

Report on Activities of the Commitment Leaders between June-Dec. 2009

DRAFT as of Jan.19, 2010

This summary presents an update on progress and projects from the commitment leaders for the period of June to Dec. 2009. This is the third cross-commitment update since implementation began 18 months ago and builds on previous summaries that are posted at www.usask.ca/ip. This summary focuses on commitment leader activity and does not intend to capture everything colleges and units, or the university as a whole, is doing in each commitment area. A more comprehensive report on year 2 progress for the second integrated plan will be released in May 2010.

A highlight of fall 2009 was a kickoff event held Sept. 29 featuring remarks by the president and the provost, as well as posters from each of the 20 commitments. The event provided an opportunity for the campus community to interact with commitment leaders and to learn more about projects stemming from the integrated plan. Posters were displayed across campus during the fall and are currently on display in the Murray Library, the School of Public Policy and in the College of Education. They are also available online.

In 2010, many commitment leaders will continue to consult with the campus community, approach key committees and groups for feedback, and host workshops or other events to present their progress and gather feedback. Please see the website above for the most current information.

Recently funded projects

The list of projects below were submitted to the Provost's Committee on Integrated Planning from commitment leaders (in partnership with others) and received funding (whole or partial) from the Academic Priorities Fund (APF) – a fund developed to support strategic initiatives at the university. **This list is not a complete list of all initiatives funded by the APF, rather examples of recently funded projects led or co-led by a commitment.** A full report on APF expenditures will appear in the May 2010 progress report.

- **Recognizing and rewarding teaching excellence – The Teacher-Learner Experience (Jim Greer)**
Funding to support new teaching awards and research grants related to teaching, and to hire a half-time communications person to raise the profile of teaching and learning activities at the U of S. The communications specialist, Kris Foster, began in January.
- **Student advising project – Retention Strategies and Initiatives (Tom Steele and Susan Bens/Tonya Wirchenko)**
Funding to support an external review of how well advising services for undergraduate students across campus are connected and coordinated, as well as an in-depth look at advising in the Undergraduate Office in the College of Arts and Science. This project is part of the university's Enrolment Action Plan.
- **Sustainability liaison position – Sustainability as a Shared Challenge (Alec Aitken and Julia Jones)**
Funding to support a new sustainability initiatives liaison position in Facilities Management Division (FMD), filled by Heather Treuman in Oct 2009. She is responsible for working with departments to assess existing practices and facilitate sustainability initiatives which primarily benefit the built environment on campus, among other activities.

Current and emerging projects

Below is a summary of current and emerging projects by commitment as of Dec. 2009 – it is not a comprehensive or final list. For more detail about specific commitments, please see the individual progress reports posted at www.usask.ca/ip or talk to the commitment leader(s) directly.

Quality and Accountability, Brett Fairbairn

In order to gauge progress of the university's strategic directions, and to adequately represent this progress to the community and the public at large, the Quality and Accountability commitment developed a set of university-wide assessment indicators called the Achievement Record. The Achievement Record is in circulation this year, with an enhanced online version coming in the fall of 2010. www.usask.ca/achievementrecord

- **Outcome: Achievement Record**

Areas of Pre-Eminence, Karen Chad

This commitment builds on the *Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Foundational Document* (Jan. 2004) and aims to identify a select and definitive set of "signature areas" of exceptional research achievement at the U of S and to promote these widely. Throughout the fall, the commitment consulted with different groups on campus and plan to release a draft list of signature areas in early 2010 for further feedback.

- **Outcome: Draft list of signature areas**

Concurrently, the university is working through an institutional positioning project, which builds on the institution's priorities and aims to pinpoint the University of Saskatchewan's position in the Canadian post-secondary education sector using criteria of relevance, differentiation and credibility. Through the positioning project, it is becoming evident that an emerging global trend in the post-secondary market is the importance of research to an institution's reputation. Therefore, it is important to align the process of identifying the signature areas with the institutional positioning project. www.usask.ca/positioning

Collaboration between Academic and Non-Academic Units, Lyn Currie & Jacquie Thomarat

The commitment leaders have taken an anthropological approach to studying collaboration as it happens at the University of Saskatchewan – existing collaborative models, what works well, how to enhance collaboration in organizations, etc. They have conducted a review of collaboration in the higher education literature, started documenting collaborative models in practice across the U of S campus, and consulted with other commitment and campus leaders about collaboration in their work.

- **Outcome: Study of collaboration at the U of S**

Retention Strategies and Initiatives, Tom Steele & Tonya Wirchenko

The Learning Communities project, funded as a result of a proposal brought forward by this commitment, launched in April 2009 and had a successful intake of 333 students (80 per cent capacity) in the Colleges of Arts and Science, Kinesiology, and Agriculture and Bioresources in the fall term. The commitment will continue to work with colleges on this initiative for the remainder of the planning cycle. The commitment has also been highly involved in developing and beginning to implement a student advising project, which includes a review of all advising services on campus and a survey with students about their advising experiences. A final report is expected in June 2010.

- **Outcome: Learning Communities**
- **Outcome: Student advising project**

Diverse Body of Students, David Hannah

This commitment has worked closely with the Student and Enrolment Services Division, colleges and other units on a number of projects related to the student body, enrolment and recruitment. The commitment hosted a Recruitment Summit in Aug. 2009, which will lead to future work with colleges and units on more targeted and co-ordinated recruitment strategies. Recent work includes enrolment-related research regarding why students choose to attend/not attend the U of S; a review of financial aid at the U of S; development of an admissions policy for the U of S and a review of the admissions and communications processes, which resulted in recommendations for improvement and a plan to address problem areas. In addition, the commitment is working with Institutional Strategy and Analytics on developing improved methods for measuring and monitoring enrolment information.

- **Outcome: Recruitment summit**
- **Outcome: Targeted and co-ordinated recruitment strategies**

Innovation and Cultural Contributions, Peter Stoicheff & Glen Schuler

Two subcommittees have been formed, one focused on innovation and the second on culture. The cultural assets subcommittee is developing a long-term strategy for all campus museums, cultural facilities and artifacts, anticipated in June 2010. The innovation subcommittee is exploring ways to expand and deepen innovative and creative environments for undergraduates, graduate students, faculty members and colleges/schools. The commitment conducted a survey about current and proposed cultural/innovative initiatives in spring 2009; this information continues to inform their work.

- **Outcome: Long-term strategy for cultural assets**
- **Outcome: A more innovative and creative campus environment**

Infrastructure and Capital Resources, Chuck Rhodes & Colin Tennent

The commitment has chosen to focus on helping the university community better understand the university's strategic capital goals and processes, from how new buildings or infrastructure are developed and approved to the processes and decisions about deferred maintenance. Increasing communications and explanatory, transparent materials through a variety of channels (web, print, face-to-face) will be the commitment's focus for this planning cycle. The campus community can expect to hear more in 2010.

- **Outcome: Wider understanding of the capital processes and goals**

Research Success and Collaboration, Jim Thornhill

The commitment is working on a project aimed at understanding what research collaboration and research success mean to academic and non-academic individuals and groups at the U of S, with a focus on research outcomes and impact, and their measurement, rather than research inputs. The goal is to produce a set of recommendations and a discussion paper for the vice-president research (the commitment's executive sponsor) and the provost. Beginning in January 2010, the commitment leaders and working group will be conducting a series of consultations on this project leading to the discussion paper.

- **Outcome: Broader understanding of research success and collaboration**

Issues-Based, Interdisciplinary Scholarship, Lou Hammond-Ketilson

The commitment's primary project is an analysis of the context, challenges and opportunities of interdisciplinary scholarship at the U of S. This includes developing an inventory of existing interdisciplinary initiatives, leading to a position paper and an action plan for addressing the challenges of doing interdisciplinary work at this university. Over winter and spring 2010, the commitment working group will begin a consultation process and will be meeting with various committees/councils.

- **Outcome: Wider understanding of interdisciplinary scholarship**

Sustainability as a Shared Challenge, Alec Aitken & Julia Jones

The commitment's primary goal is to develop a campus sustainability plan that identifies sustainability strategies for five areas of campus life: education, research, operations, governance and community engagement. In spring 2009, the commitment conducted a survey to gather information about current and potential/planned sustainability activities at the U of S. An inventory of initiatives is currently under development and the campus community will be invited to provide feedback in early 2010 through a consultation process and a workshop. Please take the survey at: <https://survey.usask.ca/survey.php?sid=14949>

- **Outcome: Campus sustainability plan**

Innovation in Programs, Ernie Barber

This commitment continues to focus on a project to identify the key drivers of program innovation and the barriers to innovation at this campus. Most of the identified examples of successful and stalled program changes and program innovations have been collected. This information will be analyzed within a framework of four sets of factors contributing to successful transformation initiatives.

- **Outcome: Better understanding of program innovation drivers and barriers**

Campus Environment for Students, Trever Crowe & Greg Fowler

Over the past year, the working group collected information on areas of student concern as identified by staff members who work with students on a regular basis. The assembled areas of concern continue to inform and influence the thinking and work by the commitment leaders. One outstanding issue not addressed by any other unit(s) on campus is that of mutual respect and the service environment. Leaders of the campus environment commitment are taking steps to arrange a workshop in the spring of 2010 and start a campus-wide discussion on this topic.

- **Outcome: A campus-wide conversation about mutual respect and the service environment**

Finance Resources, Laura Kennedy & Lou Qualtiere

This commitment is focused on three pillars of activity: (1) improving the management of resources and implementing more effective resource allocation; (2) improving the internal control environment; and (3) enhancing transparency. In the first pillar, the commitment has been researching models in use at other institutions. In the area of internal control, the Financial Services Division performed a self-assessment and established a consultative group of college finance officers. Transparency will continue to be enhanced through the development of new reports, easier access to fund and transaction details and increased understanding of the financial system across campus.

- **Outcome: A resource allocation-reallocation model for the U of S**
- **Outcome: Improved internal controls**
- **Outcome: Enhanced financial transparency**

Engagement in Governance and Decision-Making, John Rigby

This commitment is focused on three areas: (1) increasing awareness and participation in governance; (2) developing a common understanding and approach to policies; and (3) examining timeliness of processes with intent to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Next steps in area one above is to develop a communications plan for University Council; an overview of this plan has been presented to the Co-ordinating Committee of Council.

- **Outcome: Streamlined approval process for graduate programs, potentially saving weeks or months**
- **Outcome: Increased awareness of opportunities to be involved in decision-making at the U of S**

Aboriginal Engagement, Tom Allen & Charlotte Ross

Over the fall, the commitment leaders, executive sponsor and members of the working group met with various groups on campus to raise awareness and provide information about current Aboriginal programs and initiatives and to discuss opportunities to make the campus welcoming for Aboriginal faculty, staff and students (e.g. signage, cultural presence, employment initiatives). They worked with the IPA to develop an inventory of Aboriginal programs and services (in progress). Going forward, they will continue to work with SESD and others on an Aboriginal student recruitment strategy, among other projects.

- **Outcome: Inventory of U of S Aboriginal programs and initiatives**
- **Outcome: More welcoming campus environment for Aboriginal Peoples**

Other Commitments

The implementation process for the second integrated plan is designed so that each commitment proceeds at a different pace. The other five commitments not reported above have also made progress and continue to develop work plans, perform environmental scanning, and develop projects. See www.usask.ca/ip for the most recent progress reports from each commitment.

Need more information?

Please visit www.usask.ca/ip to find more information on these and other items:

- Posters from the Sept. 29 poster event
- Names and photos of commitment leaders
- Progress reports
- Presentation slides from progress workshops
- Circle diagram, full and summary integrated plan, strategic directions, foundational documents

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www.usask.ca/ip