more than \$297,000 has been raised thanks to generous contributions from a range of individual and corporate donors, which includes alumni and Memorial's faculty, staff and students. Mr. Sadik, who received \$500 from the Graduate Student Emergency Fund, remarked that support in a financial and/or emotional format had a tremendous impact, no matter the size of the donation.



Sultan Sadik received support from the Student Emergency Fund.

"The fund definitely helped ease my worries," he remembered, making special mention of Andrew Kim, director of graduate enrolment services in the School of Graduate Studies. "I was able to afford groceries and pay a portion of my bills for the next month, so I was able to take care of myself and focus on my studies. The School of Graduate Studies has been of tremendous help during that time and since then. Andrew called me the very day I applied for the fund, and even brought me groceries. He has been in contact with me ever since, guiding me to explore all of my options. Knowing that support like this is available for students who are thousands of miles away from home takes a giant load of the burden off our shoulders so that we can focus on our studies, and create a path for a better future."

Following Dr. Surprenant's challenge, the wave gained traction with significant donations from Memorial's Student Support Office, the Memorial University of Newfoundland Student Union's executive committee, the Graduate Student Union and the Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty Association. The student emergency funds have also benefitted from remarkable corporate and community support. A special thank you goes out to Fortis Inc. and VeraCares, the charitable team run by Verafin employees, for their donations.

In addition to donations to the emergency fund, many faculty, administrative staff, other students and members of the public have given additional funds from grants, other funding awards and in-kind (delivery of food, clothing, household items) contributions. It has truly been a heart-warming community effort.

To date, approximately 815 undergraduate and graduate students have received assistance from these funds. However, as the pandemic continues, so does the need. While physically apart right now, when you belong to the Memorial community, you are always connected. www.mun.ca/give

(cont'd from Bearing Fruit, page 5)

Another initiative has mitigated labour shortages by connecting workers in the food service industry to rewarding jobs in agriculture that require a range of skill sets. "While we have been faced with serious challenges, we've also been able to seize opportunities that will support the sector and strengthen it over the long-term, and that is very reassuring," said Ms. Gibbons.

From the one-on-one support of the Food for Thought Project, to the federal government initiatives, people in Canada are recognizing needs in their communities and working together to help address them. It's another case where we are stronger, and better fed, together.

(cont'd from Flash Forward, page 4)

Student Amy Squires flew to Australia to be with her husband upon the pandemic announcement. She agreed that despite the challenges of remote learning, a sense of togetherness increased and she discovered new things about herself that she otherwise wouldn't have.

"I realized how much I value being in the classroom, where students and teachers build relationships and learn from each other. The chance to hear other students ask questions, form study groups, or pop by a professor's office to see the door slightly ajar and ask a quick question or tip or trick for how to best prepare for an upcoming exam or paper were suddenly gone."

An epic time zone difference and strained internet connectivity also presented challenges. However, the strong bond amongst the Memorial family is ultimately what helped Ms. Squires succeed in the semester.

"A class at noon occurs at 12:30 a.m. here in Sydney. And because of the volume of those now using the internet, connectivity has slowed, which is frustrating. I am proud to be a student of Memorial University, and to have benefited from the quick action of CITL and their speedy switch to this new way of learning. It has been because of the adaptability and understanding of the professors and instructors at Memorial that I have been able to succeed this semester, and I want to thank them for that."

CONGRATULATIONS

ALUMNI TRIBUTE AWARD RECIPIENTS

2019



Barry Perry

B.Comm.(Hons.)(Co-op)'86
ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR



Dr. Boluwaji Ogunyemi

Dip. in Clinical
Epidemiology '09, MD'13
HORIZON AWARD



Susan Rose

BA'82, B.Ed.(High School)'86,
B.Sp.Ed.'97
OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY
SERVICE AWARD



Dr. Peter Collingwood

B.Med.Sci.'79, MD'81
J.D. EATON AWARD

2020



Lisa Browne

BA'91, MBA'93
ALUMNA OF THE YEAR



Aatif Baskander

B.Eng.'08, MTM'15
HORIZON AWARD



Courtney Clarke

BA'12, MIPGC'15
OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY
SERVICE AWARD



Geoff Emberley

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