



# Our Learning Charter

## The University of Saskatchewan

*Located above the shifting banks and swiftly moving waters of the kisiskāciwani-sīpiy (Ki-si-skahchoo-waNih seepi: South Saskatchewan River), the University of Saskatchewan began its learning journey in 1907. In so doing, it became part of a millennia-old tradition of people gathering on these banks to learn, to teach and to form community. Today the University has grown beyond these banks and strives to reach across the province and around the world to continue to build truth, knowledge and relationships, in all their forms.*

*This Learning Charter, first created in 2010, states our shared pursuits, commitments and responsibilities as we come together in a university community of life-long and life-wide learners. The University of Saskatchewan is more committed today than ever before in our history to including and serving all members of the larger Saskatchewan community.*

*This Learning Charter, revised in 2018, is our commitment to opening our university to learning, engagement and opportunities for all Peoples of Saskatchewan and beyond, and in so doing, recognizes and appreciates the knowledge, diverse abilities, and the ways of teaching and learning that they bring with them. And as much as the river will continue to change its shape, so too will the Learning Charter continue to change as our University moves always forward on its learning journey.*

## THE LEARNING CHARTER IS MADE OF FOUR MAIN PARTS:



The Learning Charter thus acts as a conceptual map and planning document, linking together our pursuits and how we strive for them, encouraging and guiding us on our educational journey. As a map, it is also a focal point for our community to discuss where we are and where we want to go in our shared future.

## Our Learning Journey

**Each of us comes to the University of Saskatchewan with our own learning from our family and community, and with our own abilities, learning pursuits and styles.** Yet we, individually, collectively and institutionally, are also in a continuous process of transformation, growing from ever more diverse perspectives and with new tools, skills and deeper understandings. We are driven

forward by our curiosity, inspirations, engagements and learning from and with our peers, teachers and mentors. Our learning is a lifelong process that is individual, collaborative, experiential and collective from which we grow in our sense of identity and belonging.

The community at the University of Saskatchewan is part of a shared journey of transformation through discovery, creation and learning. While grounded in the thousand-year-old traditions of the European university, since its beginnings the University of Saskatchewan has become increasingly diverse, creating a new kind of university with new traditions. Our community has been enriched by an ever greater variety of people from Saskatchewan and from around the world; our university continues to encompass new areas of study, new academic programs, new ways of teaching and learning, and new community perspectives. This growing diversity presents opportunities and challenges, experimentation and new traditions, openness to transformations and respect for the valuable contributions of past and present perspectives, or ways of learning that may be unfamiliar to us. Through this work, our university will continue to change in order to better support and nurture excellence in teaching and learning for all.

The University of Saskatchewan is especially strong in recognizing and accepting that we are all shaped and impacted by the land that we live on. We must all move forward, being taught by this land that we share and by the people who have long inhabited it – they are calling on us to learn from this place and from Indigenous peoples as part of our learning journey. With these perspectives we seek to unite our minds and hearts, pasts and futures, intellectualism and spiritualities, and our similarities and differences on our campuses, as the inclusive university community we envision. The University is a place where all people can truly belong and contribute to Saskatchewan and beyond.

# Our Learning Pursuits

**While on a shared learning journey, each of us at the University of Saskatchewan is also engaged in our own learning pursuits.** As an educational community, we support all of our members in exploring our extensive academic and professional learning opportunities. In light of the diversity of learning pathways that are available, the University uniquely offers all its students opportunities in a wide variety of fields to grow sequentially and foundationally in sets of essential learning pursuits.

Depending on their particular learning experience or program, students are thus expected to reach optimal levels of achievement in these areas. In turn, the University commits to encouraging and supporting the following five pursuits:

## The Pursuit of Truth and Understanding

- Applying critical and creative mamitoneyihtamowin<sup>1</sup> (ma-mito-neh ih-ta-mo-win)/naakatwayhtamihk<sup>2</sup> (naaka-tway-hta-mihk) (i.e., thinking) to problems, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- Being open to and adept at different ways of knowing and learning, including independently, experientially, and collaboratively.
- Possessing intellectual flexibility, ability to manage change, open-mindedness with the unfamiliar and an enthusiasm for life-long and life-wide learning.

## The Pursuit of Knowledges

- Achieving a comprehensive knowledge of one's subject area, discipline, or profession.
- Understanding how one's subject area may intersect with related disciplines, perspectives, and worldviews different than one's own, including Indigenous worldviews.
- Understanding how one's subject area, discipline or profession connects to and impacts Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan, and beyond where applicable.
- Utilizing and applying one's knowledge with manacihitowin<sup>1</sup> (ma-na-chi-hi-to-win)/manachihitoohk<sup>2</sup> (mana-chi-hitoohk) (i.e., respect of all individuals).

## The Pursuit of Integrity and Respect

- Exercising intellectual integrity and ethical behaviour with kitimakeyichikewin<sup>1</sup> (ki-tee-ma-ke i-chi-ke-win)/kitimakaymitoohk<sup>2</sup> (kiti-ma-kaymi-toohk) (i.e., kindness by self to others).
- Recognizing and thinking through moral and ethical issues in a variety of contexts, perspectives, and alternative worldviews.
- Recognizing the limits to one's knowledge, skills and understanding, and acting in accordance with these limits.
- Developing understanding and appreciation for one's own perspectives, strengths and worldview, while demonstrating mutual and reciprocal respect for the diverse perspectives, strengths and worldviews of others and their communities.

## The Pursuit of Skills and Practices

- Developing and applying appropriate skills of research, inquiry and knowledge creation and translation.
- Communicating clearly, substantively and persuasively in different academic, professional, and cultural contexts; nihtâ-âcimowin<sup>1</sup> (neh-tah achi-mo-win)/nihta achimoohk<sup>2</sup> (nih-ta achi-moohk) (i.e., being a good storyteller).
- Being able to locate, understand, evaluate and use information effectively, ethically, legally and with cultural appropriateness.

## Individual and Community Pursuits

- Committing to positive growth and change for oneself and for local, national and global communities.
- Acting with confidence and strength of purpose for the good of oneself and the different communities represented on our campuses.
- Embracing responsibilities to oneself and others in ways that are authentic and meaningful.
- Sharing Knowledges and exercising nîkânîwin<sup>1</sup> (nee-ka nee-win)/nihta niikaaniw<sup>2</sup> (nih-ta nee-kaa-niww) (i.e., leadership) as acts of individual and community responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> Cree language.

<sup>2</sup> Michif language.



# Our Commitments and Responsibilities

**The community at the University of Saskatchewan persists and thrives through its members' active commitments and responsibilities to one another.** Progressing on our collective learning journey and in our individual learning pursuits requires the commitment of students, educators and the university community, and depends on all of us fulfilling our roles in relation to one another.

As we identify the key roles in our learning community below, many members will identify with one, two or all of these. Ideally, we all transition between the roles of learner, teacher and member of the university community based on the needs of campus, community and ourselves. For example, students may be the primary learners, but they also bring the value of their own background, knowledges and experiences to the classroom and are teachers of their new understandings to their families and peers, and communities. Faculty all provide instruction in courses, but they also continue to learn through research discoveries, emerging literature, and work with peers, students and community. These commitments and responsibilities therefore may at various times belong to us all as university community members—as learners and as teachers.

## University Community

The University of Saskatchewan is its own community-- a place where people come together to share in their common interest to learn, teach and be strong effective contributing members of society. We are a collective that embraces and aspires for the highest standards of learning, discovery and knowledge translation. We are also diverse in

our abilities, perspectives, foci, values, worldviews and experiences. It is through our fellowship and open commitment to support each other that each member of our community is given the prerogative to pursue, explore and achieve his or her own personal and professional learning goals.

The privilege to engage in a life of learning and discovery, engaging both our heart and mind, is given to us and earned by our commitment and responsibility to being genuine and compassionate learners, educators, researchers and advocates for a better society. By accepting the responsibility to provide tangible benefits to local, national and global communities, we must be inclusive and proactive in seeking and accepting different Knowledges and understandings into our learning experiences. We do this by engaging with staff and the broader community, Indigenous peoples, community partners, professions and industry, to support learning and discovery in the university. In doing so, we support the ideal and importance of reciprocity, on and off our campuses, as an essential value of our learning community.

The University of Saskatchewan encourages, supports and oversees a plethora of educational experiences that contribute to the core learning pursuits and the personal and professional interests of our members. As a collective we commit to Provide Opportunities, Ensure Quality, Create Environments and Support Learning.

### UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY COMMITMENT 1: **PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Offer high quality programs and activities for learning and discovery.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community develops and grounds programs, curricula, and learning activities in ways that are socially and/or culturally relevant, adaptive, and responsive, and that will facilitate engagement and relationship building with the relevant communities.

**Foster reciprocal learning collaborations.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community recognize that learning experiences can be enhanced by appropriate interactions with various learning partners and communities on and off our campuses, and

that the University Community strives to both facilitate these interactions and ensure that they occur in a socially and culturally safe manner that is beneficial to all parties.

## UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY COMMITMENT 2: **ENSURE QUALITY**

### **Ensure qualified educators and effective instruction.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community ensures that all educators possess both content and pedagogical/andragogical competence for any course or learning activity, and that they understand and accept their commitments and responsibilities as identified in this Learning Charter.

### **Promote research-enhanced and community-driven learning.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community encourages fruitful and synergistic interactions for learning experiences with research, scholarly and artistic work being conducted at this institution and the learning opportunities developed in collaboration with community partners.

### **Create mechanisms for ongoing quality enhancement of all programs and courses.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community provides systems for the outcomes of programs to be considered and reflected upon by teaching and learning teams. In addition, support for ongoing quality enhancement of programs as a result of this reflection is required.

## UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY COMMITMENT 3: **CREATE ENVIRONMENTS**

### **Define transparent programmatic milestones expected of students in all pursuits of learning.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community supports teaching and learning teams in defining and communicating the achievement expected for students in each pursuit of learning at key points within and at the end of their academic program.

### **Provide safe, secure, and inclusive environments.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community provide reliable, secure and inclusive environments for all members of our university community. It requires that all members feel welcomed, valued and respected, and that the University systems work to support a diverse learning community with unique values, worldviews, abilities and aspirations.

### **Provide appropriate learning resources, facilities, and technologies.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community provide appropriate classroom, research, study and learning environments for learners; access to informational resources and expertise; and appropriate teaching and research technologies to support teaching, learning and discovery.

## UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY COMMITMENT 4: **SUPPORT LEARNING**

### **Support students.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community assist students to select programs appropriate to their particular abilities and preparation. Where better preparation is required, the University Community will counsel students on how they might obtain this preparation. Honouring this commitment also requires that the University Community provide appropriate academic and other supports to students who experience various challenges to their learning, including challenges of a cultural, social, psychological or physical nature.

### **Support educators.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community provide opportunities to educators (including faculty, sessional lecturers, graduate teaching assistants and instructors) to maintain and improve the quality of their teaching. Course assignments need to be commensurate with the content and pedagogical/andragogical needs of each teaching assignment and consideration of the full spectrum of responsibilities of each educator. Educators need to be supported with teaching and laboratory assistants and other support staff as appropriate to their teaching assignments.

### **Support community.**

Honouring this commitment requires that the University Community recognize the remarkable importance and contribution of local, national and global communities in supporting the success of this institution. Opportunities need to be provided to communities to inform and collaborate in various learning activities on and off our campuses. The University Community will endeavour to support their engagement and involvement in teaching and consulting with the necessary and appropriate resources and assistance.

## **Students**

The role of the learner is a vital one in the University Community and most fundamental to the learning partnership. No learning can take place without active engagement by the learner in the learning process— being open to, and learning from, the multitude of

learning opportunities available at the University, inside and outside of courses, and on and off our campuses. To optimize their learning experiences, students need to make the following commitments and fulfil the corresponding responsibilities. These commitments can be summarized as Engage Respectfully, Learn Actively, Think Broadly and Deeply, and Act Ethically and Appropriately.

### **STUDENT COMMITMENT 1: ENGAGE RESPECTFULLY**

#### **Engage in a respectful way with local, national and global members of community and society.**

Honouring this commitment requires that students engage in learning activities in a mutually and reciprocally respectful way with other members of the local, national, and global community, including other students, educators and staff. Students need to comply with university expectations for appropriate conduct (e.g., student conduct<sup>3</sup>). None of this, however, is to be construed as restricting the freedom of students to raise controversial issues or views within the context of an open, healthy and respectful dialogue.

#### **Contribute to the creation of a respectful and inclusive University Community.**

Honouring this commitment requires each student to engage in learning with and from peers, particularly from those whose life experiences and perspectives are different from their own. Inclusive in this commitment is each student's responsibility to provide constructive and thoughtful feedback on their learning experience so as to fuel educator and institutional reflection and enable processes of continuous enhancement of teaching and learning at the University.

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<sup>3</sup> The "Expectations for Student Conduct" are outlined in Section III of the "Standard of Student Conduct in Non-Academic Matters." available online at: [usask.ca/university\\_secretary/honesty/StudentNon-AcademicMisconduct.pdf](https://usask.ca/university_secretary/honesty/StudentNon-AcademicMisconduct.pdf)

## STUDENT COMMITMENT 2: **LEARN ACTIVELY**

### **Actively engage in the learning process.**

Honouring this commitment requires that students be willing to learn independently, experientially, and collaboratively with other students, as appropriate to their learning outcomes; to engage in self-evaluation and reflection; and to take personal responsibility for their learning.

## STUDENT COMMITMENT 3: **THINK BROADLY AND DEEPLY**

### **Thoughtfully consider a diversity of theories, ideas, beliefs, and approaches to problems and solutions.**

Honouring this commitment requires that students consider viewpoints and worldviews other than their own, actively try to understand the range of ideas and beliefs pertinent to any given issue, and critically consider the relevant evidence for various theories, beliefs and perspectives.

## STUDENT COMMITMENT 4: **ACT ETHICALLY AND APPROPRIATELY**

### **Undertake all learning activities with academic and ethical integrity.**

Honouring this commitment requires that students understand key principles of academic integrity, and adhere to the standards set out by the University of Saskatchewan covering academic misconduct<sup>4</sup>. Honouring this commitment also requires that students understand the importance and need to respect human dignity in all of its diverse forms. Inclusivity is a core principle of the University and, as such, students should be aware of and take care to enact these principles throughout their education (for examples, TCPS Chapters 1 and 9)<sup>5</sup>, OCAP<sup>6</sup>.

## **Educators**

The active commitment of those members of the university community responsible for providing learning opportunities is crucial to optimizing the student learning experience. To do so, university educators (including faculty, sessional lecturers, graduate teaching

assistants, and other instructors) need to act as role models, making the following commitments and fulfilling the corresponding responsibilities. Educator commitments can be summarized as Exemplify Learning, Strive for Excellence in Teaching, Assess Fairly, and Enhance Continuously.

## EDUCATOR COMMITMENT 1: **EXEMPLIFY LEARNING**

### **Embody learning behaviours you are teaching others.**

Honouring this commitment requires that educators exemplify active learning and curiosity, demonstrate broad thinking, follow ethical principles, and engage with students and peers in a respectful manner. Educators need to explicitly recognize their own position and work to understand, acknowledge, and value perspectives and worldviews different from their own. Whether issues are controversial or not, educators should encourage and foster open and healthy dialogue.

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4 The "University of Saskatchewan Regulations on Student Academic Misconduct," available online at: [usask.ca/university\\_secretary/honesty/StudentAcademicMisconduct.pdf](https://usask.ca/university_secretary/honesty/StudentAcademicMisconduct.pdf)

5 See the "Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, Second Edition", available online at: [www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/](https://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/)

6 See the "The First Nations Principles of OCAP" available online at: [fnigc.ca/ocapr.html](https://fnigc.ca/ocapr.html)

### **Maintain an appropriate teacher-learner relationship.**

Honouring this commitment requires that educators maintain a professional relationship with students under their supervision, and avoid conflicts of interest that may be posed by dual or multiple relationships with students. Where potential conflicts may exist, these should be disclosed to the appropriate academic official.

## **EDUCATOR COMMITMENT 2: STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING**

### **Bring research, scholarship, artistic work and /or professional activities into teaching and mentorship.**

Honouring this commitment requires that educators at the university maintain a high level of subject matter knowledge and ensure that content is current, accurate, relevant to learning outcomes, representative of the knowledge and skills being taught and appropriate to the position of the learning experience within a program of study. It requires that students are provided opportunity to be inspired and engaged with and in the process of authentic inquiry, wherever possible, in their learning.

### **Align learning outcomes, teaching activities and assessment.**

Honouring this commitment requires that educators at the university be aware of the range of instructional methods and assessment strategies, and select and utilize teaching methods that are effective in helping students achieve the learning outcomes of a course or learning activity.

### **Develop respectful and inclusive learning environments that support student learning.**

Honouring this commitment requires that educators co-create with students a shared space for learning in which all participants, including graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants, feel respected, valued and empowered to contribute as they achieve their goals and share the gifts of their identities in relationship with one another.

## **EDUCATOR COMMITMENT 3: ASSESS FAIRLY**

### **Communicate and uphold clear academic expectations and standards.**

Honouring this commitment requires that educators provide a clear indication of what is expected of students in a course or learning activity, and what students can do to be successful in achieving the expected learning outcomes as defined in the course outline.

### **Perform fair and relevant assessment for and of student learning.**

Honouring this commitment requires that educators ensure that assessments of learning are transparent, applied consistently and are congruent with learning outcomes. Assessment should be designed to both assess and enable student learning. Students should be provided with prompt and constructive feedback on their learning progress at regular intervals throughout the course.

## **EDUCATOR COMMITMENT 4: ENHANCE CONTINUOUSLY**

### **Solicit and reflect on feedback from students, peers and others.**

Honouring this commitment requires that educators provide students with the opportunity to give candid feedback on their learning experience, as well as seek feedback from peers and other sources to allow for evidence on all aspects of teaching practice to be reflected upon for the purposes of continuous improvement.



### **Engage in lifelong learning and continuous enhancement of teaching practice.**

Honouring this commitment requires that educators seek out and participate in opportunities to build their knowledge of teaching within their discipline, learn about advances in effective pedagogies/andragogies and engage in meaningful conversations about their practices with others.

*So as we continue on our learning journey, like the river we sit beside, the University community will aspire to change and evolve in response to shifts in knowledges and new understandings, fostering and supporting new relationships that will lead to a better world.*