



9 February 2012

Dr. Bob Tyler, Chair
Unit Plans Review Committee

Dear Dr. Tyler:

I would like to extend my sincere thanks both to you and your colleagues on the Unit Plans Review Committee. The time and thought that have gone into reviewing and commenting on the numerous unit plans submitted this cycle is apparent and is key to development of a strategic University plan. I would also like to commend the Committee for recognizing that an essential element of planning is ongoing dialogue about priorities, actions, and issues. In this light, I am pleased to respond to the UPRC's report on the Vice-President Research' Strategic Plan.

Goal Setting and Process

My Office took the responsibility of developing the strategic plan very seriously. We considered the University goals for research intensity – goals set not by the Vice-President Research, but by the collegium itself through its foundational documents – and proposed a strategic, ambitious plan for moving the U of S towards these goals. I would like to emphasize that the strategies (to enhance research intensity) outlined in the VPR Plan were developed from a thorough and comprehensive examination of the research environment in which our University functions, best practices at other – particularly top 10 research – universities, and feedback obtained through internal and external assessments. A summary list of the nature and type of evidence that informed development of the VPR plan is enclosed at the end of this letter.

As your report points out, the Associate Deans Research were, and will remain, important contributors and partners in research planning. In addition, I would like to flag the critical engagement of Centre Directors and members of the research community in development of the plan and its strategies. I am committed to continuing a collaborative approach to planning and execution of a research strategy. In IP3, I hope to extend these collaborative relationships to include better and focused opportunities to engage with the Deans around research.

Signature Areas

In IP2, the University identified six signature areas in which the U of S can make a significant, global impact through research. IP3, in part, will focus on development of these areas. I want to emphasize,

however, that the intent is not to develop these areas as “research hubs.” The signature areas are envisioned as distributed clusters or clouds. By identifying existing and promising areas of strength distributed throughout a number of academic units, we can ensure that: the work of individual researchers in these areas have greater / broader impact; identify and develop new opportunities for collaborations; and increase the visibility of these areas to attract new intellectual, academic and funding partners.

Your report provides recommendations related to development of the *One Health* and the *Aboriginal Peoples* signature areas. At the time of the writing of the plan, development of a “go-forward strategy” for these two areas was still at the incubation stage. I am pleased to report, that I have since struck a Working Committee under the leadership of Dr. Bruce Reeder to develop a strategic plan for advancing the *One Health* signature area. The membership of the Working Committee encompasses the breadth of the health colleges on campus; this will facilitate clear connections between the initiative and the research being undertaken in these units. In the upcoming year, I anticipate striking a similar committee to develop a strategic plan for the *Aboriginal Peoples* area. I will, as your report recommends, ensure that the membership reflects the myriad of opportunities in this area.

Researcher-focused Programs and Services

Thank you for emphasizing the commitment of my office to ensure that our programs and services are sensitive to the unique and often different (across career stage and discipline) needs of researchers. It is vitally important that we respect and recognize the complexity of our research environment in developing new initiatives and programs. This is also an important consideration in the services offered by the full range of units with the Office of the Vice-President Research – Research Services, Research Ethics, Research Communications, Industry Liaison, Awards Facilitation and International.

Again, thank you for your comments and the opportunity to continue a discussion about the strategies and initiatives through which our collective research goals can be met. I look forward to ongoing dialogue and debate.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Chad".

Karen Chad, Ph.D.
Vice-President

Evidence Informing Plan Development

Strategic planning and development in the OVPR emphasizes evidence-informed decision-making.

Review of best and promising practices leading to IP3 has included:

- Completed environmental scans and site visits to top 10 institutions (U-15 members and medical/doctoral peer group).
- Participated in national workshops and forums
 - E.g. Centre for the Advancement of Health Innovation, WestVPR, Community-Based Research Canada, Research Impact, national workshop on efficient administrative systems.
- Commissioned external reviews of our process, structures and strategies
 - E.g. Springboard West analysis of industry-sponsored clinical research; PricewaterhouseCooper (PwC) review business processes, Centre Reviews, Research Services External Review.
- Monitored strategic documents and best-practice literature and data
 - E.g. Canadian Medical Schools Data, Stats Canada, Tri-Agency strategic documents, Canada's S & T Strategy.
- Consulted with experts, partners and stakeholders
 - Federal government (e.g. NRCan, DFAIT, Industry Canada, Agriculture Canada, Environment Canada, Cdn Heritage, WD, INAC); provincial government (e.g. Advanced Education, Agriculture, Innovation Saskatchewan); Tri-Agencies & Presidents; industry (e.g. CNR, Research-Based Pharmaceuticals, PCS), AUCC.

UNIT PLANS REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT – VICE-PRESIDENT RESEARCH

Alignment with Areas of Focus

The plan outlines development in a number of strategic areas, including an undergraduate research strategy and the development of a strategic plan to support international activities. It describes the intent to recruit world-recognized scholars in each of the University's signature areas of research to complement the current Canada Excellence Research Chair in Water Security. Leadership at this level will accelerate research, training and knowledge transfer in each of the areas and build research clusters which profile the University's expertise in each area and attract additional resources, both intellectual and financial.

The plan describes the development and implementation of strategic plans in the *One Health* and *Aboriginal Peoples* signature areas. A broad perspective is encouraged in the development of the *Aboriginal Peoples* strategic plan given the myriad of issues to be addressed. The scope of the *One Health* signature area is unclear in the plan. A plan with clearly articulated goals and a strategy for engagement of researchers is desired, as references to this signature area in the college and school plans tended to be superficial. The leadership of the VPR is essential in this regard.

The University presently ranks in the bottom third of medical/doctoral universities in terms of the size and number of Tri-Agency grants per faculty member (success rates in 2010-11 were 23%, 58% and 37% for CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC, respectively). Tri-Agency success determines access to other federal funding, such as the Indirect Costs of Research program, Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program, Canada Excellence Research Chairs Program (CERC). A multi-faceted approach to increase performance, including facilitation teams, Tri-Agency leaders, support programs and internal review has been launched. Mentorship is outlined as a broad institutional goal. A consideration related to the internal review process is that it continues to be supportive of the research efforts of faculty members, particularly young faculty, balanced against the need to ensure the readiness of research proposals for Tri-Agency consideration. Additionally, clarifying the relative importance of maximizing the participation rate of faculty in funded research activity and maximize Tri-Agency research revenue is desired. Developing a performance indicator on participation rates is proposed as an additional important indicator of research performance. The plan speaks to the need to be sensitive to the unique needs and interests of researchers. The plan also articulates a changing research environment, which is increasingly based upon the "*inter-cluster synergies and collaboration*" of researchers. Ensuring

that the disciplinary research interests of faculty continue to be supported is highlighted as an important consideration.

Unit Priorities and Progress during the Second Planning Cycle

The plan outlines progress made across the goals for the second planning cycle related to Student Experience in Research and Community-Based Research. A number of new entities were established under the direction of the VPR, e.g. the Geographic Information System (GIS) Centre, Saskatoon Centre for Patient Oriented Research (SCPOR), Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation (CCNI), and the Global Institute for Water Security (GIWS). Significantly, the University was awarded a Canadian Excellence Research Chair in Water Security. Future growth and opportunities relate to strategic public, private and post-secondary partnerships aligned with the University's signature areas of research, to be realized initially realized through the establishment of a global food security institute.

The plan speaks of the critical under-performance in Tri-Agency funding, with improved Tri-Agency performance a key goal for the third planning cycle. Much of the plan focuses on strategies to achieve this goal and includes an array of approaches designed to support researchers related to infrastructure development, internal strategic grant review, service improvements, expanded ethics training and a team approach to grant/contract management. Positive results reported include an increase in commercialization of inventions and a third-place ranking among medical/doctoral universities in research revenue growth.

Unit Priorities for the Third Planning Cycle

The plan's unit-specific priorities were embedded within the Areas of Focus section of the plan as directly relevant to and supporting this section of the plan. The development of strategic plans across of a number of areas illustrates the leadership role for the Vice-President Research, in consultation with others. This is balanced against the need for operational strategies which focus on supporting research success across a spectrum of approaches, many to be initiated through the services offered by Research Services and related to the ability of this office to be responsive, efficient, client-centred and proactive. Other initiatives relate to external pressures, such as the development of a new research administration management structure, necessitated by the need to address external regulatory requirements.

Collaboration and Cooperation with Other Units (Academic and Administrative)

The success of the Office of the Vice-President Research and its ability to realize its goals is dependent upon collaborative ventures with others – researchers, departments, colleges/schools, industry, other research institutes, health regions, government agencies. The shared position of the Associate Vice-President Research Health University of Saskatchewan and Vice-President Research and Innovation Saskatoon Health Region illustrates the approach of building collaborative relationships to foster closer working relationships and eliminate barriers. Other examples include the shared research facilitation model established with co-funded and co-supervised research facilitators placed directly within colleges and schools, and the collaborative commercialization process through the Industry Liaison Office (ILO) to transfer research inventions to industry and society.

Summary

The vision of the Vice-President Research is to establish the University of Saskatchewan as one of the top ten medical doctoral universities in Canada. The plan is focused on strategies to make this goal a reality. A multi-faceted approach is outlined around the thematic areas of *“focus, people, enabling success, international.”*

The plan reflects the present stage of the University as seeking to boost its research performance through a variety of strategies and is written from the perspective of the cultural shift needed to advance the University’s research goals. Priorities are presented within a comprehensive list of areas. The plan boldly includes the goal of doubling research revenue by the end of the planning cycle. This goal is a “stretch” in light of the gap between the University’s present research funding performance and the performance target. As a recent member of the U15, a group of 15 leading research-intensive universities in Canada, it is appropriate that the University look to others to determine best practices for advancing its own research intensity.

The Associate Deans Research group has become an important consultative body for the Vice-President Research in determining approaches and disseminating information. The group has identified cross-unit and cross-college collaborative groups, interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary achievement, the use of community resources, industry linkages, and community partnerships as fundamental to the University’s achieving its research goals.

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February 13, 2012

Professor Bob Tyler, Chair
Unit Plans Review Committee

Dear Professor Tyler,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and your colleagues on UPRC regarding the University Advancement integrated plan, and for the thoughtful feedback provided in your report of February 3. The perspectives of your committee members were helpful and pertinent. I am particularly conscious of the heavy workload faced by your committee members over the past several months, and want to take this opportunity to both thank them and congratulate them on what I believe has been a highly collaborative and successful process.

As your report points out, nothing that is accomplished within University Advancement can be done without close collaboration with many other units and colleges on campus. Our work is a means to an end, not the end in itself. We might help to establish productive relationships with donors, but it is the prospect of supporting students, contributing to new discoveries, and transforming innovative programs and facilities that causes donors to give. We might help to attract the attention of news media or community stakeholders to the University of Saskatchewan, but it is the research discovery, the scholarly work, or the student achievement that builds the reputation of our University.

As such, we place a very high value on the quality of our relationships within the University. Your report rightly encourages us to continue to strengthen our collaborative relationships with other units, academic units in particular, to ensure our mutual success.

At the same time, we are very conscious of the need to be sound stewards of the public resources entrusted to our care. For most of us in Advancement, and here I include the deans and college-based staff as well, our challenge is to balance the desire to see a demonstrable return on the resources invested in advancement, with the reality that our work may take years to ultimately bear fruit. I believe that ensuring we have the right metrics in place, and that we pay close attention to them, is critical. For example, because we track our donor interactions on a monthly basis, I know that our total number of asks is down, but our number of personal contacts is up markedly, which should translate into a corresponding increase in number of asks in the next 12 months as those conversations progress. If we focused solely on dollars in we would be only looking at one piece of the picture, albeit of course an important one.

A further complexity is that our mission is to ensure the University of Saskatchewan has the reputation, relationships, and resources necessary to be one of Canada's most distinguished universities, and the reality is that none of these can be accomplished without the others. Reputations affect relationships, relationships affect resources, resources affect reputations. Again, balance is necessary, and attention to metrics is critical.

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It is within this framework that decisions regarding resource allocation must be made. Our ambitions will always outpace our resources, and setting priorities is inescapable. We agree with UPRC that these priorities should be set in collaboration with our colleagues, by weighing the relevant factors, and with the evidence of progress or lack of progress in hand. This may lead to some shifting of resources, but the long-term health of the University and its component parts will be the ultimate goal which will benefit us all.

Once again, thank you for your thoughtful response to our plan, and warmest congratulations to you and your colleagues for the work you have done in advancing our university.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H Magotiaux". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of the first name being a large, stylized capital 'H'.

Heather Magotiaux
Vice-President, University Advancement
University of Saskatchewan

UNIT PLANS REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT – UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

Alignment with Areas of Focus

University Advancement has received permanent funding to establish an office of Community Outreach and Aboriginal Engagement. The mandate of this office is “to engage local, provincial, national and international communities, particularly Aboriginal communities, in core activities of community outreach, engagement, service learning and research partnerships.” The office offers exciting potential to advance the University’s priorities related to Aboriginal engagement. The next step is to realize this potential by developing goals and strategies in support of the office’s mandate.

In light of its multiple responsibilities for fund raising and alumni relations, communications, and outreach and engagement, University Advancement is well positioned to support University- and unit-level strategies related to all of the areas of focus. One of its primary challenges is to strengthen its collaborative relationships with other units, academic units in particular, such that the greatest possible degree of synergy can be achieved and the mutual and individual needs of University Advancement, the University, and academic and administrative units are recognized and addressed.

Unit Priorities and Progress during the Second Planning Cycle

The plan details numerous initiatives which advance the goals of the University and its units with respect to communications, alumni and donor relations, and fund raising. Advancement has made good progress against its goals and is flexible and responsive, having developed new reporting structures and undertaken an organizational restructuring with increased funding in 2009-10.

Unit Priorities for the Third Planning Cycle

University Advancement employs a principle-based approach to guide its planning, based upon leveraging existing capacities, mitigating risks and capitalizing on opportunities, employing cost/benefit analyses, and assessing the infrastructure growth necessitated by growth in business activity. Four goals are identified in the plan: to review its organizational framework beginning with an institutional audit; to increase donor giving and determine institutional priorities for fundraising in preparation for the University’s next major campaign in 2016; to reinforce the University’s position; and to develop collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships.

The plan is grounded in the intent to develop indicators to measure effectiveness in fund raising and progress related to core strategies, to ensure the effective use of resources, and to project the feasibility of securing the level of fundraising support envisioned for campaigns. Concrete measures and metrics are identified in the plan with respect to fundraising potential and effectiveness. Further work is needed to address the measurement of effectiveness of communication and outreach and engagement initiatives.

There is a need to balance the necessity for an overarching University communications strategy and centralized messaging with the proliferation of communication that occurs from academic and administrative units. This may include consideration of a shared model, similar to that of the shared advancement officer model, with communications specialists placed within colleges and schools and administrative units, apart from the communications offices already created within SESD, Research, Human Resources and Financial Services. The vision for an AVP Communications is not well integrated within the plan. Now that an incumbent has been successfully appointed, the impact of this position on the various communications needs identified will be considered and developed.

Collaboration and Co-operation with Other Units (Academic and Administrative)

Collaboration and co-operation with other units is an imperative for University Advancement given that its mandate extends across the campus. Communications initiatives require collaboration with units such as Institutional Planning and Assessment, Human Resources Division and SESD, along with colleges/schools and research centres. Most Development and Alumni Relations initiatives require collaboration with colleges/schools. Advancement provides support for many academic-unit-based initiatives; however, there is tension regarding what is excellence versus capacity building, between University-level goals and unit-specific initiatives, and with respect to the vulnerability of colleges/schools that are dependent on the shared model for placement of advancement officers. The previous comment relates to the statement in the plan that University Advancement will reduce or eliminate services to college and units that do not have a joint reporting arrangement or that do not demonstrate a reasonable rate of return. University Advancement is encouraged to advance its goals for greater productivity in collaboration with others in order that the mutual goals for enhanced fundraising opportunities and Advancement's goal "to build a strong and unifying identity for the University of

Saskatchewan” are realized. As suggested, some degree of administrative restructuring may be called for in order to achieve the goals articulated.

Summary

University Advancement has identified its mission as establishing a national and international reputation for the University as a distinguished university. Its mission now includes outreach and engagement, along with advancement and communications. The unit has identified that key to achieving success is the establishment of the relationships and the acquisition of the human and financial resources necessary to achieve its goals, and structuring and positioning itself to address the priorities of the University and those of individual colleges and units.

During the second planning cycle, University Advancement focused on establishing the University’s brand and building the University’s reputation and relationships. In the third planning cycle, it outlines its intent to expand beyond the province to implement annual national campaigns targeted at key stakeholders. University Advancement is to be complimented on its vision and optimism and its ambitious goals, given the reality that while the University garners considerable recognition within the province, there is significantly lower recognition elsewhere. University Advancement is also to be recognized for its energy and enthusiasm in garnering new resources to support University-level and unit-level initiatives related to outreach and engagement, given their critical importance with respect to experiential learning, community engagement in research, student recruitment and Aboriginal initiatives. In advancing the reputation of the University, seeking venues to foster public recognition of the University, in addition to the Maclean’s reputational ranking, is suggested.

In the end, the degree to which University Advancement is successful in achieving its goals and targets will be dependent to a very significant extent on its success in building and strengthening its relationships with academic and administrative units, alumni, and the communities it serves.