

Report of the Senate Membership Committee

FOR INFORMATION

Presented by: Tamara Buckwold, Chair, Membership Committee

Date of Meeting: October 26, 2024

Subject: **Membership Committee – Report on Activities**

Summary of Activities:

The members of the Membership Committee are Tamara Buckwold (chair), Chancellor Grit McCreath, Wade Hainstock, Dion Martens, and Robert Henderson. Since the date of the last Senate meeting, the committee met on September 11, 2024. The following is an update on the work of this committee.

Five-Year Review of Organizational Memberships

The University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995 requires that:

“At least once every five years, the [elected members at large and district representatives on Senate] shall:

- (a) review the status of professional societies or other organizations having representatives in the senate to determine whether they should continue to send a representative to be a member of the senate.” (section 24(4))

The Governance Office began work in May 2024 to help inform the decision making of the Membership Committee in its fulfilment of this requirement. Part of this review involved reaching out to each of the associations represented on Senate to determine, among other things:

- If they wished to continue to be members of Senate,
- How their organization fulfilled the statutory requirements for membership on Senate (see section 24(3) reproduced in the next section).
- What their relationship is with Senate, and
- Basic information about their organizational structure.

At the time of writing this report, three organizational members have yet to respond, and efforts are underway to reduce this number even further. The final deadline for receiving these responses is November 29, 2024.

A summary of some of the themes that have arisen in this review are as follows:

- 1) *Prestige Associated with Senate and USask*: Many organizations appreciated having a formal connection with the university through membership on the Senate and appreciate the opportunity for information sharing. Many organizations said they have a vested interest in the continued success and excellence of the university, and no organizations (thus far) have indicated they no longer wish to be a part of Senate.
- 2) *Greater Connectivity with USask*: Although not directly related to their membership on Senate, many expressed a desire to be more connected to and to get more information about the university. The Governance Office is using this as a starting point for a discussion with the Senate Engagement Working Group about how association members can be better connected to the university and can better understand the role of Senate through some sort of regular communication/reporting.
- 3) *Regulatory Bodies vs. Professional Associations*: There was some commentary in the surveys about whether the regulatory body or the professional association linked to a professional group should be represented on Senate (when these roles are separate)). This is something that the Membership Committee will be considering further (more information in the next section).

Policies Regarding Membership by Professional Societies and Other Organizations

The criteria for membership on Senate by professional societies and other organizations are currently defined by the *University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995* supplemented by a long-established Membership Committee policy document. They are, from the *Act*:

“24(3) For the purposes of clause (1)(f) the members of the senate mentioned in clauses (1)(b) and (c) [that is, the elected members at large and district representatives] may designate professional societies or other organizations that, in the opinion of those members:

- (a) contribute in a significant way to the social, economic and cultural welfare of Saskatchewan; and
- (b) have a demonstrated interest in furthering the goals of higher education and research at the university.”

And from the policy document adopted by the Membership Committee:

- “1) Licensing and professional bodies for professions that are taught at the University, or for professions for which the University provides preparatory study, should be invited to send a representative to Senate, on the advice of the relevant dean(s). In general where there is both a national or international and a provincial association, the provincial association will be invited to send the representative.
- 2) The alumni associations for the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina will each be invited to send a representative.
- 3) Educational institutions are not themselves eligible for membership but may be represented by associations such as the CEO Council of Regional Colleges or the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.
- 4) Cultural and business organizations may be considered for membership if they meet the criteria in the act and
 - a) Their members represent a significant constituency of stakeholders within Saskatchewan, and
 - b) The goals and aims of the organization are consistent with the strategic directions of the university.”

Responses received in the five-year membership review, along with discussions at meetings of the Membership Committee and Senate at large, have prompted the committee to consider two related questions:

- 1) Should the criteria for membership by professional societies and other organizations be further defined by committee policy?
- 2) If criteria for membership should be further defined, what factors should be identified as relevant?

The committee's work in this regard is at an early stage. The committee welcomes input from our existing organizational and elected members on these questions, recognizing that authority over decisions regarding the admission of organizational members is assigned by statute to elected members.

The committee also recognizes that the number of organizational members should be maintained at a level that facilitates the mandate and effective functioning of Senate and that reflects an appropriate balance between organizational and elected members. The questions to be addressed in this process have yet to be fully defined but include whether the members of a recognized profession are better represented by the regulatory authority for that profession or by a professional association, where both exist. Comments on that issue and other matters that may be relevant to the general questions outlined above may be submitted to the committee by email to governance.office@usask.ca.

Diversity and Representation Initiatives

The Membership Committee continues to be interested in increasing the diversity of Senate.

The chair of the committee met with President Stoicheff regarding possible means to best facilitate the continued membership of the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations and the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan in a way that recognizes their unique representative and governance roles. The committee will be discussing a recommended approach at a future meeting.

Next Steps and Timeline:

The Membership Committee plans to meet early in the new year to continue its work on the matters outlined in this report.