

## ITEM FOR DECISION

**Committee Name:** Planning and Priorities Committee, University Council

**Date:** June 11, 2026

**Presented by:** Angela Lieverse, Vice-Chair, Planning and Priorities Committee

**Subject: Change of Name for Department of Academic Family Medicine**

### MOTION

It is recommended by the Planning and Priorities Committee that Council approve the name change from the Department of Academic Family Medicine to the Department of Family Medicine effective immediately.

### SUMMARY

The College of Medicine is proposing to change the name of the Department of Academic Family Medicine to the Department of Family Medicine. This name change aims to reduce barriers to participation and improve inclusivity among family physicians involved in teaching and supervision across the province. Feedback indicates that the term “academic” is perceived as exclusionary and may undermine a sense of belonging, potentially affecting engagement that is critical to the college’s academic mission.

Renaming the department to Department of Family Medicine would align with naming conventions used by other clinical departments at the University of Saskatchewan and with family medicine departments nationally. It would also reduce confusion among system partners by matching terminology used within the Saskatchewan health system.

The original distinction between “academic” and clinical departments is no longer necessary due to strengthened integration between the College of Medicine and the provincial health authority under a unified department head model.

### CONSULTATION

The College of Medicine submitted a proposal to the Planning and Priorities Committee (PPC) on June 10, 2026. PPC had the opportunity to review the proposal and ask questions. PPC voted in favour of this name change.

### ATTACHMENTS

1. **Department of Academic Family Medicine Name Change Proposal**

## CHANGE OF NAME REQUEST

College: Medicine	College approval date: May 27, 2026
Proposed date for change to take effect:  November 2026	
Contact person name Kathy Lawrence	Email Kathy.lawrence@usask.ca
What are you changing the name of:  <input type="checkbox"/> College <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Department <input type="checkbox"/> Program Name <input type="checkbox"/> Degree Name <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Field of Specialization (major, minor, concentration, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Street <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Current name: Department of Academic Family Medicine	Changing to: Department of Family Medicine

## RATIONALE

The proposed name change is intended to reduce perceived barriers to participation for faculty across the province. The department has received feedback indicating that the inclusion of “academic” in the department’s name is exclusionary and does not foster a sense of belonging among family physicians who teach and supervise medical learners throughout the province. The continued engagement of these physicians is essential to advancing the college’s academic mission.

Removing the word “Academic” from the department’s name would align the department with other clinical departments within the USask College of Medicine and with family medicine departments at medical schools across Canada.

Adopting the name Department of Family Medicine would reduce confusion among our partners by aligning with nomenclature currently used within the Saskatchewan health system. While the former name, Department of Academic Family Medicine, was originally intended to distinguish the university’s academic department from the Saskatoon Health Region’s clinical department, this distinction is no longer necessary. In recent years, the College of Medicine and the provincial health authority have strengthened their partnership through a unified department head model, facilitating the integration of academic and clinical functions within a single department.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed name change will not affect students, residents, or staff, as the department is already widely known and referenced as the Department of Family Medicine. The change will not necessitate revisions to course names, as the proposed name aligns with existing course nomenclature. In addition, there will be no impact on other programs, units, university systems, or resource areas.

Finally, the new name will align the department with national and international naming conventions and resonate more readily with community members who would not distinguish between the clinical and academic work of family physicians in the province.

## **COSTS**

There will be modest costs to replace existing signage, letterhead/logos, business cards, etc., which departmental budgets will cover. The costs would largely be related to staff time to change out digital records.

## **CONSULTATION**

The Governance Office advised the department that consultation with other university offices was not required, given the limited impacts of this name change. The Registrar's Office (via the Governance Office) confirmed that the proposed change will not impact student systems.

## **REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

### **Department**

As part of an external review conducted in 2022, it was recommended that the department consider re-naming itself the "Department of Family Medicine" based on the following feedback and observation:

*A few participants wondered if the word "Academic" should be dropped from the unit's present appellation "Department of Academic Family Medicine." It was felt that the use of the term "Academic" might create an unnecessary divide and that the aspiration should be that all family physicians should embrace their teacher role. The naming is also inconsistent with other departments within the College of Medicine, who do not use "Academic" in their names.*

Subsequently, in the fall of 2023, department members (faculty, staff, and residents) were surveyed to gain their perspectives on the name change. When asked "Do you support the Department of Academic Family Medicine changing its name to the Department of Family Medicine,"

179 of the 182 respondents (98%) said “yes.” Most written comments were also supportive of the change, including the following examples:

*Thank you. I have long thought our naming was exclusionary, particularly to regional and rural physicians*

*Completely agree with the name change... I think this name (the original) has alienated some family physicians from the department. We need all family physicians to feel welcome to help recruit them as preceptors, and I feel this slight name change will help in that regard. Great idea!*

*I like embracing the idea that academics happen in a variety of practice settings*

The external reviewer’s recommendation and results of the department survey were discussed at the February 2024 Department Executive Committee meeting. This committee, which is advisory to the Department Head, is comprised of the clinical unit and academic leaders of the department’s divisions (undergraduate, postgraduate, scholarship, faculty development, rural) and operational leaders. The committee reached a consensus that the department should move forward with removing “Academic” from its name.

## **College**

Dean Sarah Forgie has endorsed the proposed name change (see attached letter). A Notice of Motion was presented to the College of Medicine Faculty Council on March 25, 2026, followed by a Motion at the May 27, 2026 Faculty Council meeting. The Motion read: *It is recommended that Faculty Council approve the renaming of the Department of Academic Family Medicine to the Department of Family Medicine.* No questions were asked at the May 27 meeting and the motion was carried.

## **University**

The Provost & Strategic Finance Offices have reviewed and endorsed the proposed name change (see attached memo).

As advised by the Governance Office, following its approval at the College of Medicine Faculty Council, the proposal will go to University Council through the Planning and Priorities Committee (PPC).



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Medicine

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May 5, 2026

As Dean of the College of Medicine, I am pleased to express my support for the proposal to change the name of the Department of Academic Family Medicine to the Department of Family Medicine. In keeping with our college's core value of fostering a sense of belonging, I appreciate the department's efforts to use more inclusive language and ensure that its name does not inadvertently exclude or alienate any members of our medical faculty. Family physicians across the province are vital members of our college community, and their contributions to our academic mission are invaluable.

I wish to convey my sincere thanks to Dr. Kathy Lawrence and her team for drafting the proposal before you, and to the many faculty and leaders who have expressed their support for this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Forgie'.

Sarah Forgie, MD, M.Ed., FAMMI, FRCPC  
Dean, College of Medicine  
Professor, Department of Pediatrics

## PROVOST & SFO CONSULTATION

To: Planning and Priorities Committee of Council

From: Kyla Shea, Academic Programs and Planning Specialist

Date: March 30, 2026

Re: Name Change – Academic Family Medicine to Family Medicine

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### SUMMARY

The Provost and Strategic Finance Offices have reviewed and endorsed the proposal as proposed. The purpose of the review was twofold:

- 1) to understand the potential impact of the change on the program enrolment and alignment to the college/school strategic enrolment plan.
- 2) To understand the financial implications of the proposed change and the impact on the college / school financial situation.

Date: March 27, 2026	Reviewed By: Loleen Berdahl, Acting Deputy Provost	Communicated By: Kyla Shea
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