



BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

**Office of the  
Vice-President Research**

**2024-25 Annual Report**



UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN



# Land Acknowledgement

The University of Saskatchewan is on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.



*'W̓inipekw on the Rising'* by Lindsay Carlson, PhD student, Department of Biology, College of Arts and Science



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Cover photography: *'Combatting Anti-Microbial Resistance for Safer, Healthier Food'* by Mihiprabha Rathnayake, PhD student, Department of Veterinary Pathology, Western College of Veterinary Medicine

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# Dr. Baljit Singh's Vice-President's Address

It is my honour to provide members of the University of Saskatchewan (USask) community the 2024-25 research, scholarly and artistic work (RSAW) report on behalf of the Office of the Vice-President Research (OVPR).

RSAW plays an undeniable role in the health and wellbeing of our planet, and it is needed now, more than ever. We need RSAW to explore the unknown. To give voices to communities that are otherwise silent. To unearth the truth about false misconceptions. To examine ways to heal that are all-too-often overlooked. To teach, to learn, to entertain and to grow. Through innovation, discovery and creativity, USask has greatly impacted the cultural and economic fabric of Saskatchewan. As we continue to build our RSAW enterprise, our impact extends even further into our country and throughout the world.

USask remains committed to delivering world-class research that answers the questions of complex problems, and we won't back down anytime soon.

This year marks another year of growth, learnings and discovery for RSAW at USask. We continue to punch above our weight and gain traction on the world stage as we grow our RSAW enterprise and reach new heights and aspirational goals. The growth of RSAW across USask has also been reflected in our ranking efforts. I'm proud to report that we achieved our highest-ever performance in the QS World University Rankings (QS WUR) this past year and we also won the most improved university in Canada.

We sought to increase the impact of RSAW at USask through collaboration. This happened with integrated RSAW planning with our colleges and schools, something that hasn't traditionally been done in at USask.

By setting RSAW targets with each of the colleges and schools, we were better able to align with our community and build targets that reflect the ambitious efforts of the entire campus community. Setting targets together helps us calibrate our unified support.



Vice-President Research, Baljit Singh

The OVPR is committed to empowering our researchers, students and scholars and setting them up to succeed. We've worked tirelessly, and through a coordinated effort, to ensure that enhancements were made to our research services. Several initiatives have been implemented this year to address the growing needs of our researchers, including our improved processing time for human and animal ethics. Our animal care office has improved support amidst the growing complexity of Canada Council on Animal Care (CCAC) requirements while our human ethics applications continue to increase every year and, as such, we improved our methods and have lowered wait times for applications.

We are currently pursuing modernizing our software, implementing our new RSAW infrastructure tracking booking system, and actively trying to collaborate more effectively with our research infrastructure across campus.

A continuing priority in the OVPR is to strengthen RSAW in Health Sciences. While we have seen growth in this area, we also know there is work to be done. USask's success rate in the last three Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) competitions is proof that we are moving in the right direction. Our team, along with the Provost's office, has created a Health Sciences governance and administrative structure to support RSAW and our hope is to continue this momentum for years to come.



We continue to build relationships with strategic partners around the world, with a heightened focus on Germany, Brazil, Bangladesh and India. Throughout the year, we made several meaningful missions to these countries where fruitful discussions were had on topics ranging from veterinary medicine, to quantum technologies. We've made valuable headway in many areas of the world, and one example of that is the unprecedented agreement with USask, Innovation Saskatchewan (IS) and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to increase academic and research between Saskatchewan and Germany.

USask's start up incubator, Opus, has seen enormous success in moving innovation from the labs of the university to the boardrooms of industry. Just this year, there have been over 600 people actively engaged in Opus' programs and services, which represents the desire to establish our work more broadly and to expand our impact to members of our community, and beyond.

This year, our phenomenal scholars have published and produced dozens of books, artistic performances, exhibitions, and curations. These thought-provoking artistic works bring immense meaning and joy in our lives and, as always, greatly enhance the reputation of USask's RSAW enterprise.

We are actively telling our RSAW story through events, stories, and collaborative methods across campus. The OVPR team hosted the TEDxUniversityofSaskatchewan event again this year, which shone a light on the incredible ideas coming from our researchers, students and faculty. We also hosted the sixth annual People Around the World (PAW) Congress in October, which was a dynamic event that brought together experts and innovators to explore the Food-Water-Energy nexus, using data as a cross-cutting concept.

The OVPR remains committed to growth in all areas, including at our leadership table. This is why I facilitated a leadership series where members of our executive team heard from trailblazers and leaders from across the country, including McGill's Vice-President Research Martha Crago, President of the University of Calgary Elizabeth Cannon, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce Candace Laing and head coach of USask's women's basketball team Lisa Thomaidis.

2024-25 has been an uplifting year for RSAW at USask, but

we know our job isn't finished. We will not sit on our laurels and coast; we will continue to find creative, collaborative and effective ways to bring efficiency and innovation into every corner of our work.

This seemingly humble university has blossomed in the heart of the Prairies to deliver some of the most profound answers to the world's most complex problems. From our agricultural developments to our robust social science and humanities influence, to our impact in the energy sector, to our dedication to educating the next generation of changemakers, USask's impact is widespread.

By combining USask's academic expertise with the experience and knowledge held in our community, organizations, and governments, our institution exemplifies its history of being the "peoples' university" as we continually and collectively work with partners to address the most pressing challenges of our time.

I invite you to read through the following pages of this report to gather a more fulsome understanding of the OVPR's impact this year.

**Baljit Singh**  
Vice-President Research  
University of Saskatchewan



# Office of the Vice-President Research

The OVPR provides key services and supports to researchers, fostering connections between USask's RSAW endeavors and communities worldwide. Together, the units of the OVPR facilitate the development of local, national, and international partnerships, manage grant and contract submissions, support knowledge mobilization, ensure compliance, and highlight the university's impact and achievements.

## Research Acceleration and Strategic Initiatives (RASI)

RASI supports the university research community in the incubation and development of research grants, infrastructure projects and initiatives, and management of the federal research chairs programs. Key goals of RASI are to provide researchers and the university with services and programs that create a competitive edge when applying for external research funding, ensure alignment with granting agency and national research security requirements, and support good management of external funding. RASI supports the development of a robust research culture through targeted programs and initiatives, including the Undergraduate Research Initiative and the Discovery, Achievement and Research Excellence (DARE) program.

## International Office (IO)

The IO supports the USask community to engage in international research, by identifying funding opportunities, and bringing teams and global partners together to work on international projects. The IO's work supports and coordinates international initiatives highlighted in the university's *"International Blueprint for Action 2025 – a vision for a globally significant university."*

## Research Profile and Impact (RPI)

RPI tells the university's research story to the world – through strategic communications involving print, video, newsletters, media releases, web, social media, advertisements and events. RPI plays a critical role in building USask's reputation as a U15 institution, which in turn helps bolster our placement in university rankings and attracts top talent, public and private investment, as well as support from alumni and partners. As the university's liaison with federal and provincial granting agencies, RPI ensures compliance with communication requirements and leads high-profile events to showcase our research funding successes. Working in coordination with University Relations and a network of USask college and research centre communicators, RPI is here to help researchers celebrate their success, effectively tell their stories, and demonstrate their impact to the world.

## Research Ethics and Infrastructure (REI)

REI upholds the approved ethical standards and guidelines for research conducted on campus. Services include reviewing and approving submissions, developing policies, and providing education and training.



## Innovation Mobilization and Partnerships (IMP)

IMP builds strong ecosystems and research partnerships to support the mobilization of USask innovations with the goal of creating external value for society, the economy, and the environment. IMP teams conduct technology transfer, research contracting, intellectual property management, venture creation, and innovation ecosystem engagement activities. IMP is the organizational home of Opus, USask's pre-accelerator program for founders with research-backed innovations for which they want to build new companies.

## The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS)

Dean Dr. Debby Burshtyn (PhD) and VPR Baljit Singh continue to incorporate CGPS strategy into RSAW planning to deepen graduate student and postdoctoral scholar experience. Leadership has been working closely with deans, centre directors and department heads on the alignment of graduate student programming. The OVPR and CGPS continue to work collaboratively to find more graduate student funding and international opportunities.

*CGPS prepares an annual report for University Council. For further information on the college's priorities and activities, please refer to CGPS's report.*




VPR Dr. Baljit Singh (PhD) kicked off the 2024-25 academic year to a full house during his annual Campus Address

# Connecting with Community


The OVPR acknowledges scholars across campus who engage in RSAW activities with communities external to the university. We acknowledge the additional time, deep listening, and reciprocal learning that occurs within this form of RSAW and commend scholars for focusing on outcomes that truly make a difference to diverse peoples and places, locally, nationally and internationally.

A special acknowledgement is extended to the editorial team and board of the *Engaged Scholar Journal (ESJ): Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning* that is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year! The *ESJ* serves as Canada's "online, peer-reviewed, multi-disciplinary journal committed to profiling best practices in 'engaged scholarship' informed by community-academic partnerships in research, teaching, and learning." Congratulations also on signing an agreement with the University Library to host the journal on its new hosting service.


Amidst the collective efforts of individual scholars engaged in this work, members of the OVPR have worked to uplift efforts with community partners. A few examples are offered below:



The OVPR partnered with **Dr. Loleen Berdahl** (PhD) from the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy and the Diefenbaker Institute on an Exchange grant supporting civic engagement for municipal, provincial, and federal elections held at Station 20 West. Community partners who supported the initiative included Station 20 West, Quint Development Inc., CHEP Foods, and the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Program.



Members of the OVPR, the kihci-okāwīmāw askiy Knowledge Centre, and the Indian Teacher Education Program travelled with elders to Kainai Nation south of Lethbridge, AB to participate in the tenth anniversary of the Buffalo Treaty where they signed as supporters of the Treaty. This work is important to RSAW efforts on campus as we develop a relationship to the buffalo, and in particular, the bison herd at the Livestock and Forage Centre of Excellence (LFCE). As part of a response to the Treaty, grade three students from Saskatoon Public Schools and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools will be visiting the baby bison this spring to learn with us from knowledge keepers, LFCE staff, and partners from Search and Rescue Saskatchewan.



The OVPR organized a panel of community-engaged scholars who informed USask's Senate about their work in/with communities. The collective scholarship of **Drs. Jennifer Lang** (PhD), **Stuart Skinner** (MD), **Kerry McPhedran** (PhD), **Markus Brinkmann** (PhD), and **David Natcher** (PhD) showcased a breadth and depth of community-engaged scholarship that "wowed" the Senate and enabled a fulsome discussion on the importance of community-engaged work.





Nobel Laureate and USask honorary degree recipient Prof. Emmanuelle Charpentier spoke to 200 Saskatoon high school students at USask on May 12, 2025

USask scholars continue to share their knowledge externally and to the community through written works. A few of this years publications included: *It's Nation Time* by **Dr. Jerry White** (PhD), *For the Public Good: Reimagining Arts Graduate Programs in Canadian Universities* by **Drs. Loleen Berdahl** (PhD), **Jonathan Molloy** (PhD) and **Lisa Young** (PhD), and *A Line of Blood and Dirt: Creating the Canada-United States Border across Indigenous Lands* by **Dr. Benjamin Hoy** (PhD).

The Walter P. Shyluk Nature's Health fund prioritizes community-led partnerships that work on locally developed projects in the Krydor-Redberry Lake area with partners such as the Redberry Lake UNESCO biosphere, local schools and First Nations communities.

The OVPR and **Dr. Jay Wilson** (PhD, Principal, PA Campus) have connected with community members from the La Ronge area to discuss possibilities for RSAW. These efforts began after an introduction to the community by **Dr. Jordan Woodsworth** (DVM, PhD) from the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) who regularly holds animal clinics in the community. As part of this growing relationship, USask was invited to participate in the annual Art in the Park event. Members from the Indigenous Student Achievement Pathways Program offered an art-making session, and were available to students and educators at the two high schools to discuss pathways to USask.

The OVPR organized a feature lecture in partnership with the Gairdner Foundation from Nobel Prize winner and world-renowned microbiologist and geneticist and USask distinguished honorary degree recipient, **Dr. Emmanuelle Charpentier** (PhD). The OVPR partnered with Saskatoon Public Schools and Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools to invite 200 high school students from STEM classrooms/programs. This lecture, Q&A and networking opportunity granted high school students the opportunity to engage with a world-renowned scientist whose discoveries have revolutionized modern genetics and biomedical research.

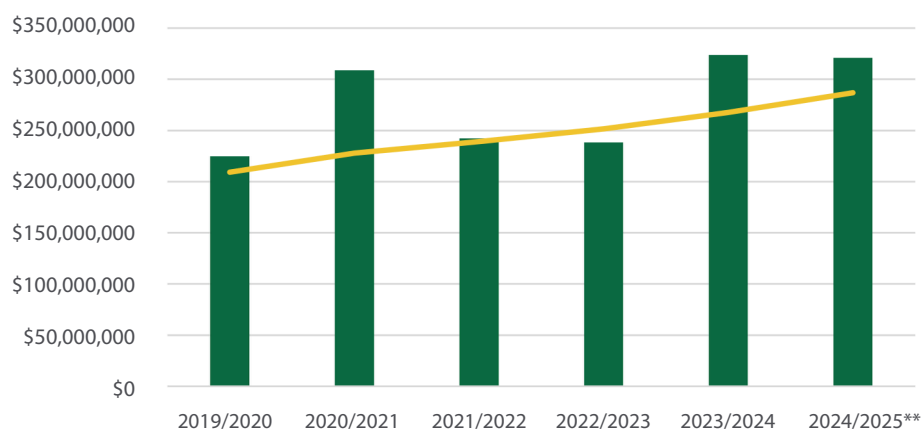
As part of its membership in Community Based Research Canada, USask faculty have access to member benefits, professional growth opportunities and events. This year, we partnered with CBRC to open the spring SSHRC event to discuss the value of community-based research and the resources that membership provides to our scholars.

# RSAW Funding

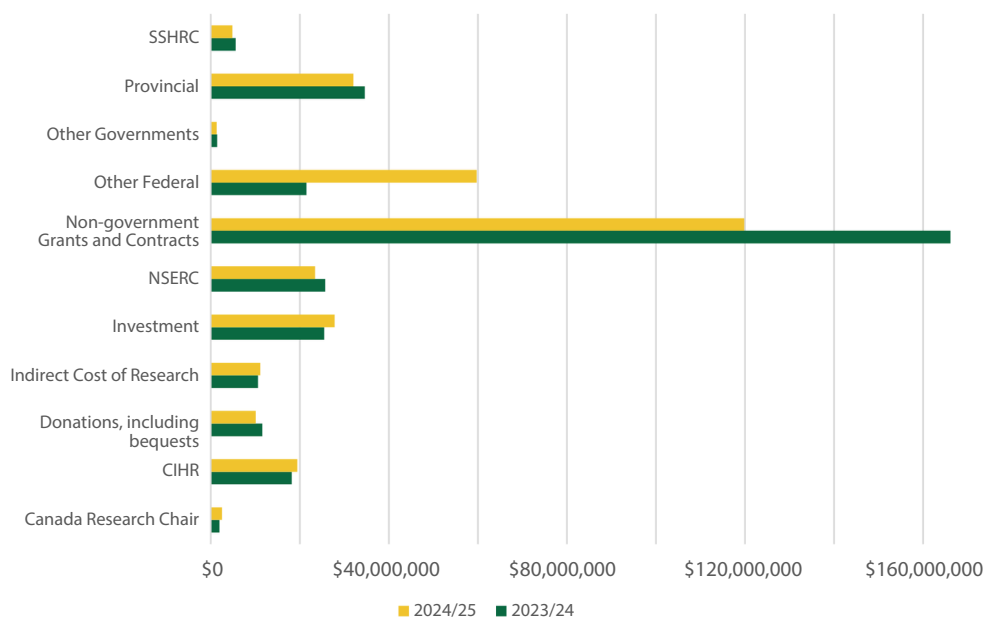
## RSAW Revenue

- USask received **\$321 M** in RSAW Revenue recorded for the 2024-25 fiscal year.
- The current five year rolling average (2020-21 to 2024-25) is **\$286 M** which is a 26 per cent increase since 2020-21.

RSAW Revenue\* and five-year rolling average



RSAW Revenue by source



\* RSAW Revenue amounts are shown as is and when the money is received. Installment amounts are shown under each year the installment is received in.

\*\* Data is incomplete for 2024-2025 until July 2025.

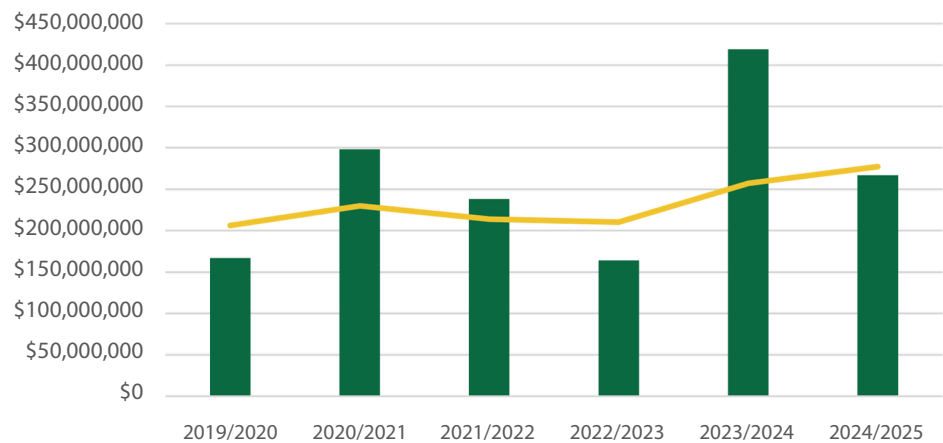


# Awarded RSAW

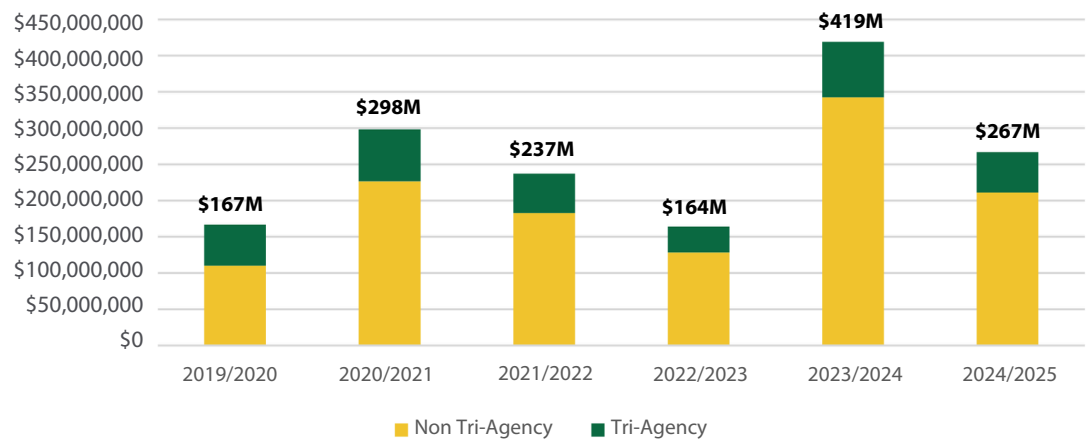
Collectively the three units of the OVPR supported researchers in securing:

- USask received **\$267 M** in Awarded RSAW funding in 2024-25, including **\$59 M in tri-agency funding**.
- USask’s five year rolling average of Awarded RSAW is at a historic high of **\$277 M** which is an 20 per cent increase since 2020-21.

Awards RSAW five-year rolling average

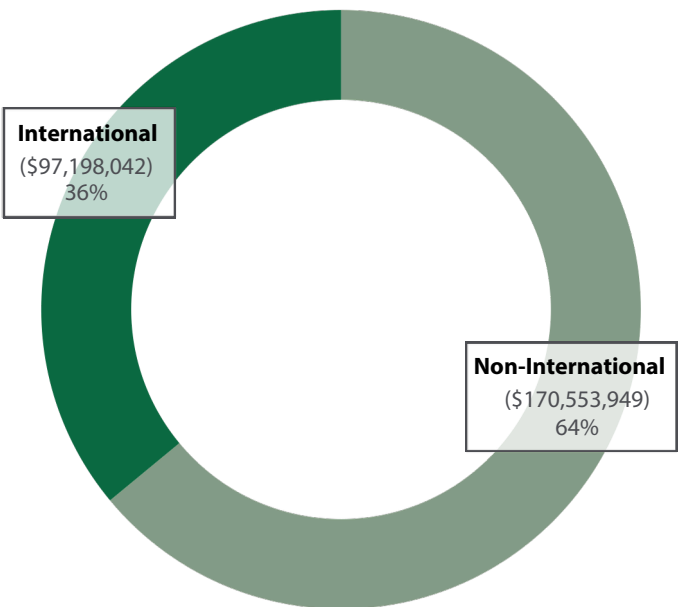


Awarded RSAW\*



\*Awarded RSAW includes the total research amounts recorded/shown under the year (fiscal year) the award was accepted. The total of all installment amounts, if any, are shown under the date of acceptance of award.

Over **\$97 M in awarded international RSAW funding** from May 1, 2024 to April 30, 2025 contributed to the USask total awarded RSAW funding listed above.



## Select grant successes in the last year include:

### A) Large-scale and Institutional Research and Infrastructure Grants

The OVPR supported the development of large-scale and institutional significant research grant proposals, helping faculty navigate the complexity by providing a suite of strategic and practical supports. A few examples of select grants that USask was awarded in 2024-25 include:

**Dr. Christy Morrissey's** (PhD) *"Identifying and Optimizing Marginal Agricultural Land to Achieve Nature-based Solutions"* received a \$3.9 M investment from the NSERC-SSHRC Sustainable Agriculture Research Initiative (SARI). One of 16 grants awarded through this competition, her project brings together researchers from USask, the Universities of Calgary and Manitoba, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada along with 13 community and industry partners to improve agricultural sustainability through marginal land use.

**Dr. Kristina Bidwell's** (PhD) *"We're Still Here: Amplifying Urban Indigenous Stories in Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and St. John's through Indigenous-led Partnership"* received \$1 M as one of six grants awarded through the SSHRC Reconciliation Network in Response to Call to Action 65. This Indigenous-led network brings together 17 scholars, storytellers, and students with Indigenous community organizations, Indigenous-led arts organizations and two universities in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland to amplify stories of Indigenous communities that have been excluded from processes of reconciliation to expand public and scholarly understanding of reconciliation.





Dr. Christy Morrissey (PhD) seeks to advance our understanding of the value of ecosystem services while providing farmers with guidance and tools for making land-use decisions


**Dr. Robert Henry** (PhD) received \$4 M in renewal funding from CIHR for the SK-Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR): nātawihowin and mamawiiikayaahk Research, Training and Mentorship Networks. This funding will continue to support this independent, Indigenous-led network to work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners in community-based research to improve Indigenous health. Dr. Henry also received \$1.5 M in renewal funding for the USask-based NEIHR National Coordinating Centre.

**Dr. Volker Gerdts'** (PhD) project *"Enhancing GMP Manufacturing by Leveraging Process Analytical Tools (PAT)"* received a \$1 M investment from the Canadian Pandemic Preparedness Hub, co-led by the University of Ottawa and McMaster University. One of three projects supported by this hub, this new PAT equipment will significantly increase our manufacturing abilities to develop new products to aid Canada's Pandemic Response.

**Dr. Markus Hecker's** (PhD) project *"Transatlantic Interdisciplinary Research and Training Program in Water Security and Freshwater Ecosystem Health"* received \$1.65 M from NSERC CREATE. This new international training program will work closely with partners in Germany to provide an immersive, experiential program that draws connections between disciplines like toxicology, engineering, social sciences and ecology, providing students with a transdisciplinary, global perspective on water research.

**Dr. Andrew Grosvenor's** (PhD) project *"The Development of Glass-ceramic Composite Materials for the Sequestration of Intermediate Level Waste Generated by SMR"* received \$120,000 from NSERC and \$120,000 from Natural Resources Canada. This project will further develop advanced waste from materials that are critical to the deployment of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) across Canada.


**Dr. Bishnu Acharya's** (PhD) project *"Biorefining of Oat Hulls for Materials, Chemicals, and Functional Food Application"* received \$675,000 from NSERC, \$292,500 from Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, and \$45,000 from Richardson Milling Ltd. This was the first application to successfully match the Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) grant with an NSERC Alliance and served as the pilot project for the development of a new ADF-Alliance partnership process with the Ministry of Agriculture.




New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF) – Exploration. USask submitted 16 applications and seven were awarded for a total funding of \$1.7 M. This funding will support "high-risk, high-reward" Canadian-led projects in the Colleges of Engineering, Medicine, and Arts and Sciences, the WCVm, the School of Environment and Sustainability, and the School of Public Health.

## B) Large-scale International Research and Development Grants


The IO supported several successful, large-scale grants. A few highlights from 2024-25 include:




A project led by **Dr. Trina Racine** (PhD) in the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization (VIDO) received \$15.7 M USD funding from the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to help VIDO continue developing its pan-sarbecovirus vaccine – a broadly protective vaccine designed specifically to protect against different types of potentially deadly coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-1, as well as SARS-CoV-2, the virus behind the COVID-19 pandemic to prepare the world for the next infectious disease crisis.



**Dr. Lori Bradford** (PhD) in the Ron and Jane Graham School of Professional Development in the College of Engineering and **Dr. Robert Henry** (PhD) in the Department of Indigenous Studies, College of Arts and Science are co-principal investigators on the project *"Arctic Freshwater Food Systems: Influence of Warming Winters and Increased Snow Cover"* led by **Dr. Milla Rautio** (PhD) at the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi funded through the NFRF NordForsk-led International Joint Initiative on Sustainable Development of the Arctic program. The Canadian team has been awarded \$4 M while the Nordic collaborators receive funding from NordForsk to better understand the consequences of warming winters on Arctic lakes and to identify adaptation strategies to ensure access to fishing sites. Through interdisciplinary practices, this project will lead to a co-designed resilience plan to sustain local food economies and traditional ways of fishing.



**Dr. Maureen Reed** (PhD) in the School of Environment and Sustainability (SENS) is leading a multinational education project that secured over \$500,000 from the Spencer Foundation in the United States. The project, *"Co-designing Transdisciplinary Sustainability Education,"* trains learners globally by combining community and academic knowledge to tackle sustainability challenges. This marks the first time a USask-led project has received funding from the Spencer Foundation.



**Dr. Lori Bradford** (PhD) in the Ron and Jane Graham School of Professional Development in the College of Engineering and **Dr. Graham Strickert** (PhD) with SENS are leading a USask project that secured nearly \$1.5 M from the NFRF International stream. This interdisciplinary, high-risk, high-reward project, *"Climate Collaboratorium: Co-creation of Applied Theatre Decision Labs for Exploring Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation,"* uses applied theatre, environmental science, and social science to engage communities in designing water security solutions.





Dr. Trina Racine (PhD), VIDO's Director of Vaccine Development, Dr. Baljit Singh (PhD), USask Vice-President Research, Cynthia Block, Saskatoon Mayor, Jamie Martens, Member of Legislative Assembly and Provincial Secretary, Terry Duguid, Member of Parliament, and Dr. Volker Gerdtz (PhD), VIDO's Director and CEO celebrated \$24 M in funding from the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to help prepare the world for the next infectious disease crisis

### C) International Blueprint for Action 2025 – International travel and project grants

An integral component of the *International Blueprint for Action 2025* is the International Travel and Project seed grants that the IO manages. Each year a call for applications for the travel and project grants is promoted to USask faculty and staff and through them to their international partners to support both incoming and outgoing travel to initiate, build and support international and intercultural engagement and activities aligned with our existing or emerging areas of strength to boost research collaborations with both existing and new international partners.

USask is proud to be one of the first to offer these types of seed grants, which are seen by many of our partners as an exemplary model of how to support internationalization at the ground level in a strategic way. One example supported by these grants includes:

*"Mobile Libraries and Literacy for Climate Justice: An Action Research Project with Youth in Northern Ghana"*, led by **Dr. Jacob Alhassan** (PhD), Department of Community Health and Epidemiology, College of Medicine, was awarded the Global Community Service Fund 2023-24. This project has significantly empowered rural Ghanaian youth to take climate action by improving their climate justice knowledge and providing them with tools to articulate their concerns and develop solutions. Through book clubs, photovoice methods, and small project funds, students have initiated community education, tree planting, and political engagement projects. The project has not only enhanced their climate literacy and reading abilities but also fostered a sense of critical citizenship and ongoing commitment to climate justice.



## D) Other notable successes:


### Canada Research Chairs

In 2024-25, 14 Canada Research Chair (CRC) searches were underway. Three new CRC nominations and one renewal were submitted in October 2024 (results pending).

- One new T1 nomination and two renewals submitted in October 2023 were awarded in April 2024.
- A call for CRC theme area proposals was sent out to the community in January 2025. Theme area proposals will again be accepted from Signature Area leads, deans, executive directors or centre directors.

### Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)

- In 2024-25, two regular JELF proposals were submitted to CFI (results pending) and three JELF-partnerships were submitted to CFI in support of Canada Research Chair applications (results pending).
- Five Innovation Fund proposals were submitted to CFI (results pending). In addition to the regular stream, the CFI developed a new stream to support core facilities, and one to support social sciences.



*A Breath of Protection!* by Mihiprabha Rathnayake, PhD student, Department of Veterinary Pathology, Western College of Veterinary Medicine

# Mobilizing Intellectual Property

IMP supported commercialization of innovations:

- Assessed 20 new invention disclosures from six colleges/schools.
- Filed 29 patents, contributing to a total of 156 patent families currently active.
- Secured 31 license agreements, which are now part of 319 active licenses under management.

## Innovation mobilization highlight: medSask

In recent years, pharmacy prescribing guidelines developed by medSask, a non-profit organization supporting pharmacists that operates out of USask's College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, became available for use by pharmacists across Canada through a subscription and licensing-based model. By 2024, 40 per cent of pharmacists in Canada, more than 19,000 professionals, are now using this USask-developed tool in their daily practice. This USask innovation impacts the business of pharmacists by helping them through the prescribing and documenting process and positively impacts the lives of Canadians who need safe and efficient access to prescription medications.



Former USask pharmacy student Tanya Fontaine in the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition Apotex Lab (Photo: David Stobbe)

# Internationalizing the USask Experience

The IO has hosted events at all accessibility levels and collaborated with colleagues on and off campus to ensure an internationalization experience for all.

In 2024-25 the IO accomplished the following highlights:

## Teaching and RSAW Partnerships



The IO houses over 250 international agreements with more than 200 entities in over 60 countries (including one with the Government of Saskatchewan on International Education). In 2024-25, there were 11 new and 17 renewed agreements that were signed.



Five of the 11 new agreements signed were with institutions in India.

## Delegation Support

Hosted 18 inbound visiting delegations from 10 countries including:



A visit by **Amanda Strohan**, Director General for Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy at Global Affairs Canada in May 2024 to engage with USask stakeholders who have key ties to the Indo-Pacific, to understand the progress made in the implementation of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy and identify key areas of opportunity and collaboration.




Officials from the German Bundestag (eight MPs, members of the Standing Committee on Education, Research and Technology Assessment) and staff from the Vancouver Consulate and the Embassy in Ottawa visited USask in October 2024 to learn more about the ongoing research and collaborations with Germany.

USask Vice-President Research Baljit Singh and President Peter Stoicheff sign an agreement with Innovation Saskatchewan CEO Kari Harvey for a three-year pilot project to operationalize future collaborations between Germany and USask, including on-campus research institutions






Supported eight outbound delegations by USask senior leaders including:



Organized a Saskatchewan-Germany R & D Partnerships Forum with the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Development Office in Germany in May 2024, to strengthen partnerships between USask and industry partners in Germany. Attendees included Ambassador of Canada to Germany, IBM, Nuclidium AG, LenioBio, Bayer Agriculture, University of Bonn, DAAD, Innovation Saskatchewan and USask. Nuclidium Ag has expressed a strong interest in increasing the production yields of Copper-67 and exploring clinical trials in Saskatchewan, augmenting the developments underway in Europe.




Organized a delegation to Brazil in September 2024. The objectives of the visit were to rebuild and strengthen institutional connection for collaboration in Brazil. All engagements were established to build a foundation on people-to-people connections. The delegation met with senior leaders at Universidade de São Paulo, and Universidade Estadual Paulista “Júlio de Mesquita Filho” (UNESP). In addition, they met with **Caroline Charette**, Consul General of Canada to Brazil in São Paulo, and **Marco Antonio Zago**, President of FAPESP.


## Government Engagement

To extend our global impact on International Education, the IO participated in more than 80 meetings with provincial, federal, or international government representatives.


We have participated/organized joint events with international and provincial governments such as:



A joint mission to Vietnam with the Ministry of Advanced Education in March 2025 to facilitate strategic partnership development with Vietnamese partners and diplomats and advance cooperation in joint research, student mobility and recruitment, faculty exchange, and training.



The signing of a joint agreement with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and Innovation Saskatchewan and a pilot implementation agreement between USask and Innovation Saskatchewan at a joint symposium between U15 Canada and German U15 in Germany in January 2025. These agreements promote the international exchange of students and faculty and provide support to operationalize research collaboration in areas such as health, synchrotron sciences, quantum computing and artificial intelligence, food security, nuclear and alternative energy, agriculture, and the environment.



Individuals from the IO, VIDO and the QuanTA centre, joined a Western Canadian delegation to France in January 2025 organized by the Embassy of France in Vancouver. The delegates visited Paris and Brussels and met with French institutions and the European Commission to better understand the specifics of the Horizon Europe program and potential collaboration opportunities with French institutions.



Dr. Steven Rayan (PhD) moderated a panel on food, water and energy at the PAW 2024 International Congress at USask (Photo: Dave Stobbe)


## Other Activities

USask hosted a successful People Around the World (PAW) 2024 International Congress on the main USask Campus from October 16-18, 2024. This dynamic event brought together experts and innovators to explore how a cohesive approach to the Food-Water-Energy nexus, using data as a cross-cutting concept, can address socio-cultural issues both locally and globally. Attendees celebrated achievements, shared insights and helped shape the future of sustainable solutions.

Since Canada's participation in Horizon Europe has enabled USask researchers to engage with European counterparts and international networks, the IO has developed a brief guide to Horizon Europe in the form of an introductory *Horizon Europe Canvas Course*. This self-paced course is designed to support USask researchers and their teams in exploring and applying for Horizon Europe funding. The course provides an overview of Horizon Europe, covering its structure, key priorities, and funding opportunities under Pillars I and II. It offers insights into the Horizon Europe Portal, its resources, and the internal supports and services available at USask to leverage Horizon Europe opportunities.

The IO and Saskatchewan Polytechnic hosted/organized a Horizon Europe Roadshow in March 2025 with Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) Canada, EURAXXES and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) to inform the private sector, post-secondary institutions, provincial government and non-government organizations on the world's largest multilateral research and innovation program. The roadshow provided an overview of Canada's association to Horizon Europe, especially Pillars I and II, and provided testimonials from successful USask faculty.





Dr. Tamanna Jahan (PhD) is undertaking cutting-edge chickpea research as part of her postdoctoral fellowship in USask's College of Agriculture and Bioresources

# Storytelling and Awards

## Storytelling

The RPI team continues to creatively find ways to tell USask's RSAW story to the world.

In 2024-25 RPI accomplished the following:

- Continued to grow an extensive following on our social media channels.
  - Launched an Instagram account, "usaskresearch," on Jan 27, 2025 to expand our storytelling presence online. In under three months, the account has garnered over 350 followers. The account's posts, stories and reels have generated over 270,000 views and have reached over 34,000 accounts.
  - 'USask Research' had over 175,000 impressions on LinkedIn and gained more than 1,800 new followers, contributing to a total of 4,893 followers on the platform. This increase reflects a 60 per cent growth rate.
- RPI's monthly newsletter—*Discovery Digest*—had a 57.1 per cent open rate. This is a three per cent increase from 2023-2024. Additionally, 45 new subscribers were added.
- Launched the *Signature Series Podcast* which released eight episodes exploring and celebrating innovative RSAW at USask. To date, the *Signature Series Podcast* webpage has been visited over 1,200 times with over 700 episode downloads.
- Wrote, lead or partnered with USask communicators to put out 150 news releases/stories.
- Honouring a record-breaking \$417 M in awarded research in 2023-24, RPI produced a comprehensive celebratory campaign that included a video, news release and multi-part social media series. The campaign garnered nearly 60,000 views online. This project was entered to the CCAE 2025 Prix d'Excellence Awards for *Best Creativity on a Shoestring*.



# Awards

RPI facilitates several USask faculty applications for external research awards to encourage and build external recognition for breadth and quality of RSAW created by our faculty.

Since March 2024, working with facilitators and other supporters from colleges and schools, the RPI awards team has supported 40 high-profile nominations for awards and recognitions, including the Royal Society of Canada, Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, and many more.

Awards received (May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025) include:

## **Dr. Alexandra King (MD)**

Cameco Chair in Indigenous Health and Wellness, College of Medicine  
*Canadian Academy of Health Science Fellowship*

## **Mckelvey Kelly** (pictured, left)

Department of History, College of Arts and Science  
*SSHRC Talent Award - Finalist*

## **Global Water Futures**

*Stockholm Water Prize - Shortlisted*

## **Dr. John Pomeroy (PhD)** (pictured, right)

School for Environment and Sustainability  
*International Hydrology Prize - Dooge Medal*

## **Dr. Linzi Williamson (PhD)**

Department of Psychology and Health Studies, College of Arts and Science  
*CBC Saskatchewan Future 40*

## **Dr. Tara Kahan (PhD)**

Department of Chemistry, College of Arts and Science  
*YWCA Women of Distinction Awards STEM category - Finalist*

## **Dr. Ingrid Pickering (PhD)**

Department of Geological Sciences, College of Arts and Science  
*YWCA Women of Distinction Awards STEM category - Finalist*





*"The Invisible Bond: Research and Empathy"* by Angie Magana, PhD student,  
Department of Veterinary Pathology, Western College of Veterinary Medicine

# Safeguarding RSAW

## Strengthening the Operational Framework

The OVPR continues to focus on strengthening the operational framework that underpins research activity at USask, with an emphasis on quality control, compliance, and due diligence. Ongoing efforts aim to harmonize workflows, reduce administrative friction, and improve service delivery through continuous process improvement. A key focus has been deepening collaboration with other institutional units that support research, including CGPS, Contracts, Financial Operations, Ethics, and the IO. These partnerships are essential in building more integrated, responsive systems that enable researchers to navigate complex requirements with greater ease. By investing in coordinated operations, the OVPR is working to ensure that internal infrastructure keeps pace with the evolving needs of the research community.

## Research Grants and Contracts Support






RASI ensures grants and contracts meet the compliance requirements of both funders and USask by providing robust support at the application submission and award stages. In 2024-25, the RASI team was responsible for reviewing and submitting 1148 externally funded research applications, a 24 per cent increase over the previous year. In addition to that, RASI processed and set up 799 new research awards, 323 new research contract agreements, and amended 783 existing projects.

## Animal Care

The Animal Care and Research Support (ACRS) office has improved sustainability and support for researchers who use animals in response to an increased workload and the growing complexity of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) requirements.

ACRS is currently working through an RFP process to contract use of a new software system for animal protocol administration and animal ordering and management. This will streamline various facets of ACRS work and improve the animal user experience.




In 2024-25 ACRS accomplished the following:

-  Organized the annual Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Science (CALAS) symposium in Saskatoon in June 2024. (CALAS represents animal technicians, veterinarians, and animal scientists across Canada). CALAS was last held in Saskatoon nearly 30 years ago.
-  Supported over 1,000 active animal users, at USask and its affiliates, who completed animal-based activity on 100,000 animals and totaling \$850,000 in animal purchase costs.
-  Managed 460 animal use protocol submissions.
-  Completed 100 animal user training sessions.
-  Trained veterinary students in laboratory animal medicine through first year lectures, senior year rotations, and the WCVL laboratory animal medicine club.

## Human Research Ethics

In 2024-25, the Human Research Ethics Office (REO) processed over **3,600 research ethics applications** (new applications, acknowledgements, exemptions, amendments, renewals and closures). This volume continues to increase year by year, which correlates with increased research activity by USask researchers.

The focus for 2024-25 was finding efficiencies in our work processes to decrease the time from file submission to approval. Our efforts have been very successful. When comparing our 2024-25 approval times with 2023 metrics, we achieved the following improvements:

-  39 per cent faster for Behavioural REB delegated reviews.
-  24 per cent faster for Behavioural REB full board reviews.
-  31 per cent faster for Biomedical REB full board reviews.



The current, regularly updated approval times are posted on the USask Human Research Ethics Office website and display the average number of calendar days with the REO, with the REB and with researchers. Researchers can now plan their ethics submissions to align with their anticipated research start dates.

## Expanding Research Security Guidance

The 2024 fall grant cycle marked the first time that both of Canada's research security policies, the *National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships* and the *Sensitive Technology Research Areas and Affiliations of Concern*, were applicable to all Tri-Agency and CFI grants. Over the course of the year, the needs of research security have expanded within an increasingly complex geo-political environment. The research security team not only continues to provide advice and guidance related to Canada's research security policies, but it also addresses a variety of research security related requirements including anti-corruption practices, export controls, sanctions, and Government of Canada Contract Security Program requirements. The research security team continues to capitalize on a network of national and international subject matter experts thus ensuring that the USask community is receiving the most relevant and comprehensive guidance.



"Under the Tundra's Midnight Glow" by Cameron Vestby, Master of Science student, Department of Biology, College of Arts and Science

# RSAW Initiatives

## Opus – Incubating USask Startups

USask launched Opus in 2022 as a pre-accelerator program for USask founders with research-backed innovations they wish to use as the basis for a startup venture. Opus is designed to provide participants with foundational knowledge to build business acumen, as well as personal connections to mentors, experts, industry, funders, and business service providers.

Opus 2024-25 quick facts:

- Our idea2Build program included 29 aspiring entrepreneurs in 17 new ventures.
- Opus founders entered 18 startup competitions, winning over \$21,000 in prize money, and were invited to participate in seven external accelerator programs.
- Participants received over 41 hours of programming and benefited from the advice of 38 mentors and coaches from Saskatoon's business community and beyond.
- 591 USask community members received services and attended Opus workshops and events.
- Welcomed our first team of student founders from Saskatchewan Polytechnic in a pilot partnership offering.
- Two Opus companies were granted patents on their core technologies.
- Opus companies secured \$667,500 in private sector investment and generated almost \$300,000 in revenue.

Since inception, Opus-incubated ventures have secured more than \$1,507,745 in non-dilutive funding and have created 16 new jobs.

An engaged crowd heard pitches from Opus i2Build founders at the 2025 Innovation Expo (Photo: Three2One Studios)







The One Health Signature Area of Research and their student organizing committee (pictured) hosted the first annual One Health Symposium on November 23, 2024

## Signature Areas of Research

USask's Signature Areas of Research include: Agriculture, Communities and Sustainability, Energy and Mineral Resources for a Sustainable Future, Health and Wellness, Indigenous Peoples, One Health, Quantum Innovation, Synchrotron Sciences and Water.

This year, the Signature Areas hosted major events, lead consultation processes for large scale initiatives, and further developed interdisciplinary connections.

In the fall of 2024, RPI launched a podcast series— *the USask Signature Series*—which explores and celebrates the tremendous expertise and research initiatives of the Signature Areas of Research. Each episode is focused on answering one question pertaining to that specific Signature Area, such as: 'Are pets good for your health?', 'What makes Saskatchewan farmers so efficient?' and more.


## Undergraduate Research

The Undergraduate Research, Scholarly, and Artistic Works (uRSAW) initiative focuses on providing and enhancing research and discovery experiences to undergraduate students through a four-part strategy – course-based experiences, assistantships, storytelling and/or dissemination activities, and research skill development. Highlights for 2024-25 include:




Launch of the uRSAW Storytelling Competition – an annual competition where students submit their pitch explaining why their summer research project makes a compelling story and how they envision telling that story. The winner was awarded the opportunity to work with USask's Media Production team to create a two-minute video telling their research story.







Over 1,400 students had a course based First Year Research Experience (FYRE).



USask maximized our annual NSERC USRA allocation of 61. We have awarded a total of 91 tri-agency USRAs for the summer of 2025, including 19 NSERC USRAs for Indigenous Student Scholars, six NSERC USRAs for Black Student Scholars, two SSHRC USRAs, and three CIHR USRAs.



The DARE Undergrad Training and Mentorship Awards funded 11 Early Career Researchers to hire undergraduate student research assistants for the summer of 2025. The competition funded social science, humanities, and fine arts projects, addressing a gap in federally funded undergraduate research assistantship opportunities. Three of the awards were co-sponsored by SCPOR and focused on patient-oriented research.



In collaboration with the University of Regina (U of R), uRSAW developed a new funding opportunity – Collaborative Energy, Minerals, and Society Research Award (CEMSRA), to fund an undergraduate student researcher for a research project co-led and co-supervised by faculty at both USask and U of R. Five CEMSRA projects were funded for Summer 2025.



*"The Melt Begins"* by Hannah Koslowsky, Research Technician, Department of Geography and Planning, College of Arts and Science





Kayley D. Lawrenz took to the TEDxUniversityofSaskatchewan on February 2, 2025 to share her talk *“Can we break free of ableism?”*  
(Photo: Dave Stobbe)

## TEDxUniversityofSaskatchewan

On February 2, 2025, RPI—with support from USask’s Media Production and University Relations teams—hosted a half-day TEDxUniversityofSaskatchewan event that profiled a carefully curated and prepared series of talks designed to celebrate world-leading ideas and innovations at USask. Under the theme of ‘Inspiring Impact’, this sold-out event welcomed attendees from on and off campus who joined in a celebration of ideas worth spreading and were left feeling engaged and hopeful.

Eleven faculty, staff and students were engaged in this year’s TEDx process, undergoing a comprehensive series of coaching and rehearsal sessions to prepare for the live event. These individuals will continue to leverage these research communication skills as they advance in their careers at USask.

Live talks were recorded and distributed online via the TEDx official YouTube channel – home to 42 M subscribers. These recordings have also been widely shared and celebrated within the USask community and beyond.

As of April 7, two of the recordings were selected by TEDx for additional marketing profile, significantly increasing their reach and viewership.

Planning for TEDxUniversityofSaskatchewan 2026 is already underway, with speaker information sessions and recruitment set to begin Spring 2025.



## Images of Research

Celebrating another year of this influential research communications initiative, the 11th annual Images of Research contest and awards reception honoured the diversity and beauty of RSAW at USask.

From honeybee yards to the hidden universe inside ourselves, this year's images celebrated RSAW from across all corners of USask. The 2025 contest garnered close to 100 image submissions, which received nearly 20,000 online views and over 2,500 votes.

The March 24, 2025 Images of Research awards reception brought together over 75 members of USask's research community, contest judges and winning photographers for a lively celebration, reminding attendees that knowledge truly is beautiful.

## Faculty Support

DARE supports new faculty at USask to grow their research programs and build cross-campus connections. DARE provides practical and tailored resources for new and early career faculty, coordinates interdisciplinary programming to support grant development, and hosts networking and career development events for new and early career faculty.



DARE supports the NFRF Exploration funding program. The 2023 results (announced Spring 2024) included two successful early career researchers who participated in DARE's Exploration Grant Development Program, **Drs. Cari McIlduff** (PhD) (\$249,8000) and **Amanda Froehlich Chow** (PhD) (\$199,937).





DARE launched the first SHRF Establishment Grant Development Program to support ECRs applying for this funding program. Five early career researchers participated in this programming and submitted their Establishment Grant applications.

## Expanding Post-Award Grant Management Support

Following the success of the pilot phase, the OVPR has established two permanent Post-Award Research Specialist positions to support grant management. Support is now available to all departments in the College of Arts and Science, with successful outreach to other colleges between November 2024 and March 2025. The expansion continues to prioritize colleges with limited internal capacity and aligns with the OVPR's broader goal of supporting researchers throughout the entire grant lifecycle.

## Research Facilitators/ Administrators (RF/A)

RASI undertook a comprehensive analysis of existing centralized and decentralized research support system at USask to understand the scope; identified opportunities (gaps) and implemented a model to bring RASI, tri-agency support specialists, and decentralized RF/As together to work as a collective (> 65 members); working on their professional development through collective identification of thematic areas and topics; instituting an annual symposium with a focus on collective effort and strategy, team building, and recognition of their contributions to USask research enterprise.

## Rankings and RSAW Intelligence

The OVPR's collaboration with various portfolios continues in support of rankings and RSAW intelligence at USask. The 2024-25 year once again saw overall strong rankings results for USask, including achieving or maintaining two best-ever performances in international rankings, as follows:



**Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) 2025 World University Rankings:** USask was ranked at 340th in the world, an increase of five positions from the prior year (345th). After setting a new record in 2024, this result replaces the previous year as USask's best ever performance in the QS global ranking.



**Times Higher Education (THE) 2024 World University Rankings:** USask remained ranked in the 351-400 tier, the same as the previous year. This result allowed USask to remain positioned in our best rank in the THE global ranking.

In addition to the above best-ever performances, USask performed well in sustainability-related rankings this year. USask was ranked 131st globally in the QS Sustainability Rankings, and 101-200 globally in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings. Both of these ranks are decreases over the previous year but still represent strong performances for USask in an increasingly competitive pool. Notably, USask also achieved two global top 100 performances in individual Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the THE Impact rankings,

ranking at 25th globally in SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and 57th globally in SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

Among these strong performances, there remains opportunities for continued improvement. For example, USask moved down one tier in this year's Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities, dropping into the 401-500 category. This drop can primarily be attributed to a decrease in USask's Highly Cited Researchers score, highlighting an opportunity to develop and attract more faculty whose work is highly recognized and cited by fellow academics.

Associate Vice-President Research **Dr. Dawn Wallin** (PhD) and OVPR Rankings Strategist **Dr. Jennifer Drennan** (PhD) continue to collaborate with valued partners to move this work forward under the previously launched five-pillar strategy. Leadership briefings and analysis were delivered for 11 annual rankings releases throughout the past year, and the team cooperated with RPI on communications/news stories for each of the 11 releases as well. Progress continued on the development of the ranking dashboards, including demos, trials, and feedback opportunities for senior leaders. Custom rankings reports were created for seven colleges/schools, and 18 presentations were delivered to various USask leadership tables/committees. Work in the coming months will include continued efforts on projects in progress, as well as new initiatives focused on USask's global reputation and RSAW intelligence.

*"Field of Promise, Skies of Home"* by Praveen Sapkota, Alumni, Department of Plant Sciences, College of Agriculture and Bioresources



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