

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

PLANNING AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

PRESENTED BY: Fran Walley, chair
Planning and priorities committee

DATE OF MEETING: October 24, 2013

SUBJECT: *Vision 2025: From Spirit to Action*

COUNCIL ACTION: For information only

DISCUSSION SUMMARY:

On behalf of President Ilene Busch-Vishniac, the planning and priorities committee submits to Council the draft discussion document, *Vision 2025: From Spirit to Action* for information and discussion. It is appropriate that the committee present this document to Council as the committee is responsible for university-wide planning and recommending to Council on the academic priorities of the university. The intent is to submit the vision document to University Council, Senate, and the Board of Governors in the spring of 2014 for endorsement.

The president, as the author of the document, has explicitly stated that the statement is very much a work in progress. An extensive period of consultation will inform the document and feedback has been invited on the direction and depth of the document. The intent is that the *Vision 2025* document will become an institutional statement of the university's broadest goals and objectives and lay the foundation for the university's future integrated plans.

The planning and priorities committee met with President Busch-Vishniac on October 9, 2013, to discuss the draft vision statement. In its initial consideration of the document, discussion focused on the reflection of student financial needs, the value statements in the document, and the degree of integration of Aboriginal support structures. A sense of place encompassing the North, in addition to "prairie resourcefulness" was also expressed.

CONSULTATION:

The draft discussion document was released to the university community on October 9, 2013. Following presentation of the draft vision statement to the university's governing

bodies this month, input and feedback will be sought through town halls, public meetings, and through external contact. A town hall on October 30th in Convocation Hall open to all members of the university community has been announced. Online feedback can be submitted and viewed at www.usask.ca/president. In addition, any individual may email comments to uofs.vision2025@usask.ca.

In developing the draft document, consultation occurred with senior leaders of the university; in particular, feedback was obtained at the senior leadership forum held in August. Council committee chairs were also consulted in early September.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. *Vision 2025: From Spirit to Action (discussion draft)*

University of Saskatchewan

Vision 2025: *From Spirit to Action*

Our Mission

Our mission is to excel in the scholarly activities of teaching, learning, thinking, and discovering, as well as in preserving, integrating, and applying knowledge. These endeavours enable students to become active and responsible global citizens, help drive the provincial economy, and promote social, health and policy innovation.

Our Vision

We will be recognized as being among the eminent research-intensive universities of North America and world-leading in areas of education and research that have a significant impact on our region, our nation and our globe. We will lead the nation in working with Aboriginal communities to identify their unique post-secondary education needs and to partner with them in meeting their goals.

Our Values

- Creativity, innovation, critical thinking and courage
- Appreciation of communities and a desire to work together with a sense of shared purpose
- A deep understanding of the land and place
- Prairie resourcefulness and respect for a history of achievement through perseverance and vision
- Diversity with equity built through relationships, reciprocity, respect and relevance
- Academic freedom, institutional autonomy and ambition

Our place in the post-secondary landscape:

The University of Saskatchewan is a member of the Canada's leading research-intensive universities, the U15, and our research has very broad disciplinary coverage, particularly in the health disciplines. Founded as Saskatchewan's first university, the U of S has always valued applied research leading to important gains for Saskatchewan farmers and businesses and has partnered well with external stakeholders to achieve these gains. We enjoy an unusually good relationship with the Saskatchewan government, in part because we excel in integrated planning and following through on our plans. Our original campus is located in Treaty 6 territory, and we are proud of our partnerships with Aboriginal communities that have led us to be a leader in Aboriginal student enrolment in Canada. We enjoy a close relationship with our federated college, St. Thomas More. We have the most beautiful campus in Canada and are endowed with significant land holdings. Uniquely among the Canadian universities, we are host to two national laboratories – the Canadian Light Source and VIDO-InterVac. These distinctive and enduring characteristics of our university will not change in the foreseeable future.

The University of Saskatchewan expects its graduates and employees to exhibit the following attributes: intelligence, curiosity, resilience, creativity, social responsibility, resourcefulness, confidence, dynamism, a respectful attitude, an ability to work as part of a team, and ambition.

Key principles that will guide our future:

- We recognize the importance of learning and discovery. We believe that each is best accomplished in the presence of the other, i.e. through experiential or problem-based education and research engaging students at all levels.
- We accept that career preparation is part of our mandate, but rather than training individuals for particular job opportunities or to work for specific companies, our role is to help students succeed in a field of endeavour and to equip them for the future with the ability to keep learning.
- We should not gratuitously duplicate research or educational programs that may be found elsewhere within the province.
- We value and reward both individual and team research efforts on some of the world's most vexing problems. We value both application-driven and curiosity-driven research.
- We partner where it is clear that such a partnership is in the best interest of all involved and preferable to competition. Partnerships are especially valued when they link to both our discovery and learning missions.

- We grow our academic programs and our student numbers only when we can do so while maintaining or improving upon our learning and discovery standards and the quality of our student experience.
- We serve Saskatchewan best by being a world-leading authority on globally significant issues with particular importance to our province.
- We honour a culture of planning, implementing plans, and evidence-based decision-making.
- We seek to position ourselves as a trusted and valued global partner on important matters of discovery and on teaching and learning innovation.
- We value entrepreneurial thinking, but we will only run businesses that are directly related to our learning and discovery missions.
- We seek to be as accessible as possible to qualified students in all locations of the province. We value diversity and actively promote equity in learning and discovery opportunities.
- We seek to be transparent and accountable.
- We will ensure that our resources are spread appropriately – neither massed in a narrow portion of our mission, nor spread so thinly that we are incapable of excelling in any part of our mandate.
- We must retain our autonomy so that decisions are based not on expediency but on our best judgments tempered by public discussion with interested parties.

Where do we want to leave our mark?

The University of Saskatchewan has unique, special and distinguishing attributes that create opportunities for us to leave a lasting legacy. Among them:

- *Two national science facilities that support team research and learning:* We are the only Canadian university to support two national science facilities and our external funding patterns reflect that our strengths are in our team efforts more than in individual research programs. In the future, we will choose to emphasize team research and learning experiences.
- *Multidisciplinary approaches to global challenges:* We are also the Canadian university with the broadest disciplinary coverage, particularly in the health sciences and in our College of Arts and Science, thus enabling us to consider the world's difficult challenges from many perspectives simultaneously. We will capitalize on the synergies that our unique breadth offers in both our learning and discovery missions.

- *Model for addressing Aboriginal needs:* We are the research-intensive university of Canada with the highest percentage of self-identified Aboriginal students. We will be the role model in successfully integrating the needs of Aboriginal peoples into the goals of our institution.
- *Commercialization impact:* We rank high in revenue from intellectual property given our size. This demonstrates our continuing commitment to research that powers innovation. We seek to continue to lead in management of intellectual property.
- *Areas of pre-eminence:* We have areas in which our research and academic programs are pre-eminent. We will continue to lead in these distinguishing areas of focus and expand our areas of academic world leadership by building on our strengths.

We value leadership and will be deliberate in assessing, developing, and rewarding leadership skills across the board. We could and should be doing more to groom people for leadership at all levels of the university. We will describe the characteristics needed to support innovation, creativity, nimbleness and responsiveness, and then create the opportunities that allow people to grow and exercise skills in these areas.

We will increase our efforts to ensure that people throughout the world are aware of our accomplishments. We will publish our results and we will publicize those accomplishments of particular importance to our local, provincial, national, or global community.

We seek to be distinguished as a leader in community-based scholarship and education, building strong partnerships with community-based organizations in order to achieve lasting improvements and involving our discovery mission as well as our learning mission. Our efforts must specifically address the social dilemma of educational access and success for Aboriginal peoples.

A particularly important domain in which the university interacts strongly with the public is through our health disciplines. A key goal for the coming decades is to improve the performance of our health colleges in education and research, particularly our medical and dental colleges. Once it is clear that our health fields have an appropriate governance structure to ensure a strong partnership with the health regions, we will

distribute high quality education, research and clinical service in the health fields throughout the province.

Saskatchewan under-performs relative to its Canadian peers in terms of participation in post-secondary education. It is incumbent upon us to address this issue, particularly in the Northern Saskatchewan Administration District, by making it possible for Saskatchewan people to pursue degrees without leaving their homes and family support structures. We have an opportunity to lead in this area.

What is our sense of place?

In a province with a fast-growing economy and a huge demand for highly trained personnel, we play a key role in attracting new talent to the province and in enabling Saskatchewan students to find employment in their home province. When students from outside the province attend university, a significant percentage choose to remain once graduated, thus serving as a means of attracting new, highly qualified citizens who contribute to the province.

We will be strategic in our student recruitment, seeking to raise our admission standards and be more attractive to Saskatchewan's top students and to high-performing students from outside the province. This approach serves the province, not only through attracting new highly educated personnel, but also by raising the degree completion rates across the board and by enhancing our visibility nationally and internationally.

We have a special role to play in partnership with Aboriginal communities in the province. Current approaches to the challenges faced by Aboriginal peoples often prompt us to create special programs for Aboriginal learners or employees. In the long run, we would strongly prefer to create an atmosphere in which, rather than two programs to achieve each goal – one for non-Aboriginal peoples and one for Aboriginal peoples – we are able to create a single program that allows everyone to flourish.

Our key partners will include: other U15 institutions and similar universities outside Canada; post-secondary institutions in the province; the Government of Saskatchewan and other provincial governments; the federal government; funding organizations, alumni and donors that support our mission; and prominent businesses and social agencies. Given our relationships outside Canada, partnerships with governments of our international partners are also important. It is critical that these partnerships reflect advantages to all parties so that the relationships are balanced. It is also crucial that the university retain its autonomy and integrity.

Our peers are the 14 other research-intensive universities of Canada. Our benchmarking will routinely be against this group of peers.

We expect our faculty, staff and students to participate in professional and social societies. In particular, we expect our employees to play leading roles in professional societies linked to their work.

How do we create and maintain the environment that enables us to reach our goals?

We choose to continually refer to our mission, vision and values in making hard decisions at all levels. We are prepared to take some difficult actions in the future to preserve integrity of mission.

Institutionally, we need to have a set of key performance indicators that provide a snapshot of performance and are regularly presented to the public and our governing bodies. For the future, we will ensure that measures reflect our vision and are used effectively as a tool for charting progress.

There has been a rising obsession by government and university administrators with funding at universities, complete with deleterious side effects such as directed funding that disproportionately determines strategic directions. We will resist the temptation to see funding as more than it is – a constraint rather than a driver of what we, as a public institution, should be doing.

It is essential that we address the issue of long-term financial, social and environmental sustainability of the university. We seek to model how a university achieves financial sustainability in the long term, through planning and attention to mission and priorities. A key challenge for us relates to provincial funding, which is debated and determined annually rather than being set for multiple years. We will work with government to seek multi-year funding agreements. Expanded external revenue sources are also important for financial sustainability.

A challenge is to identify mechanisms that would help us determine which opportunities (financial and otherwise) we should view as appealing and to respond to these in a timely fashion. We seek to craft such mechanisms.

As we move forward, we must change how we view technology – seeing technology as a means of changing the nature of our work and study. Of course, this will require us to train employees and students to welcome and be proficient in quickly changing technological skills.

We will identify areas in which risk-taking should be valued (as in conducting research which rejects old paradigms in favour of a new approach) but also be clear about areas in which we should be risk-averse (as in expansion of defined benefit pension plans).

We must consider how best to address the university workforce in an age of instantaneous information and rapid change. Our employees reflect the values of the university, and it is our responsibility to ensure that we embed sufficient professional development in our operations so that our personnel can grow their skills and expand their knowledge.

We must also ensure that our staffing structures do not ossify, that we have sufficient flexibility to respond to change and be nimble. In particular, the role of faculty members is evolving as pedagogies change and we seek to distribute programs geographically to provide greater access for learners.

Achieving this vision will require innovative thinking, a willingness to challenge established processes and governance structures, and commitment. This vision will need to speak to all facets of our institution and to all people associated with us. Our actions in the years to come must reflect the goals outlined in this vision. Our success will be judged by how well we mirror our vision in the coming decades.