

Acadia President Dr. Peter Ricketts Named Chair of the Maple League of Universities

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Acadia University's President and Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Peter Ricketts, has been elected Chair of the Maple League of Universities, succeeding Michael Goldbloom, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Bishop's University. The Maple League is a consortium of universities -- which includes Acadia, Bishop's, Mount Allison, and Saint Francis Xavier Universities -- that fosters reciprocal relationships and engages across institutional boundaries to enhance the student experience while leading the way on what it means to be educated in the 21st century.

"I am very pleased to follow Michael in the role of Chair of the Maple League and want to thank him for his outstanding leadership while we've built momentum inside and outside our institutions," says Ricketts. "Michael was instrumental to the formation of the Maple League and continues to champion our new initiatives and activities. Our four institutions are so similar in their approach to teaching, learning, and student experience that we have been able to develop concepts such as a multi-campus course delivery that has been an exciting and popular offering to students. We expect these sorts of academic innovations to continue and for more students to choose to study at one of our four institutions as a result."

The Maple League of Universities (formerly the U4 group) was officially launched in November of 2016. All four universities take great pride in fostering close-knit communities with small class sizes and a residential focus (90% of students live within 1km of campus). Maple League institutions are primarily undergraduate institutions and 70 to 80% of courses are taught by full-time faculty. The four universities are economic and cultural drivers for their respective regional communities, each with their own distinct eco-systems and socio-linguistic communities. History and tradition abound – institutions were founded between 1838 and 1853 – and yet offer degrees that are increasingly relevant to modern society: our 21st century liberal education focuses on critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, and real-world experiences. Students benefit from high levels of engagement with faculty and are encouraged to become involved in hands on research – an experience that is usually only offered to graduate students at most large Canadian universities.

“Earning an undergraduate degree is a significant investment for students and their families and in the Maple League we are firmly convinced of the value of an education that includes the entire range of student interests,” says Ricketts. “Small scale universities offer young people an opportunity to engage directly with faculty and their classroom peers. It is nearly impossible to remain anonymous on a campus where almost the entire student body lives on or within several blocks of campus so learning is an immersive experience. On every one of the Maple League campuses there are virtually limitless opportunities for volunteering in the community, giving students early exposure to what it means to be a member of a community and forming habits and building networks that will last a lifetime. University should be more than simply earning a degree: it should be about finding out what kind of person you can be and how far your interests and expertise can take you in life.”

Dr. Jessica Riddell, Executive Director of the Maple League (and the Stephen A. Jarislowsky Chair of Undergraduate Teaching Excellence at Bishop’s University), is looking forward to working with President Ricketts in his new role: “The Maple League is a unique partnership in the landscape of higher education in Canada, and requires visionary leadership, which we have in abundance with President. Ricketts and the other three presidents, Principal Goldbloom, President MacDonald, and President Boudreau. This collaboration challenges us to ask two fundamental questions: What can we do together that we cannot do on our own? And how does working together enhance what we do do on our own? These questions are progressive and unconventional since universities are usually hard-wired to compete. The Maple League – under the leadership of President Ricketts – has tremendous potential to re-wire mindsets around higher education, challenges us to be creative and bold in designing exceptional student experiences, and distinguishes us as leaders in defining what a 21st century education looks like.”

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