

## SENATE MEETING, OCTOBER 24, 2020

### QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

#### AGENDA ITEM 10.1 PRINCIPLES FOR FEDERATION AND AFFILIATION

- *Are federated and affiliated institutions currently presented on the Council and Senate or would this represent a new practice?*

Response from Jacquie Thomarat, associate secretary, academic governance:  
Representation of federated and affiliated colleges on Senate and Council is not a new practice. In accordance with the *University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995*:

Senate comprises

24(1)(a)(vi) the principals of federated or affiliated colleges of the university

Council comprises

53(2)(b) one faculty member representing each college and affiliated and federated college who is a member of the college who has been elected by the members of the college

#### AGENDA ITEM 12.1 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

- *This is an important initiative and it is good to see it nearing final completion. Thank you to all involved. I gave two questions with respect to this work.*
  - 1) *What specific performance indicators will be measured to confirm this work is on target?*
  - 2) *I noticed the plan is to provide an annual progress report to the Board of Governors. What is the thinking in reporting annually rather than more frequently such as quarterly?*

Response provided by Irena Creed, associate vice-president research:

1) *What specific performance indicators will be measured to confirm this work is on target?*

The President and I discussed whether we should include the implementation strategies together with performance indicators for ongoing evaluation and revision in this strategy. The decision was to focus the strategy on the commitments, goals, and actions. Once endorsed by the three governing bodies, we would proceed with implementation strategies for each action, that would include a timeline for completion, guideposts to measure our progress on an annual basis, and performance indicators to measure the outcome (i.e., impact). The Chief Sustainability Strategist, who will lead the implementation of the strategy, will work closely with the university community to develop these implementation strategies, as it will take commitments from every level of the institution for the strategy to be successful.

2) *I noticed the plan is to provide an annual progress report to the Board of Governors. What is the thinking in reporting annually rather than more frequently such as quarterly? An annual report will be*

produced, but this does not preclude more frequent progress reports, that focus on opportunities that arise as well as any barriers that need to be overcome. We expect that as we shift from strategy to implementation, there will be many exciting updates to share, and are prepared to include a "for information" update at each meeting of the Board of Governors.

- *I appreciate the effort of breaking down each commitment in this plan into individual actions. Have metrics been established for each of the action items that would allow for ongoing evaluation and revision without waiting for the opportunities for review outlined on the fifth page of the plan (USask's University Plan in 2025 and the UN Agenda in 2030)?*

Response provided by Irena Creed, associate vice-president research:

Thank you for forwarding me this question. The President and I discussed whether we should include the implementation strategies together with metrics for ongoing evaluation and revision in this strategy. The decision was to focus the strategy on the commitments, goals, and actions. And then, once endorsed by the three governing bodies, to proceed with implementation strategies for each action. The Chief Sustainability Strategist, who will lead the implementation of the strategy, will work closely with the university community to develop these implementation strategies, as it will take commitments from every level of the institution for the strategy to be successful.

## AGENDA ITEM 12.2 EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

- *The university needs to be commended for undertaking this critical work. It would be helpful to have more information about how this work will be implemented across the various areas. Have performance indicators been identified and will all areas across the university be asked to report on their progress in achieving these indicators?*

Response provided by Cheryl Carver, associate vice-president, people and resources:

In addition to the Policy development, the University's equity, diversity and inclusion advisory and working groups have been involved in developing an institutional EDI Strategy and Action Plan. The EDI strategy and action plan will demonstrate the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity through specific and measurable goals and actions that align to the University's Mission, Vision, and Values and the University Plan. The policy will serve as an anchor for this and other EDI work on campus. Consultation on the EDI Strategy and Action Plan is expected to begin in December, 2020.

- *It would seem to me that this policy is already covered in the Mission, Vision, and Values of the University.*

*In 2016 the University spent considerable effort to update the MVV and it is generally agreed that "the vision, mission, and values statements provide direction for everything that happens in an organization. They keep everyone focused on where the organization is going and what it is trying to achieve. And they define the core values of the organization and how people are expected to behave." (Lumen "Principles of Management, Module 3" online)*

*Given that the Policy is really only effectively aimed at University leaders such as Deans and senior administrators (almost everyone else is covered under complementary policies and procedures), why is it necessary? Could not more explicit Values be provided up front?*

Response provided by Cheryl Carver, associate vice-president, people and resources:

While the responsibilities outlined by the policy vary, the scope of the policy includes “all members of the university community, including students, researchers, postdoctoral fellows, staff, faculty, institutional leadership, members of governing bodies, all persons participating in university businesses or activities (e.g. visitor, service provider, contractor, volunteer).” More specific opportunities for community members to participate in achieving our EDI goals will be articulated in the EDI Strategy and Action Plan (under development).

The EDI Policy supports the direction setting of the MVV by:

- Setting clear expectations by and for our leadership and our community;
- Defining and providing context to the principles and values of diversity, equality, human dignity and inclusiveness outlined in the MVV;
- Clearly articulating our position on EDI to internal and external stakeholder groups (including employees and their representatives, regulatory bodies, funding agencies);
- Providing sufficient information from which to develop supplemental procedures and guidelines.

The policy is meant aspirational, and a call to action for and by our community to exemplify our commitment to EDI and to take responsibility to nurture a diverse and inclusive university community. The policy is also intended to replace the outdated Employment Equity and Gender Neutral Language policies.

## GENERAL QUESTION

- *I regret being unable to contextualize my question by, in person positively commenting on the President’s and other leadership on the UofS pandemic response, the dedicated Indigenous Strategy, EDI Policy and concrete Sustainability Strategy. So much work well done merits praise.*

*That said, the biggest issue of concern I am aware of regarding the UofS is the reporting of many resignations of professors in the College of Education, (and elsewhere?) and the environment there.*

*Within the limits available could Senate please have some further light shed on this issue?*

Response provided by Melissa Just, interim provost and vice-president academic:

We are aware of recent concerns raised about the departure of Indigenous faculty from the University of Saskatchewan. While the public depiction of these departures was missing significant context, we acknowledge there is always more to do, and we remain committed to doing more as we continue on our path to be the best place we can be for increasing numbers of Indigenous faculty, staff and students at the university, and their communities. Campus conversations are underway, and more are planned, so that we can work together to address challenges and barriers that ensure we can successfully retain the faculty and staff that we have been able to successfully recruit.

Over the past several weeks, many discussions were held with College of Education faculty, staff, and administration which will help us to better understand any issues and/or challenges and implement the necessary actions for a unified path forward in the college. These discussions included the vice-provost

Indigenous engagement, the provost, and the university president, and were very constructive, collegial, and candid conversations. The points recently raised regarding Indigenous faculty and staff retention were openly discussed and constructive actions are being carefully explored.

Based on the meetings we've had within the college, we are proceeding with a thorough process of further dialogue with all Education Indigenous faculty, staff and students. To lead these conversations and ensure we have the fullest picture possible, we have secured the services of nationally recognized third party consultants. The benefit of engaging external consultants is that it brings independent perspectives and processes to identifying the issues and reduces the perception of bias of the process.

Recognizing that all voices need to be heard, the College of Education assessment process that is conducted by the consultants will include hearing from everyone within the college through surveys and more selective interviews. In the final stage, we would move directly to engagement of active processes and action that address any and all areas of concern. We are confident the process will help restore the trust and positive working relationships of all within the college and partners beyond. These open, honest, and collegial conversations are needed to better learn and understand the situation, and the findings from the college assessment will help us take all necessary steps to ensure that our teaching, learning and research spaces are inclusive and respectful.

In addition to this discovery and healing process within the College of Education, the president, provost and vice-provost Indigenous engagement will begin an ongoing series of meetings with Indigenous faculty and staff across to ensure we fully understand all opportunities and challenges in implementing change that fosters reconciliation at USask.

As we work together to build this path forward, we also shouldn't lose sight of what we have already accomplished in the college and across the university. Even in the midst of a pandemic, our overall undergraduate and graduate Indigenous student numbers remain strong. We continue to dedicate resources to improve student access and support, and to ensure that all Indigenous students who aspire to be at USask have that opportunity, and to be the best place we can be for them.

The hiring of and investments in increasing Indigenous faculty and staff representation across campus have continued. Over the past five years, 23 highly regarded Indigenous faculty have been hired, for a total of 45 working at the university. We have lost some of our Indigenous faculty for many different reasons during that time, but we plan to increase the total number well beyond our current levels. Our Indigenous faculty and staff are role models for our Indigenous students, and we acknowledge there is more to be done to support and retain them, to hear them.

Supported by the Office of the Vice-Provost of Indigenous Engagement (OVPIE), the university helps retain our talented Indigenous faculty and staff by creating retention plans and strategies, and by ensuring that the new University Standards for promotion and tenure acknowledge Indigenous scholarship.

The University Plan 2025 weaves USask's commitment to Indigenization and reconciliation throughout its many goals. In 2015, USask hosted the first national forum on "Building Reconciliation" in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report. Also, in that year, all colleges and schools committed to incorporating Indigenous knowledges and experiences into their many degree programs. The university has seen physical changes such as the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre

and our new Prince Albert campus (opening this month) aimed at ensuring we are a welcoming place for Indigenous students. Supporting our work are the first-of-a-kind agreements with the FSIN, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, Prince Albert Grand Council, Office of the Treaty Commissioner, and the Saskatoon Tribal Council.

Indigenous researchers lead research projects across campus, particularly in community-based, health-related areas. For instance, we have attracted top Indigenous researchers to work with Indigenous communities across Saskatchewan to support community-based research and healthcare initiatives. We are home to the national CIHR Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Institute. We are the national coordinating centre for the nine Network Environments for Indigenous Health Research (NEIHR) and we lead the Saskatchewan NEIHR network—the First Nations and Métis Health Research Network—to advance health research within Indigenous communities in the province, working in close partnership with the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, the Whitecap Dakota First Nation, and a team of more than 60 researchers and community partners. This spring, we announced the CIHR-funded Indigenous Research Chair in Nursing to build research capacity in Indigenous nursing and improve the health of Indigenous peoples.

We've been honoured with an Indigenous Chancellor, an Indigenous Board Chair, and a Vice-Provost of Indigenous Engagement over the last five years, and with six Indigenous Student Union presidents in the last eight years, including the first female this year. We offer the Nunavut Law Degree program, a certificate in the study of Indigenous Languages, and an Indigenous Land Management program. Professional programs ensure spots for Indigenous students, and non-Indigenous students have experiences grounded in Indigenous world views. Beginning this year, all degree students in Arts and Science (almost half our student population) will fulfill an Indigenous learning requirement. Enrichment opportunities such as the Indigenous Student Achievement Pathways and the Indigenous Engineering Student Initiative are now provided for Indigenous students as they join the university.

Leading real change is hard, and we acknowledge that there is much more to do. The journey is long and will require us to actively listen, be adaptive, and work with all to ensure we achieve our shared vision for the University of Saskatchewan.