

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
PLANNING AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

PRESENTED BY: Fran Walley, Chair, Planning and Priorities Committee

DATE OF MEETING: November 21, 2013

SUBJECT: **Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) Report Summary**

COUNCIL ACTION: For information only

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

The 2003 foundational document on Enrolment Planning set the university's enrolment goals of having a student body by 2010 comprising 18,500 undergraduate students and 2,500 graduate students. As this goal was met, the SEM project was launched in 2011 to identify enrolment opportunities and develop new enrolment goals to 2015-16. The consulting firm SEM Works was contracted to assist the university in reviewing the university's enrolment management and in setting these goals.

Historically, the planning and priorities committee has been involved in the discussion of enrolment targets and goals as part of its mandate to report to Council on university-wide planning, and in recognition of the importance of strategic enrolment planning. The planning and priorities committee discussed and received updates on the university's Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) project in December 2011 and October 2012. On October 2, 2013, the committee invited members of the academic programs committee to a joint meeting to discuss the Strategic Enrolment Management Report highlights (as attached) with Dr. Dave Hannah, associate vice-president student affairs.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY:

The SEM report uses data to understand enrolment patterns and inform goals and strategies. The report is based on much detailed analysis of the university's enrolment trends over the past five years and the enrolment goals of the colleges and schools as outlined in their strategic plans. The report also builds on the university's institutional positioning project, which defines those unique characteristics that differentiate the University of Saskatchewan from its competitor institutions.

The enrolment goals to 2015 approved by PCIP are to increase undergraduate enrolment by 3.4%, increase graduate enrolment by 28.6%, and continue to diversify the student profile. The SEM report targets modest undergraduate growth and aggressive graduate student growth, with a total enrolment of approximately 23,000 students by 2015-16, comprising 18,500 undergraduate students and 4,450 graduate students.

The SEM report contains ten key recommendations as outlined in the attached summary, which address student recruitment within an environment of increasing competition among universities as most areas in the country experience declining post-secondary student enrolment. To implement the recommendations, strategic opportunity teams will be built around three strategies: undergraduate recruitment, undergraduate retention, and graduate student lifecycle.

The report is presented for information to Council as any academic policy changes that result from the adoption of the recommendations in the report will be presented to Council separately as individual items. In their discussion of the report, the committees focused on the resources required to increase graduate student enrolment, the need for classroom space planning to accompany any consideration of enrolment increases, and the need for the professional colleges to consult with their associated professional bodies on planned enrolment increases.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Summary of executive highlights of the Strategic Enrolment Management Report

The full SEM report can be found at:

<http://www.usask.ca/plan/areas-of-focus/innovation-in-academic-programs-and-services/index.php>

(click on the projects bar)

University of Saskatchewan

Strategic Enrolment Management Report

Executive Highlights

Introduction

In November 2011, the U of S initiated an enrolment planning process under the strategic leadership of the Associate Vice-President of Students Affairs with a view to developing a comprehensive, integrated and actionable strategic enrolment management (SEM) plan that is aligned with the University's strategic plans and directions. In doing so, the expertise and assistance of SEM Works, a higher education enrolment management consulting firm, was secured to support this process. The resultant SEM Report is the product of a SEM planning initiative that spanned more than 16 months and involved over 150 faculty, staff, students and administrators in the process.

SEM is largely about changing the campus culture to adopt a heightened marketing, recruitment, retention, service orientation, and academic program relevance—at both the tactical and strategic levels. Four strategic points of leverage and ten primary strategies have been identified to advance our strategic enrolment goals and competitive positioning, with an initial focus on six priority target student segments. Presented herein are highlights from the SEM Report, which will shape our enrolment management efforts at the undergraduate and graduate levels over the plan period from 2013-14 through to 2016-17.

This executive highlights begins with an overview of the SEM planning context, process and enrolment goals that were foundational to the development of the SEM Report; followed by a synthesis of the recommended ten priority strategies for implementation over the next three-year period, including action steps and an indication of the relative resource intensity of these efforts. Finally, next steps are presented for the review and approval of the recommendations presented herein. A copy of the full version of the SEM Report, which includes details on the SEM planning foundational elements, as well as best practice considerations, effectiveness measures and

antecedents for success in the implementation process will be available shortly.

SEM Planning Context

In recent years, the U of S has embarked on numerous strategic initiatives in order to address the foundational elements to position the University for success in realization of its vision. Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) is among the foundational elements identified for continued institutional success.

The University's leadership has determined the need to develop a comprehensive, integrated and strategic approach to enrolment management with a focus on meeting the needs of students and the Province into the future. Indeed, enrolment management becomes 'strategic' when it is an integral component of institution-wide planning and resource planning processes, fused with the academic enterprise, and when it advances transformative change.

SEM Works was contracted to undertake a comprehensive review of the University of Saskatchewan's enrolment management function, as well as to work in partnership with the University in facilitating an inclusive and data-driven planning process leading to the development of an actionable strategic enrolment management (SEM) Report—the result of which is presented herein.

The scope of the consultancy was threefold:

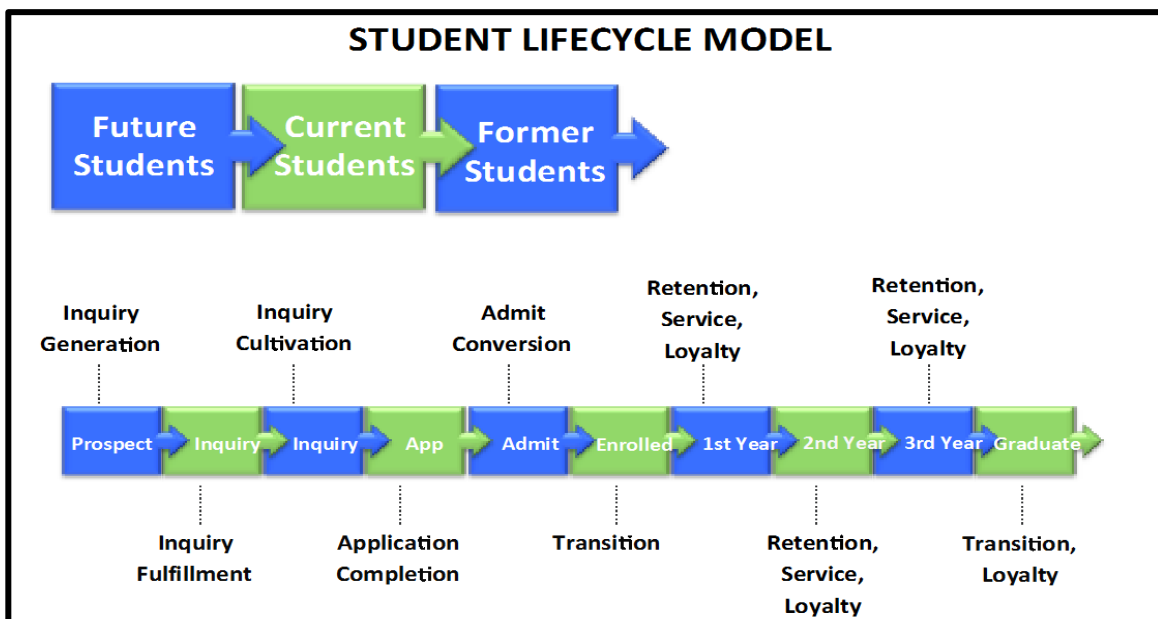
1. A *SEM Audit* of undergraduate and graduate enrolment operations (i.e., structures, strategies, systems, information, policies, and processes);
2. An *Enrolment Goals Analysis* involving a review of enrolment goals, aspirations, processes and capabilities at the college and institutional levels; and
3. A review of *Enrolment Intelligence* capabilities and capacity conditions (i.e., data collection, data management, analytics, reporting systems, organizational structures) to support SEM planning, strategy development, performance management and decision-making.

SEM Planning Process

Mobilizing a campus community around a **common purpose** is the secret to producing dramatic, sustainable enrolment results. Therefore, the U of S adopted a SEM planning process that was designed to be highly consultative and participatory. Through this process, the campus community was engaged in identifying, defining, and organizing around a common purpose—what are referred to as **strategic opportunities** throughout the SEM Report.

To achieve a **seamless service experience** for students, planning and decision-making structures must be in places that promote collaboration and coordination across functions and divisional boundaries in the delivery of programs and services relative to the needs of target student segments. Through such planning and decision-making processes, a campus-wide commitment to a student-centred purpose shapes institutional strategic directions, priorities, and decision processes; redefines operational processes, systems, policies, and practices; and ultimately, permeates the organization’s culture.

High performing enrolment organizations continuously evaluate the frequency and nature of touch points at each stage of the student lifecycle to determine the adequacy of each related to a goal of maximizing enrolment yield and student retention. The student lifecycle model shown below served as a cornerstone for conducting the *SEM Audit* undertaken by the consultants.



In application, the student lifecycle model served as the framework for identifying strategic opportunities, and for informing the subsequent stages of SEM planning. Following from the audit process, four primary strategic points of leverage have been identified to advance the U of S' strategic enrolment goals and competitive positioning, with an initial focus on six primary target student segments including: students direct from high school, Aboriginal students, mature learners, transfer students, international students, and graduate students. The strategic points of leverage are encapsulated within the following four broad thematic areas:

1. Undergraduate student recruitment
2. Undergraduate student retention
3. Optimizing the graduate student lifecycle
4. Strategic enrolment intelligence (use of research and data)

Enrolment Goals

SEM is about bringing alignment between the University's enrolment (i.e., size, quality, diversity, mix) and the changing external environment within the context of the institution's strategic development directions, capacity conditions and financial imperatives. The U of S is currently among the **smallest of the research/medical** universities in the country. Therefore, the realization of the University's aspiration to gain positioning as a research-intensive university is contingent in large measure on our ability to strategically manage undergraduate enrolment at a sufficient level to fuel planned graduate enrolment growth.

In consideration of this imperative, the following enrolment goals to 2015 were approved by PCIP:

- ❖ Increase undergraduate enrolment by **3.4%**
- ❖ Increase graduate enrolment by **28.6%**
- ❖ Continue to **diversify the student profile** (undergraduate and graduate) with particular attention to *Aboriginal* and *international* student segments have also been defined.

Within the context of a declining traditional population of university-going students, changing population demographics, and intensifying competition, the U of S will need intentional, targeted, and aggressive interventions directed to:

- ❖ At least maintain (and ideally increase) the University's provincial **market share** of traditional university-going students;
- ❖ Arresting undergraduate **student attrition** particularly within the College of Arts and Science and with attention to Aboriginal and international student populations; and
- ❖ **Diversifying** the student mix through innovations in program and services that address the needs of targeted student segments at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Priority Strategies and Action Plans

In considering the many strategies identified to advance the University's enrolment goals and competitive positioning, the following ten (10) were identified as critical in addressing **foundational problems** of our "current state" before proceeding with innovation and enhancement strategies. These ten foundational elements are building blocks to our success, and include.

1. **Create administrative processes for graduate students that are better than our U15 peers** in order to respond to the University's ambitious graduate student enrolment goals and thus, to attract, admit and graduate high quality graduate students. Students, staff and faculty have indicated current processes are inefficient, fragmented, disjointed and frustrating. Key processes include:
 - a. Streamline admissions procedures including processes for application, assessment, and decision-making
 - b. Coordinate scholarship administration including application, deadlines, promotion and decision-making
 - c. Coordinate graduate student lifecycle communications beginning with the creation of a single acceptance package that includes institution, department and supervisor information
 - d. Create student-supervisor partnership agreements that are mutually beneficial, enhancing academic student success and faculty research goals
 - e. Standardize, proceduralize and communicate grade conversion practices to ensure consistency in the selection of the best students for admission and scholarship purposes
 - f. Revise time to completion and delayed completion policies and procedures
2. Establish a **coordinating infrastructure for undergraduate student retention**. This includes the selection of an Undergraduate Student

Retention Champion and the establishment of a representative Undergraduate Student Retention Committee; the work of the Committee will be guided by terms of reference that clarifies responsibilities and authorities.

3. Determine principles, priorities and authority for making decisions around the strategic allocation of **graduate level scholarship funding**. This would include examining the allocation of existing scholarship funding for graduate students to ensure it is being used to maximize graduate student enrolment priorities (including Masters versus PhD enrolment goals and Thesis versus non-Thesis enrolment goals). Priorities for seeking new graduate level funding should also be identified and communicated.
4. **Student recruitment role clarification** between SESD, USLC, CGSR and colleges, schools, departments is required to better coordinate recruitment activities and maximize recruitment resources across the campus. A comprehensive and coordinated recruitment strategy that includes undergraduate, graduate and English language training is recommended.
5. Select and implement a **customer relationship management (CRM) system** to coordinate strategic, effective, targeted, and timely communications with students through the student lifecycle, to track student interactions with the University, and to track the effectiveness of recruitment activities. A CRM would serve both graduate and undergraduate needs.
6. Prioritize and ensure implementation of a **university-wide transfer credit policy and accompanying procedures** to address student mobility issues. These procedures should also include standardized administrative processes for establishing and tracking transfer articulation agreements (course by course, 2+2, and block transfer arrangements).
7. Establish an **expanded centralized student experience function**, ideally building upon the capacity of the existing Student Central office. This function would hold responsibility for coordinating with other campus partners the student experience function (for both undergraduate and graduate students) including enhanced student awareness of available services and supports, common student orientation components across colleges, provision of programs such as financial literacy and resolution of student complaints/concerns.

8. Create **competitive graduate and undergraduate admission packages and offers** for targeted student persona groups – Aboriginal students, international students, IB/AP students, and high quality graduate students. These offers would contain not only an acceptance letter and relevant transition information, but would also leverage student residences, financial aid, and daycare spaces to enhance the admission offer.
9. Select and implement an **early alert system**; the system will enable early identification of undergraduate and graduate students who are just beginning to experience difficulties and would promote timely and more effective intervention.
10. Establish a **centralized strategic enrolment intelligence team** to identify and prioritize key quantitative and qualitative data requirements to support the strategic enrolment management plan. Establish a mechanism for regular reporting on SEM data, SEM plan implementation progress, and subsequent communication to key stakeholders.

The specific action steps associated with each of the aforementioned priority strategies that are recommended for implementation over the next three-year period are summarized in the **chart appended** to this document.

There are many recommendations identified in the SEM planning process as “**quick wins**” that can be implemented to demonstrate immediate progress. Strategy owners are encouraged to take the initiative to act on identified opportunities as appropriate, assess and account for the impact of actions taken. Through a process of continuous improvement, we will heighten our acumen as a *learning organization* of international preeminence.

Finally, it should be noted that the strategies and related actions for implementation presented in the SEM Report do not reflect the good work that is already underway in the strategic opportunity areas. Rather, the strategies in the Report are new initiatives that build on existing efforts and related institutional and operational strengths.

Conclusion

While the University engages in SEM planning partially as a defensive measure to mitigate threats in the environment, it does so primarily to seize

opportunities—to pursue a bold vision, to fulfill the University's mission to serve the needs of its constituents and the Province, and to be a leader among universities throughout Canada and beyond. By being increasingly strategic in thinking and action, the U of S will control its own destiny. The University will fulfill the promise it makes every day to those it serves.

The SEM planning process requires leadership, strategic thinking, a focus on students, data-driven decisions, campus-wide involvement, and a willingness to let go of the old ways of doing things. Equally important is university-wide buy-in and engagement in SEM efforts. Without this buy-in, then cultural change, innovations in academic programs and program delivery, improved student retention, and meeting the demographic challenges we face, will not be possible to the extent necessary. Put simply, adopting a SEM philosophy requires **commitment to organizational change** in culture, systems and practices. The impact and success of this SEM Report over time will be determined in large measure by the collective will to explore new possibilities and let go of the old models and practices. The process of organizational change requires persistence and sustained attention over time.

While this plan will be modified based on changing conditions and new opportunities, in general, the focus must be on staying the course. This is a journey, not a quick fix or a solution for some immediate crisis facing the University. The plan is intended to be strategic in nature—meaning long-term, systemic, comprehensive, and based on data regarding environmental factors that may affect enrolment as well as our own enrolment ambitions and constraints. To successfully execute this plan, the antecedents for success to support implementation must be in place, as well as broad buy-in from the University community.

As we move forward, it will be imperative that a coordinated, collaborative and integrated approach to SEM planning is adopted that brings into alignment our academic and enrolment planning processes, maintains a focus on the needs of the students we serve, and fosters a student experience that engenders student loyalty and affinity.

Next Steps

Over the next few weeks the U of S will identify next steps in the roll-out of the report.

U of S SEM Report
Summary of Recommended Strategies and Actions

Priority Strategy	Related Objective(s)	Target Student Groups	Action Items	Timelines			Resource Implications
				Yr1	Yr 2	Yr3	(L, M, H)*
1. Create administrative processes for graduate students that are better than our U15 peers	❖ To ensure administrative processes for graduate students are better than U15 peers	Graduate students	1. Streamline the admissions procedures:	1a-f, 2a-c	2d, 3, 5a	4, 5b, 6	L
			a. Conduct focus groups with current U of S students to assess their admissions experience with the University relative to competitors	<input type="checkbox"/>			L
			b. Review the existing application to identify areas of improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>			L
			c. Utilize the automated workflow feature of a document imaging system to forward applications for review by the appropriate evaluator	<input type="checkbox"/>			L
			d. Integrate automated prompts to alert evaluators that a decision is due	<input type="checkbox"/>			L
e. Request that program directors or associate deans hold evaluators accountable	<input type="checkbox"/>			L			

Priority Strategy	Related Objective(s)	Target Student Groups	Action Items	Timelines			Resource Implications
				Yr1	Yr 2	Yr3	(L, M, H)*
			3. Develop a high quality, customizable acceptance package that integrates relevant institutional, departmental, and supervisor information (student lifecycle communications). 4. Create and promote student-supervisor partnership agreements. 5. Standardize, proceduralize and communicate grade conversion practices: a. Adopt a standard methodology for converting grades b. Provide graduate chairs and others with data to actively monitor student progression, leaves from coursework, and the length of leaves 6. Engage in a systematic review of time to completion and delayed completion policies and procedures.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	L L L L
2. Establish a coordinating infrastructure for	❖ To develop capacity, empowerment,	UGs with an emphasis on direct from high	1. Establish a position for a <i>Student Retention Champion</i> and recruit/appoint a qualified and	1,2a <input type="checkbox"/>	2b-c	2c-d	M

Priority Strategy	Related Objective(s)	Target Student Groups	Action Items	Timelines			Resource Implications
				Yr1	Yr 2	Yr3	(L, M, H)*
undergraduate student retention.	self-efficacy, and resilience among our students ❖ To ensure that our policies and procedures reflect our culture ❖ To foster an evidence-based approach to retention planning and decision-making	school students	experienced retention leader (as appropriate). 2. Establish a Retention Committee that is charged with responsibility and accountability for developing and implementing an integrated Student Retention and Success Model. Responsibilities include: a. Establish and seek approval for an integrated and coordinated Student Retention and Success Model. b. Oversee and coordinate implementation of the model. c. Assess the impact of strategies implemented. d. Determine pathways for continuous improvement and resource allocation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	L M L L
3. Determine principles, priorities and authority for	❖ To ensure U of S scholarship offers are competitive by program	Graduate students	1. Conduct a competitor analysis benchmarking against each graduate program's top five competitors. 2. Identify programs with enrolment	1,2,3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4,5	4 cont'd	M L

Priority Strategy	Related Objective(s)	Target Student Groups	Action Items	Timelines			Resource Implications
				Yr1	Yr 2	Yr3	(L, M, H)*
making decisions around the strategic allocation of graduate level scholarship funding.			capacity or the desire to grow the applicant pool in order to improve selectivity.				L
			3. Identify programs most closely aligned with the University's research agenda.	<input type="checkbox"/>			L
			4. Address identified competitive gaps over time with priority given to programs with enrolment capacity or an interest in improving selectivity and alignment with the University's research agenda.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	L
			5. Evaluate the feasibility and desirability of each of the <i>Graduate Student Lifecycle Team's</i> recommendations.		<input type="checkbox"/>		TBD
4. Student recruitment role clarification.	❖ To more effectively use existing resources	All students with a segmented approach by student population	1. Identify critical strategy areas where efficiency and effectiveness improvements are needed.	1, 2, 3, 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5		L
			2. Engage in a strategy mapping process associated with identified strategy areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>			L
			3. Based on findings from the strategy mapping analysis, define roles, responsibilities, process improvements,	<input type="checkbox"/>			L

Priority Strategy	Related Objective(s)	Target Student Groups	Action Items	Timelines			Resource Implications
				Yr1	Yr 2	Yr3	(L, M, H)*
			<p>and strategy coordination plans.</p> <p>4. Present the recommendations flowing from the strategy mapping analysis to appropriate leadership within the University for approval.</p> <p>5. Implement approved recommendations.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		L TBD
5. Select and implement a customer relationship management (CRM) system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To increase the number of new students enrolling at the University ❖ To continue to diversify the student profile (UG & G) 	All students with a segmented approach by student population	1. Create an audience-segmented, multichannel communications plan.	1, 2a, 2b, 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3	3	H
			2. Develop the organizational competencies and enabling technologies to effectively execute a prospective student communications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A content creator and editor, graphic design professional, web coder, social and multimedia media coordinator, data manager with reporting and analysis skills, and project manager will be required to sustain implementation over time. b. Select and implement a CRM 	<input type="checkbox"/>			H H

Priority Strategy	Related Objective(s)	Target Student Groups	Action Items	Timelines			Resource Implications
				Yr1	Yr 2	Yr3	(L, M, H)*
			system 3. Ensure adequate IT support for the selected system is in place.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	L
6. Prioritize and ensure implementation of a university-wide transfer credit policy and accompanying procedures.	❖ To increase the number of new transfer students enrolling at the University	Transfer students	1. Develop and approve policies and procedures for transfer credit evaluations and transfer articulation agreements. 2. Create a list of feeder schools. 3. Assess the curriculum alignment in consultation with U of S faculty and academic leaders. 4. Contact the sender institution to determine pathways and protocols for the agreement review and approval. 5. Promote the articulation agreement to potential transfers.	1, 2, 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	L L L
7. Establish an expanded centralized student experience function.	❖ To develop capacity, empowerment, self-efficacy, and resilience among our students ❖ To ensure that our	All students	1. Establish a <i>Student Experience Team</i> with responsibility for conducting a comprehensive review of current services for students (undergraduate and graduate). a. Identify information and service delivery gaps	1a-d, 2a <input type="checkbox"/>	1e-f, 2b	1e-f, 2c	L

Priority Strategy	Related Objective(s)	Target Student Groups	Action Items	Timelines			Resource Implications
				Yr1	Yr 2	Yr3	(L, M, H)*
			impact and ROI			<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Create competitive graduate and undergraduate admission packages and offers for targeted student persona groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To increase the number of new students enrolling at the University ❖ To continue to diversify the student profile 	All students with a segmented approach by student population	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine the package ingredients that will resonate best with each target population. 2. Form a cross-functional team to oversee coordination and integration of the admissions package. 3. Reengineer processes and reallocate staff time to ensure on-time delivery of package items. 4. Design a package that will convey the quality of the U of S and compel the recipient to respond positively to the offer. 	1,2,3,4 <input type="checkbox"/>	Refine as change warrants		TBD L L TBD
9. Select and implement an early alert system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To develop capacity, empowerment, self-efficacy, and resilience among our students ❖ To ensure that our policies and procedures reflect 	Initially UGs with an emphasis on direct from high school students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish an <i>Early Alert Team</i> with a mandate to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clarify the desired functions and features of an early alert system b. Research best practices c. Assess internal capacity d. Recommend a solution e. Identify and acquire an early 	1a-d <input type="checkbox"/>	1e-i	1i	L L L L H

Priority Strategy	Related Objective(s)	Target Student Groups	Action Items	Timelines			Resource Implications
				Yr1	Yr 2	Yr3	(L, M, H)*
	our culture ❖ To foster an evidence-based approach to retention planning and decision-making		alert system f. Pilot the system g. Develop an intervention strategy h. Create an information and intervention process flowchart i. Develop and implement a plan for campus-wide application		<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		TBD M L TBD
10. Establish a centralized strategic enrolment intelligence team to identify and prioritize key quantitative and qualitative data requirements to support the strategic enrolment management plan.	❖ Develop enrolment intelligence to understand the student lifecycle ❖ Increase ease of access to enrolment intelligence based on needs of staff and faculty ❖ Build capacity to apply enrolment intelligence to inform	All student segments	1. Establish a standing cross-divisional <i>Strategic Enrolment Intelligence Team</i> that is responsible for: a. Creating an enrolment intelligence vision, strategy and plan b. Facilitating an inclusive and consultative process in confirming the research questions and elements underlying the draft <i>Strategic Intelligence Blueprint</i> c. Establishing standard institution-wide data definitions for enrolment	1a-e <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1f-g <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1f-g cont'd	L L L

