

Report of the Associate Vice-President Research (Engagement)

FOR DISCUSSION

Moderated by: Dawn Wallin, Associate Vice-President Research (Engagement)

Date of Meeting: October 26, 2024

Subject: **Community-Engaged Research at USask**

Background:

Community-engaged research—that is, research that is done in collaboration and partnership with community to address an identified need—is an important part of [Discovery the World Needs: University of Saskatchewan’s Strategic Research Plan, 2018-2025](#).

USask’s Strategic Research Plan identifies four different values that are central to the university’s research identity, and two of these are directly relevant to community-engaged research:

- *Partnership and Collaboration:* We thrive through our relationships and connections—a strength rooted in the pragmatism and ambition of a community of scholars who recognize that we can simply do more by working together.
- *Community and Sense of Place:* We are inspired by the communities we serve and the land we inhabit—and we aim to bridge local priorities to knowledge and opportunities across the globe.

This plan also articulates five different commitments, one of which is: “Put our knowledge to work: We will put our knowledge to work for the benefit of society, telling our stories of how we are the university the world needs.” There are six guideposts that the university has for marking and evaluating progress in working toward this commitment. The three of these that are particularly relevant to community-engaged research are:

- Enhanced partnerships and engagement between communities and the University.
- Governments, communities and industry increasingly partner with USask.
- Conduct research that is responsive to social, economic, cultural and environmental needs of society.

This engagement session with Senate will seek solutions and strategies for how the university can better embark on the work of community-engaged research so the university can work toward this commitment and live up to the values articulated in the Strategic Research Plan.

Expert Panel

To help Senators understand the scope of community-engaged research and the potential impacts various sorts of projects could have, the engagement session at the Senate meeting will feature a panel discussion with USask faculty members involved in community-engaged research in different disciplinary backgrounds:

- 1) Dr. Markus Brinkmann: Centennial Enhancement Chair in Mechanistic Environmental Toxicology; Director, Toxicology Centre; Associate Professor, School of Environment and Sustainability; Faculty Member, Global Water Futures (GWF) program; Member, Global Institute for Water Security (GIWS).
Dr. Kerry McPhedran: Saskatchewan Centennial Enhancement Chair; Professor and Graduate Chair Civil Geological and Environmental Engineering.
These scholars will discuss their engagement with the City of Saskatoon Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Saskatchewan Health Authority to implement and strengthen a SARS-CoV-2 wastewater surveillance program. The program tracked COVID-19 in the community through wastewater and provided key information for public health response and prevention of outbreaks. They also worked closely with First Nation communities to implement wastewater surveillance in those communities.
- 2) Dr. Jennifer Lang: Interim Vice-Dean Academic College of Arts and Science, co-lead of the Health and Wellness Signature Area, and Full Professor (music), School for the Arts. Dr. Lang's work focuses on music, arts and wellbeing. She is the Graduate Chair and organizer of the Department of Music's Music Education in Action Series, the founder and organizer of the uSing uSask Choral Festival, the conductor of the Greystone Singers and the Founder and Artistic Director of Aurora Voce. Dr. Lang's research examines engagement and agency in music education programs, including informal music learning in a variety of educational contexts, music and language learning for Newcomer Youth in Canada, and intergenerational singing programs with singers with dementia.
- 3) Dr. David Natcher: UArctic Chair in Water, Energy and Food (WEF) Security in the Arctic; Professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. Dr. Natcher's research focuses on the social dimensions of water, energy, and food (WEF) insecurity in Arctic regions. David has served as the UArctic Thematic Lead in Northern Food Security since 2016. In addition to this role, David serves as a Canadian representative on the International Arctic Science Committee – Social and Human Working Group and the Arctic's Council's (SDWG) Social, Economic, and Cultural Expert Group (SECEG).
- 4) Dr. Stuart Skinner: Assistant Professor Division Head, Infectious Diseases, College of Medicine; Executive Director of the [Wellness Wheel Medical Clinic](#), supporting First Nations communities in Saskatchewan. Dr. Skinner's research is primarily focused on providing health equity and delivery of care models in partnership with First Nations communities. The research includes clinical care models, virtual care approaches, peer programs, and an approach to providing as much care as possible in one clinic visit.

Discussion Groups

After the expert panel concludes, there will be interactive table discussions that focus on how the university can lead in community-engaged research. These discussions will centre on how the university can be responsive to community needs; what barriers exist to community-engaged research and what can be done to address them; and the reciprocal role of Senators as USask champions to bring forward ideas for community-engaged research but also help communicate to constituencies what is occurring in the area of community-engaged research.

Alignment with the *University Plan*:

An emphasis on community-engaged research supports the following goals of the *University Plan*:

- *Seek Solutions*: Foster a problem-solving, entrepreneurial ethic among students, faculty, and staff, harnessing opportunities to apply our research, scholarly, and artistic efforts to community and global priorities.
- *Align Structures*: Ensure that academic, administrative, and physical infrastructure enable collaborative opportunities for all students, faculty, and staff.
- *Embolden Partnerships*: Foster, expand, and diversify local, national, and global partnerships— with governments, businesses, and civil society in rural, northern and urban communities— rooted in reciprocal learning and the co-creation of knowledge.
- *Embrace manacihitowin*: Strengthen bonds of respect, trust, and shared benefit with Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan, across Canada, and globally.

Attachments:

- [Discovery the World Needs: University of Saskatchewan's Strategic Research Plan, 2018-2025](#)