

Introduction to University Governance

USask Governance Office
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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION.....	3
GOVERNANCE: THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH.....	3
ADMINISTRATION: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH.....	3
ORGANIZATION: THE ACADEMIC STRUCTURES.....	4
TRICAMERAL GOVERNANCE.....	4
MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES.....	4
<i>Senate</i>	4
<i>Board of Governors</i>	8
<i>Council</i>	8
<i>General Academic Assembly</i>	8
LINKS TO IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS	9
GOVERNANCE BEST PRACTICES.....	9
ROLES OF MEMBERS	9
CONFLICT OF INTEREST	10
APPENDICES.....	12
STRATEGIC PLAN: 2025	12
<i>THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN ACT 1995</i>	12
GOVERNANCE OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION.....	12

As each of the governing bodies meet, we acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

Introduction

The [University of Saskatchewan Act 1995](#) provides the university’s governing bodies with their authority. The foundation of good governance at USask is embedded in the university’s *Mission, Vision and Values* statement.

USask has a tricameral governance structure. The Board of Governors is responsible for financial oversight of the institution. Council is responsible for academic oversight. Senate provides for connection to the public.

Mission, Vision and Values

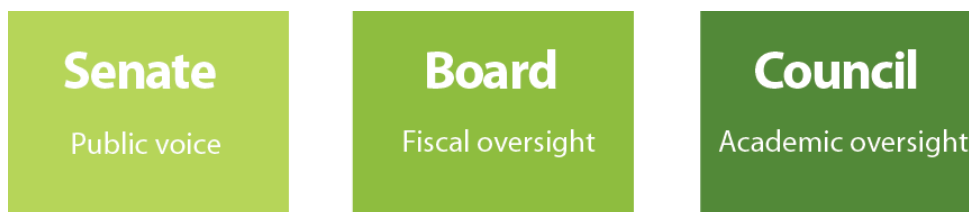
Governance, Administration and Organization

Governance: the Legislative Branch

The basic governance structures at USask remained virtually unchanged from 1907 to 1995. The [University of Saskatchewan Act 1995](#) created an elected faculty council and gave Council the authority to approve academic programs. Previously, the final academic approval authority was Senate. This change allowed Council to delegate to colleges the ability to manage their own curriculums, with Council retaining the authority to approve new programs and major program revisions.

The University of Saskatchewan has a tricameral governance model (as represented in Figure 1). Senate provides for public voice. The Board of Governors provide financial oversight. University Council provides academic oversight.

Figure 1. The Legislative Branch: a Tricameral Governance Model



Administration: the Executive Branch

[USask Executive Leadership](#) supports each of the university’s governing bodies in fulfilling its role in accordance with the requirements of *The University of Saskatchewan Act 1995* and the principles of good governance.

The University of Saskatchewan Act 1995:

- ❖ Provides for an administration led by the chancellor, president and vice-chancellor, vice presidents, deans and department heads (not all colleges are departmentalized).

USask Organizational Structure

Organization: the Academic Structures

The *University of Saskatchewan Act 1995* provides for the establishment of colleges, schools, and departments led by deans (and executive directors of schools), with oversight provided by the provost.

USask Colleges and Schools

Tricameral Governance

In accordance with *The University of Saskatchewan Act 1995*, USask has three governing bodies. Most U15 universities (Canada's top research-intensive universities) have a bicameral governance structure, with a Board having the authority for financial oversight and a Senate being responsible for academic oversight. At USask, in addition to the role of the Board of Governors which has the authority for university finances, our Senate provides for public voice in the governance of the institution, and our academic oversight body is called 'Council.'

Main Responsibilities

Senate

The Senate is the university's window on the province and the province's window on the university. Senate is responsible for:

- appointing the Chancellor
- confirming decisions of Council related to admission requirements and quotas
- recommendations regarding the establishment or disestablishment of any college, school, or department;
- receiving proposals respecting the affiliation or federation of any educational institution with the university and recommend to the board and council whether it should be made
- appointing examiners for and making bylaws respecting the conduct of examinations for professional societies;
- authorizing the establishment of an advisory council for any college, school, department; prescribe its composition, duties and powers; and also discontinue it
- recommending to the Board or Council any matters or things that the senate considers necessary to promote the interests of the university

- the granting of honorary degrees; and
- non-academic student discipline

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors is responsible for overseeing and directing all matters respecting the management, administration and control of the university's property, revenues and financial affairs. This includes:

- construction and maintenance of buildings, equipment and capital assets;
- appointing the president and other senior officers of the university and fixing salaries;
- compensation and terms of employment for all employees, and pension plans for retirees;
- overseeing the university's finances, investments and pension plans;
- providing for the establishment and/or disestablishment of colleges, schools, departments, endowed chairs and institutes;
- affiliation and federation with other educational institutions;
- setting of tuition and other fees; and
- establishment and oversight of good governance practices, including regulating the conduct of its meetings, establishing its committees and making bylaws respecting matters over which it has responsibility.

Council

Council oversees and directs the university's academic affairs including:

- grants academic degrees, diplomas and certificates;
- grants scholarships, prizes, fellowships, bursaries and exhibitions;
- approves all academic programs, new programs and program deletions;
- authorizes the board to establish new colleges, schools, departments, endowed chairs and institutes;
- prescribes methods and rules for evaluating student performance;
- disciplines students for academic misconduct and hears student appeals;
- prescribes qualifications for admission;
- sets the academic schedule;
- reviews library policies;
- makes recommendations on physical and budgetary plans for the university;
- and makes recommendations on any other matters it considers to be in the interest of the university

General Academic Assembly

The *University of Saskatchewan Act 1995* establishes the **General Academic Assembly** as the body to whom Council is responsible. It has the power to require Council to reconsider certain decisions and ultimately to dissolve Council.

The General Academic Assembly is composed of the president, vice-presidents, registrar, deans and directors employed by the university or an affiliated or federated college, all full-time faculty members and a number of USask students. The President is chair and quorum is 150 members. The assembly meets annually to hear the report of the President respecting the state of the University and any other matters that the President considers appropriate

Links to Important Documents

Senate	Board of Governors	Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Powers and Responsibilities of Senate • Senate Committees and Membership • Meeting Schedule • Senate Bylaws • Senate Rules of Order • Guidelines for Honorary Degrees • Guidelines for Submitting a Motion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Committees and Membership • Meeting Schedule • Governance Standards • Board of Governors Bylaws • Forms and Guidelines • Travel Expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance PAWS Channel • Council Committees and Membership • Meeting Schedule • Council Bylaws • Council Committee Member SharePoint Sites • Resources • Student Hearings and Appeals
<p>Add the NEW Governance Channel in PAWS as a favorite for quick access to materials and information from the Governance Office.</p>		

Governance Best Practices

Roles of Members

Senate

In summary, according to the Senate bylaws, Senate members share with members of the university’s other governing bodies the following responsibilities:

- to abide by the policies of the university;
- to seek to be fully informed about the university, its mission, its strategic plan, its culture, and its role in the province and in higher education;
- to help the university be responsive to the changing environment that affects it;
- to promote and defend the autonomy of the university;
- to find opportunities to communicate the university’s role and mission to the external community.

Board

In summary, the Board of Governor's bylaws require the following of board members:

- to understand the University, its mission, its strategic plan, and its culture in order to advocate on behalf of the university;
- to exercise diligence, critical powers and independent judgement in the oversight of the university as an active, energetic, and probing member of the Board of Governors;
- to understand the ethical responsibilities incumbent upon a member of the Board;
- to seek to be fully informed about the University and its role in the province and in higher education and to help the university to be responsive to the changing environments which affect it.

Council

Council members are expected to:

- Make principled contributions to governance of the university (collegial self-governance)
- See the whole picture—step back from 'silos';
- Celebrate the diversity and complexity of University;
- Engage in vigorous academic debate and provide enthusiastic support for common sense and "warranted risk taking";
- Pay diligent attention to the business of Council through preparation, active participation in Council and Committee work, communication with constituents, consulting, voting;
- Keep the debate at the level of policy and direction;
- Be mindful that Council decisions have important academic, financial, public policy and operational implications.

Conflict of Interest

In accordance with the University of Saskatchewan's [**Conflict of Interest Policy**](#), the following definition of conflict of interest applies to all members of the university community, inclusive of members of its governing bodies.

A conflict of interest occurs when there is a divergence between a University member's private interests and professional work outside of the University and their obligations to the University such that an independent observer might reasonably question whether the University members' professional actions or decisions are determined by considerations of personal gain, financial or otherwise.

Conflict of interest is a breach of an obligation to the University that has the effect of advancing one's own interest or the interests of others in a way detrimental to the interests of, or potentially harmful to, the integrity of the University. Conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest must be avoided.

Since the possibilities for conflict of interest are almost limitless and cannot all be covered in procedures, University members are expected to conduct themselves at all times with the highest ethical standards in a manner which will bear the closest scrutiny, and are responsible for seeking guidance before embarking on activities which might be questionable.

Senate

Senate abides by the University of Saskatchewan's Conflict of Interest Policy as noted above. In 2019/20, Senate constituted a Joint Committee of Board, Senate and Council to review the University of Saskatchewan's Conflict of Interest Policies. The committee determined that the current Conflict of Interest policy is robust and recommended to the Board of Governors the development of procedures to go along with the policy. The committee's report was accepted by Senate in April 2020.

Board

According to the Board of Governors Bylaws, it is the responsibility of Board members "to understand the ethical responsibilities incumbent upon a member of the Board, and to declare a conflict of interest whenever such conflict arises."

Furthermore, "if a member of the Board or any Committee thereof has a conflict of interest in some matter to be considered, the member shall declare his or her interest and shall not vote thereon. Such member may, if determined by the Board, be asked to withdraw from the meeting during the discussion or voting of any motion relating thereto."

Council

According to a motion adopted by Council, a conflict of interest exists for a member of Council or a member of a Council committee when, with respect to a matter being considered by Council or the committee:

(a) the decision being made is such that the member could not reasonably be expected to exercise independent judgment because of the effect the decision would or would be likely to have on the member or a person closely related or closely associated with the member; or

(b) as a result of occupying a position or holding an office in an organization, the person is legally obligated to subordinate the interests of the University to the interests of the organization when dealing with the matter.

Appendices

Strategic Plan: 2025

The University of Saskatchewan’s strategic plan was approved by the university’s governing bodies in 2018 and is available online at: <https://plan.usask.ca/>.

The University of Saskatchewan Act 1995

The University of Saskatchewan was established by an “Act to establish and incorporate a University for the Province of Saskatchewan” that was passed by the provincial legislature in 1907 and updated in 1995. It is available online at [University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995 - Governance Office | University of Saskatchewan \(usask.ca\)](#)

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