Discovery Digest

BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

June 2026 - Issue 101

Discovery Digest **is a glimpse into how University of Saskatchewan research, scholarly and artistic works are making a difference for Saskatchewan, Canada and the world. Curated by the Research Profile and Impact unit, Office of the Vice-President Research. Feedback welcome!**

This Month's Stories

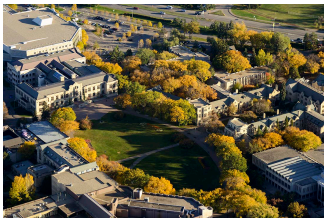
USask recognizes Roy, Banerjee, Adewole as top researchers for 2026

The University of Saskatchewan (USask) is honouring **Dr. Wendy Roy (PhD)**, Bateman Professor of English in USask's College of Arts and Science, with its top academic award of Distinguished Researcher for 2026.

As well, USask is recognizing two outstanding young scientists—one an expert in nonruminant nutrition, and the other a rising star in virology—with New Researcher Awards: **Dr. Deborah Adewole (PhD)** is an assistant professor in the College of Agriculture and Bioresources; **Dr. Arinjay Banerjee (PhD)** is a principal scientist in the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO), adjunct professor at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM), and co-lead of USask's One Health signature area.

They will be honoured June 17 during USask's Faculty and Staff Awards ceremony at Maquis Hall.

Unique high-tech storytelling hub at USask receives funding boost



Imagine a space where high-end technology and in-depth storytelling tools come together to create lasting narratives. That's the goal of USask's proposed "Story Collider," a new and unique infrastructure project that will advance storytelling research in Canada.

Led by **Dr. Dawn Wallin (PhD)**, associate vice-president research (engagement) and a professor in the College of Education, and **Dr. Andrew Denton (PhD)**, the director of the USask School for the Arts, the new space aims to be a resource for students, staff and faculty to explore new and varied storytelling methods for research, scholarly and artistic works.

Five USask scholars named distinguished professors

The honorary title of distinguished professor is an award that celebrates lifetime achievement in research, scholarly and artistic work. Four USask professors and one professor emeritus were selected to receive the honorary title this year.

This year's distinguished professors are **Dr. Claire Card (PhD)**, **Dr. Daniel Chen (PhD)**, **Dr. Miroslaw (Mirek) Cygler (PhD)**, **Dr. Curtis Pozniak (PhD)** and **Dr. Barbara von Tigerstrom (PhD)**.

VIDO researchers advancing technology to better understand immune responses

Dr. Neeraj Dhar (PhD), principal scientist at VIDO at USask, is looking to better understand immune responses to specific diseases like tuberculosis — a disease that targets the respiratory system — and the therapies being developed to combat them.

With investment from the New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF), Dhar's lab is developing advanced immune organoids, a new approach that can help save both time and money by testing how potential therapies will work.

Organoids are 3D micro tissue models that are developed from human donor tissue. According to Dhar, unlike traditional animal models, organoids closely mimic human biology, allowing researchers to reliably predict how treatments will work in people while also reducing reliance on animal testing.

Rapidly 'rusting' subarctic rivers at heart of cross-Canada research project

A new research paper from USask, McMaster University, and Carleton University researchers shows that streams and waterways are being impacted by acidity and metals released from thawing permafrost in the North. **Dr. Matthew Lindsay (PhD)**, a professor in USask's Department of Geological Sciences, was a co-author on the paper.

Referred to colloquially as "rusting" rivers, the phenomenon is linked to otherwise clear river water changing colour dramatically to orange and white as new minerals form in impacted streams.

This new paper published in the journal *Science* suggests that climate change is enhancing a process called 'acid rock drainage' in which rocks containing sulfide minerals are weathered. Sulfide minerals like pyrite react with water and oxygen to create highly acidic runoff that dissolves and carries metals like nickel and cadmium into rivers.

Looking for more research stories? Visit Discovery Digest online.

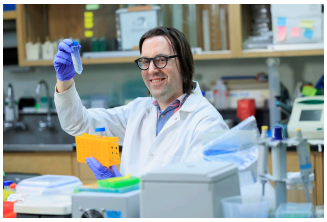
USask receives NSERC award for Science Ambassador Program

Zoe Slusar wants to inspire young people about the possibilities of science.

Whether that's teaching biodiversity through outdoor learning, building model cars, getting messy to understand chemistry, or exploring physics through a fun science challenge, she wants students to feel excited.

That passion and focus have been recognized, with the Science Ambassador Program receiving the Organizational Award in the prestigious 2026 Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Awards for Science Promotion.

“This kind of recognition is very significant because it not only fuels your ‘why’ when someone else validates the work that’s being done, but it also creates some sustainability to continue the work in a very tangible way,” she said.



USask medical researcher earns prestigious Stem Cell Network honours in Canada

Dr. Tyler Wenzel (PhD), an assistant professor at the USask College of Medicine, recently received one of the Stem Cell Network (SCN) 25 for 25 Silver Anniversary Awards presented as part of the network’s 25th anniversary.

Wenzel was given an SCN Rising Star Award as an early-career researcher who has demonstrated potential for major impact in the field. He is the only researcher in Saskatchewan to be awarded one of the SCN’s Silver Anniversary Awards in any category.

Wenzel’s work with stem cells specifically involves looking at the brain. He has developed tiny “mini-brain” organoids – tiny three-dimensional models made from human tissue – by manipulating stem cells into brain cells.

‘Creating space for others’: USask scientist wins Women of Distinction Award

Dr. Corinne Schuster-Wallace (PhD) received the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Award at the YWCA’s 44th annual Women of Distinction Awards on May 14.

Schuster-Wallace is the executive director of the Global Institute for Water Security and a faculty member in the College of Arts and Science’s Department of Geography and Planning. She was chosen for the award based on her contributions to research on water-related human health in rural, remote and marginalized communities, as well as her work creating opportunities for women and girls in science.

USask research chair supports sustainable development of soil resources

Dr. Shannon Brown (PhD) has been appointed the new Chair in Soils and Environment-Soil Biogeochemical Processes at USask.

The research chair focuses on the interaction between agriculture and the environment, with a goal of providing solutions for Saskatchewan producers that support sustainable land management and

helping them adapt to a changing climate. It is part of the Strategic Research Program (SRP), funded through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP).

Brown has more than 15 years of experience researching greenhouse gas emissions in the context of agronomy and agricultural soil processes, and began her new five-year appointment as research chair and assistant professor in the Department of Soil Science at USask on May 15, 2026.

Tracking Trichinella: USask graduate investigates cryptic Arctic parasite

A newly discovered species of parasite circulating among Arctic carnivores is shaping the research and career of **Dr. Cody Malone (PhD)**, who received his PhD degree and the top graduate thesis award (life sciences category) at the USask Spring Convocation on June 3.

A parasite called *Trichinella chanchalensis* (*T. chanchalensis*) became the centre of Malone's four-year journey that led him from studying zoonotic diseases in his home province of Ontario to collecting and analyzing parasite samples in Canada's North.

USask Governor General Gold Medallist focuses on connection, care and community

USask graduate explores subarctic mine site revegetation

From VIDO director of facilities to a world of possibilities

USask Signature Series Podcast - Season 2

The USask Signature Series Podcast is an exploration and celebration of the interesting and the innovative, the fun and the fantastic, the cutting-edge and the creative side of USask

research.

You'll hear from USask experts across a variety of disciplines and research areas as they tackle the questions and opportunities the world needs today.

Check out the podcast on Spotify, Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts!

Here are the newest episodes of the USask Signature Series:

- S2E11 – **What do we need to know about nuclear energy?**
- S2E10 – **What should your children be eating for lunch?**
- S2E09 – **How are we encouraging young scientists?** (International Day of Women and Girls in Science special!)

If you have an idea for an episode of the podcast, please email **research.communications@usask.ca**.

Stay connected with USask research news

Make sure to follow USask Research on Instagram at **@usaskresearch**, and on **LinkedIn** and **Twitter/X** to stay in-the-know, with exciting research news delivered right to your newsfeed. Don't forget to also follow **@VPR_USask** and **@USask** on Twitter/X for more of the latest research and university news.

Use the hashtag **#USaskResearch** when sharing USask-related research findings, publications or achievements on social media.

In *The Conversation*

Being involved in *The Conversation* is a unique and renowned avenue for sharing research and study with both colleagues and the public. We strongly encourage researchers to explore *The Conversation* as a way to share and distribute their expertise! Feel free to reach out to research.communications@usask.ca if you have questions.

Upcoming events

Early Bird Registration - PAW 2026

Early bird registration is now open for the People Around the World (PAW) 2026 International Congress at USask!

Take advantage of discounted rates and join researchers, scholars, industry partners, government representatives and community members for this dynamic three-day event at USask Oct. 20-22, 2026.

Students are eligible for discounted registration rates. To access your student discount code, please email **international.office@usask.ca** with the following information: Name, NSID, Student Number, College and Program, and Supervisor.

Learn more and register **here**.

CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis (IMHA) Dialogue Series

The CIHR IMHA Dialogue Series is underway with 13 in-person and virtual sessions designed to spark meaningful dialogue towards advancing research in all aspects of IMHA's mandate. IMHA is mandated to provide research leadership related to: active living, mobility and the wide range of conditions related to bones, joints, muscles, connective tissue, skin as well as the mouth, teeth and craniofacial region.

The series will have an upcoming stop in Saskatoon. Individuals from all career stages are invited to attend.

Register at the **link here**.

- CIHR IMHA Dialogue Series Saskatoon – Friday, June 19, 9-10:30am – Arts Building Room 133

VIDO Community Liaison Committee public meeting

The Community Liaison Committee (CLC) of VIDO invites you to join their upcoming public meeting at the Willows Club.

The meeting will feature presentations from scientist **Dr. Darryl Falzarano** on working safely with high-containment pathogens: lessons from the pandemic and VIDO director **Dr. Volker Gerdts** on why high-containment research is needed, and how VIDO is growing. Question and answer period to follow.

The CLC was created by USask in 2007 to serve as an independent organization working to ensure full and open communication on safety issues related to VIDO's biocontainment facilities.

Register at the link **here**.

- VIDO Community Liaision Committee Public Meeting – Wednesday, June 24, 7-8:30pm – Willows Club

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5th Annual Saskatchewan Research Facilitation Network (SRFN) Forum

The 5th Annual SFRN Forum will take place on Wednesday, June 24 via Zoom from 9:30am to 2:30pm.

This year's theme, "Knowledge in Motion: Mobilizing Insights, Impacting Communities," brings together research administrators, facilitators, and partners from across Saskatchewan to

explore how we translate research into meaningful impact. The program features a mix of expert-led sessions and structured networking opportunities to support learning, collaboration, and community-building.

Whether you are new to research administration or an experienced professional, the SRFN Forum offers valuable insights, practical tools, and a supportive community focused on advancing research impact.

Register **at the link here** with your work email address.

- 5th Annual SFRN Forum – Wednesday, June 24, 9:30am-2:30pm – via Zoom

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Have any upcoming research events?

Please email research.communications@usask.ca with your event title, information and any links links for registration to include in the Discovery Digest.

Information and Community for Researchers

AI literacy resources expand with a new faculty-focused tutorial

Artificial intelligence is shaping teaching, research and administrative work at USask. Staff and faculty are encouraged to explore **USask's general AI literacy tutorial**, which introduces foundational concepts. A new faculty-focused tutorial builds on this resource and supports instructors as they consider how AI may or may not be applicable in teaching and assessment. The tutorial is designed to be completed in stages, allowing modules to be undertaken as time permits, with each module taking no more than 30 minutes. Access the new faculty tutorial at the **Canvas link here**.

Security awareness sessions

Do you have questions about protecting yourself and your devices when travelling internationally? **Lisa Belhumeur**, Senior Research Security Specialist, provides tailored travel security awareness sessions for researchers and administrators travelling internationally on university business. Travel security addresses Canadian research security policies, international funding requirements, national security obligations (such as sanctions and export controls), IT security, and some limited personal safety considerations.

Lisa offers tailored travel security briefings that consider who is travelling, where they are going, and what they will be doing. Attention is paid to **higher-risk destinations as defined by the Government of Canada**. The intent is to equip travellers with practical information so they can make informed decisions and recognize situations that may warrant caution or follow-up.

Travelers will be directed to engage with ICT to receive best practices for device security when traveling.

To request a briefing, please email Lisa at: **Belhumeur.lisa@usask.ca**.

Updates to Fedoruk Centre user access model

To better support innovation, discovery, and access, the Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation (Fedoruk Centre) and the Saskatchewan Cyclotron Facility (operated by the Fedoruk Centre) is updating its user access model. The new structure, which was developed in collaboration with USask, reduces or, in some cases, eliminates user fees that were found to discourage academic research use.

The new fee system went into place starting April 1, 2026.

To learn more about the new structure and what this means for academic research, visit: https://fedorukcentre.ca/newsmedia/notices-policies.php

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If you have any important information for USask researchers, please contact research.communications@usask.ca!

Submitting to Discovery Digest

If you would like to submit a research-focused event or news item for consideration for Discovery Digest, please submit a link and a description of no more than 150 words to research.communications@usask.ca with the subject line "Submission – Discovery Digest," along with the month and year you are submitting for.

Please indicate whether your submission is a recommendation for a news item, event or information for researchers. If you would also like to submit a photo, please make sure it is a 3:2 aspect ratio image.

The Discovery Digest goes out on or as close to the 15th of each month as possible. **Please ensure any submissions are sent in by at least the 8th of each month to be considered for inclusion.**

In the news

- June 11 – SaskToday – **U of S researcher grows 'mini-brains' to tackle childhood disease**

June 9 – Global News – **Saskatoon's VIDO expecting high containment lab certification next year**

- June 9 – CTV News – **'Important to get the message out': Saskatchewan recognizes ALS Awareness Month**
- June 7 – CBC News – **Are there too many wild horses in Alberta? It depends who you ask**
- June 7 – CKOM – **USask secures $3M federal cash for storytelling research hub**
- June 4 – NPR – **What will it take to get a vaccine for the Ebola strain driving the current outbreak?**
- June 3 – CBC News – **Saskatoon has gotten used to low water levels, but Alberta's melting snowpack is coming**
- May 27 – Saskatoon StarPhoenix, Regina Leader-Post – **U of S developing lab-grown 'organoids' that save humans, spare animals**
- May 25 – CTV News, CBC News, Toronto Star – **Why are Calgary police officers throwing pig carcasses into the Bow River?**
- May 16 – CBC News – **Hantavirus has no cure. Here's where researchers are at with treatments and vaccines**
- May 16 – Regina Leader-Post, Saskatoon StarPhoenix – **Experts say Sask.'s coal power plan not compatible with national strategy**

Banner image photo credit: **Capturing the Radiance of USask's Beloved Airplane Room -** by **Dr. Ian Stavness (PhD)**, Department of Computer Science, College of Arts and Science

Images of Research 2026 - *Grand Prize winner*

Rendering of a 3D radiance-field capture of the Henry Taube Lecture Theatre in the Thorvaldson Building at the University of Saskatchewan. This near-visually-perfect virtual replica of the theatre can be explored like a video game or viewed in immersive virtual reality, allowing off-campus community members to visit this treasured space from afar. The upper-left cutaway reveals the millions of optimized 3D points that conform to every nook and cranny of the room, outlining individual desks, the lamps and projectors on the wall, and even the paper airplanes embedded in the ceiling. Our research in 3D capture aims to comprehensively measure buildings for historical preservation, plants for detailed phenotyping, and natural spaces for artistic expression.

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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