The University of Saskatchewan must be driven by considerations of quality. Being driven by quality means listening to others: peers when it comes to research, students when it comes to teaching, the community when it comes to service. It also means setting standards and estimating progress towards goals.

A Framework for Planning at the University of Saskatchewan

In the new global environment, our competition for faculty, students, and research support is international. Increasingly, our obligations and opportunities are also international. We cannot serve our students, our disciplines, and our communities if we are content to measure ourselves locally. This is not a matter of formal standards, but rather a willingness to open ourselves to evaluation and aim for high quality in all we do. This will be the uncompromising commitment we expect of everyone and every activity.

The Strategic Directions

Quality is an abiding interest of universities the world over. Beginning with A Framework for Planning in 1998, the University of Saskatchewan has been unequivocal in key policy and planning documents about its commitment to quality, first and foremost in its academic programs, evidenced through the adoption in 1999 of Systematic Program Review (SPR) and the completion of a first six-year cycle of reviews by 2005. More recently, the University has signaled its interest in a more broadly based approach to assessment in the Strategic Directions (2002), the First Integrated Plan (2004), and the Second Integrated Plan (2008).  

Existing University-based quality and accountability efforts, however thorough they are perceived to be by the University of Saskatchewan community, must be placed within the broader public context and interest that is emerging nationally and internationally about higher education. Publications such as Maclean’s, the Globe and Mail, the Times Higher Education Supplement, and USA Today are only the tip of the iceberg. Today, universities all over the world are coming under increased scrutiny from the general public, from funding providers and policy makers, from students, and from each other as competition for students, faculty, professional staff, and resources increase. Governments, taxpayers, students, and parents are demanding more information about the outcomes of the educational programs they are funding. Students are seeking assurances about the quality of their degree programs as tuition fees increase. Boards are looking for ways to measure progress and performance and to demonstrate accountability and value for dollars expended. If current trends are any indication, the future will be one in which universities spend more time explaining what they do and why they do it to a growing list of stakeholders and interested groups.

External pressures are not the only, or even the primary, reason to re-consider existing assessment strategies. Universities have a practical and philosophical stake in maintaining and demonstrating academic integrity. Academic freedom gives universities (through colleges and departments) wide

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1 For a discussion of the assessment context at the University of Saskatchewan and national and international trends, please see Attachment One.
latitude in devising curriculum and programs, but it does not exempt them from the obligation to ensure that what is offered meets international standards. While universities may be the best judges of their own performance, they need to back up these judgments with processes that involve evidence and external referents. This is the purpose of formal assessment processes: to give rigour to judgment and thereby create shared confidence.

This paper outlines a comprehensive assessment strategy for the University of Saskatchewan. For these purposes assessment is defined as the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs, research performance, and organizational structures undertaken for the purposes of improving student learning and development, improving and assuring quality in program and service offerings, stimulating creative research and scholarly endeavours, and achieving alignment with institution-wide goals. Building on the lessons of SPR and the widespread desire to ensure that programming and services are of the highest quality, this paper identifies areas of high priority for University-level attention and their implications for the campus community.

It is important to state at the outset that the University of Saskatchewan is not starting from scratch. The University already has many of the key features of an institutional strategy (SPR results, accreditation results, student enrolment data, qualitative information from student focus groups and interviews, institutional level and national surveys, workplace assessments, and targeted unit reviews) in place. What we need to do now is to establish assessment priorities and link them to institutional level planning and decision-making. Keeping in mind that there are limits to our energy and resources, faculty, staff and students can expect to participate in several of these initiatives, although not all at once, and not with the same intensity as with SPR. They can also expect to learn more about the results of our assessment efforts through a communication process which is aimed to ensure that our challenges are understood, our achievements are acknowledged and celebrated, and continued progress towards collective goals is estimated.

**Principles Guiding Assessment at the University of Saskatchewan**

Assessment is an essential practice of the modern university. By its very nature, assessment provides feedback on progress towards agreed-upon goals or standards and expectations, occasional opportunities to reflect on progress and prospects as well as to make adjustments and obtain further feedback. It is not, as such, a punitive process. Assessment initiatives are therefore an integral component of a larger institutional planning process, not just another thing to do simply for its intrinsic value.

Because a wide variety of potential objects of assessment exists, choices about what is assessed and why, how often selected aspects are assessed, and who is responsible, are necessary. To assist, a set of guiding principles for assessment initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan has been developed.

**Principle One:** Assessment initiatives should be closely linked to the cycles of Integrated Planning and used to inform University, college and administrative unit planning. This would ensure that assessment initiatives are closely linked to the University’s major goal setting, decision-making, and resource allocation process addressing the most obvious limitation of the SPR process.

**Principle Two:** The University should give priority to assessment initiatives that promise the greatest impact in helping the University achieve the goals and priorities stated through the Integrated Planning process. Having linked assessment and planning, it should be evident that the activities that are assessed should be those that matter most to the University’s agreed upon goals and priorities.
Principle Three: The University should undertake a comprehensive and inclusive array of assessment initiatives such that academic and administrative units, services, programs and activities are all subject to appropriate forms of review. Given the wide variety of organizational units and functions on campus, a flexible approach with a variety of tools for self-assessment should be provided to support unit-based assessment initiatives. A common template or framework for similar assessment initiatives should be provided.

Principle Four: Guidelines and standards should be developed and published to ensure consistency of processes, expectations associated with the assessment tool, and alignment with institutional goals and priorities. For example, a typical review will include a self-study, an invitation to nationally and internationally recognized peers to participate in a paper-based or on-site visit, an opportunity to hear from key stakeholders (e.g., students, colleagues, user groups), and an interactive discussion of findings.

Principle Five: Assessment initiatives should be complementary and should provide a holistic view of University of Saskatchewan activities. Available information from a variety of sources (University-level, college or administrative unit specific) should be used and re-used for a number of purposes thereby reducing duplication of effort and work at the college and administrative unit levels.

Principle Six: Responsibility for assessment initiatives should be vested at a variety of levels within the University and should balance responsibility with accountability. Given the wide variety of objects of assessment, academic and administrative unit leaders should assume responsibility for identifying specific assessment opportunities and report on outcomes in their college or administrative unit plans. The guiding philosophy should be permissive, providing pro-active and cyclical opportunities for academic and administrative leaders to take responsibility for assessment within a clearly defined University-level assessment framework with established priorities and standards.

Principle Seven: Results of University-level assessment initiatives should be made generally available to the University community and beyond through a variety of mechanisms including annual reports, websites, Provost’s Reports, On Campus News and other communications vehicles. Opportunities should be provided to celebrate accomplishments, share learning, and exchange information.

Principle Eight: Responsibility and authority for oversight and management of University-level assessment initiatives should be vested in the Provost’s Committee on Integrated Planning (PCIP), an administrative body comprised of the Vice-Presidents, and coordinated by the Integrated Planning Office (IPO) under the supervision of PCIP. University Council, Senate and Board of Governors have strong interests in outcomes and should be provided with annual reports on progress. More frequent updates of major assessment initiatives will be provided as appropriate.

Purposes of Assessment
The First Integrated Plan envisioned an assessment system that would be broader than SPR. It proposed the integration and coordination of assessment activities to serve the University community in three broad areas: facilitation, consultation, and leadership for institutional assessment activities; communication of assessment results to the University and wider communities; and, creation of a repository for assessment activities on campus. The Second Integrated Plan envisions a comprehensive quality assurance framework to be fully implemented by the end of the second planning cycle (2011/12).

Three broad purposes for assessment at the University of Saskatchewan have been identified:
1. **Quality improvement** is the commitment to continuously bring performance and agreed upon goals into closer alignment. It requires benchmarking current efforts, adopting exemplary practices, and monitoring changes in student, staff and faculty practices. Quality improvement is primarily a formative process; we assess to learn and, upon learning, we act. While quality improvement is continuous, we expect concentrated effort to coincide with the opportunities presented by the cycles of Integrated Planning.

2. **Quality assurance** refers to the periodic testing of performance against expectations. It requires well developed standards and metrics, coupled with consensus on what constitutes levels of acceptable performance (minimal to superior). Quality assurance is therefore primarily summative in character. The inability to meet minimum standards must be followed by concrete ameliorative actions or by the suspension of activity. Quality assurance can take place at any time, but deans, vice-presidents and others should take advantage of natural opportunities, such as accreditation cycles and changes in leadership, to commission assessments of performance.

3. **Accountability** refers to a set of mechanisms or procedures that ensure regular communication about outcomes, desired outcomes, successes and failures. It represents our commitment to openness and transparency because it provides information about what we are doing, how well we are doing it, and what else we need to do to achieve our goals. It obliges us to assume responsibility for our plans, our actions, and our use of public resources. And it obliges us to consider how our activities are perceived by external sources.

In short, **quality improvement** is about recognizing what we do well, innovating, seeking new ideas, and doing better. **Quality assurance** is about proving that we have done so and comparing ourselves with our peers. While both should involve external referents, quality assurance in particular requires objective, impartial, information. **Accountability** links both activities by reporting out to the University’s key stakeholders (its students, its faculty, the Board, the Government, and the general public) that progress is being made towards goals and priorities.

**Areas of Priority for Assessment at the University of Saskatchewan**

Assessment initiatives already occupy a significant amount of attention at the University of Saskatchewan. This increasingly complex and costly set of activities requires oversight, coordination, and connection to the Integrated Planning process. Broadly speaking, assessment initiatives can be organized into three categories: **academic** (teaching and learning, research and scholarly accomplishment, outreach and engagement); **operational** (efficiency and effectiveness, attracting resources, building relationships); and **reputational** (local, national and international). Not surprisingly, the University of Saskatchewan has placed the highest priority on academic assessment initiatives because this is the University’s central mission; yet as our experience with SPR demonstrates, our efforts have not been all-inclusive. Moving towards a comprehensive approach will mean placing attention on all three categories (academic, operational and reputational), and increased levels of coordination with agreed-upon standards and timeframes. Given limited human and financial resources, our assessment efforts in the immediate future will of necessity be selective, leveraging the greatest impact for the University and advancing institutional goals and priorities.

Initial descriptions of the areas of priority for assessment follow. Additional details will emerge as policies are developed over the coming months.

**Academic Assessment**

This area of assessment encompasses the teaching and learning, research and scholarship missions of the University: the quality of the academic programs; student achievement and outcomes; the demonstration
of identified learning outcomes; the quality and nature of the student experience in the classroom and beyond; the quality and impact of the research, scholarly and artistic work conducted by faculty and students; the nature and quality of outreach and engagement initiatives. This is a daunting list. We are already conducting assessment initiatives in many areas and we are poised to begin some new initiatives in others. The priorities for the second planning cycle are:

1. **Graduate Program Review.** The *Strategic Directions* identified the expansion of graduate work as one of four key institutional goals. Between 1999 and 2005, SPR was used to evaluate the quality of graduate and undergraduate degree programs. Now that the first cycle of program reviews is complete, a new quality assurance process, intended to replace SPR and focusing on graduate programs, will be developed to bring the University of Saskatchewan into alignment with review processes in other parts of Canada (e.g. Ontario).

Building on lessons learned from SPR, the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research will develop a separate, streamlined, and cyclical review process for graduate programs, including professional programs, to be implemented beginning in the 2009/10 academic year. This process will recognize the diversity of purpose of graduate programs and will address disciplinary differences. All graduate programs will be reviewed according to a pre-determined schedule which will be established following consultation with the Dean(s) of the ‘home’ college and the Provost and Vice-President Academic. Documentation will address the recommendations of the most recent SPR (or subsequent) site visit and follow a template to be designed by the College of Graduate Studies and Research in collaboration with the Integrated Planning Office (IPO). The schedule and results of reviews will be broadly shared with the campus community through University Council and specifically with the Academic Programs Committee (APC). The Dean(s) of the ‘home’ college will be involved at critical points in the review process (self-study, site team visit, outcomes).

These reviews will be summative in character; program sponsors, deans and others will learn about opportunities for improvement, but graduate reviews will be principally for the purpose of quality assurance. A simplified outcome grid will determine if programs can continue to admit students and receive financial support. Where changes are required (as opposed to being recommended), the Dean will monitor progress and determine when, and if, a program should be suspended or recommenced. Program reviews will be timed to ensure that programs have had sufficient time to implement improvements suggested in previous reviews or to allow for completion of the program by a sufficient cohort of students.

The Dean of Graduate Studies and Research will be responsible for managing the process for the University under the broad supervision of the Provost’s Office. The Dean will establish the University’s policy for graduate program review following consultation with University Council and in collaboration with the Integrated Planning Office (IPO).

2. **Undergraduate Curriculum Reviews.** Given the experience of SPR, the focus of accreditation reviews, and the linkages to Integrated Planning proposed below, undergraduate program reviews will no longer be conducted systematically (as occurred under SPR). This paper proposes the

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2 It is possible that the Graduate Program Review Process will begin earlier, but this implementation timeline allows for the development of the policy and procedures, including a consultation process with the Academic Programs Committee, and the preparation of self-studies for the first programs to be reviewed.
selective and occasional reviews of undergraduate degree programs, under the supervision of the Provost and the APC, to understand the level to which the University is achieving its curricular goals and learning outcomes. Such reviews will typically be aggregated at the degree level (e.g., BA, BSc, BFA, BMus, BComm, BEng, MD, LLB etc) but may occasionally be discipline-specific (e.g. History, Accounting, Civil Engineering).

Building on the goals outlined in the *Teaching and Learning Foundational Document*, these reviews will provide opportunities for focusing on examination of the curriculum, the design and structure of degree programs, learning objectives and outcomes, program and curricular innovations and enhancements including experiential learning opportunities, study-abroad programs, discovery-based learning opportunities, alternate pedagogical approaches (problem-based learning, active learning etc), the quality of teaching, and technology in support of academic programs (both in classroom and distributed modalities), the quality of the faculty delivering the degree program, the impact of the faculty research, scholarly and artistic activity on the program, and outreach and engagement initiatives and approaches sponsored by the program or in which the program participates. Undergraduate curriculum reviews will be sponsored by the Provost and supported by the IPO. The advice of the APC will be solicited regarding which undergraduate degree programs should be reviewed; outcomes will be shared with APC and other Council committees as appropriate.

3. **Understanding the Student Experience.** The *Strategic Directions* identified two critical goals in the context of the student experience: `establish the University of Saskatchewan as a major presence in graduate education`; and `recruit and retain a diverse and academically promising body of students and prepare them for success in the knowledge age`. Since 2000, the University has increased its information base about the nature of the student experience on our campus through participation in a number of institution-level surveys. These include: the *Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC)*, 2001 – 2008; the *National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)*, 2006 and 2008; the *Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)*, 2003; the *Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment: Graduate Outcomes of 2004/05 Class* (with other post-secondary institutions), 2007; the *Student Outcomes Survey*, 2000; and the *Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (GPSS)*, 2007. The results of these surveys have been analyzed as part of the background research conducted for the *Teaching and Learning Foundational Document* and are available to the campus community through the IPO website: [www.usask.ca/ip](http://www.usask.ca/ip). In addition, the University completed a major study of *Student Retention* (2006); information about the results of this study is provided in the *Teaching and Learning Foundational Document*. Based on these studies, the Foundational Document presents a number of key areas in which the University needs to make important advances over the next decade (see pages 32 – 38 of the March 20, 2008 draft).

Through the process of review of college and administrative unit plans for the second planning cycle, it is evident that there is increased interest in gathering and understanding student opinion about their educational experience. Colleges and units have identified surveys as one tool; as Attachment Two demonstrates, the University already conducts a large number of surveys. As a first step, the IPO will develop a survey policy to ensure that students are not overwhelmed with survey requests from a wide variety of sources. Other tools, such as focus groups, will also need to be developed. In all cases, the University needs to invest in dissemination of the findings to increase mutual understanding about successes and challenges.

Beginning immediately, the IPO will take responsibility for coordinating a selected group of major University-level surveys and disseminating information about findings to the general
University community. The IPO will work collaboratively with other University offices and departments to maintain an inventory of major University-level surveys, to integrate findings, to develop a survey policy, and to coordinate and communicate the results. The APC and the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) will be the foci for Council.

4. **Research Accomplishments and Standing.** The *Strategic Directions* called for a campus-wide commitment to research, scholarly and artistic work and the identification of areas of research strength in which focused investment would garner national and international recognition for the University. The *Foundational Document on Research Scholarly and Artistic Work*, approved by University Council in 2004, subsequently identified two goals for the University’s research efforts: “to be established as among the top ten medical/doctoral universities in Canada and as one of a select few internationally in key areas”. To assess progress and prospects, the University will need to identify ways in which success in research, scholarly and artistic work (both activity and impact) can be measured. The Vice-President Research, working with the Council Committee on Research Scholarly and Artistic Work, will be charged with responsibility for developing a set of indicators by which progress can be gauged. This effort will form part of the overall institutional strategy associated with assessing progress towards University-level plans and goals (described below).

**Operational Assessment**

This area of assessment encompasses the efficiency and effectiveness of the University’s various organizational structures; the University’s capacity to attract resources (human, financial); the University’s progress towards its goals and plans; the University’s internal culture and relationships; and the effectiveness of the University’s relationships with external bodies (governments, private sector, friends). While Attachment Three demonstrates that organizational units have been the objects of selective reviews and assessments over the past decade, the Integrated Planning Initiative requires assessment of institutional level priorities within a national context. The immediate priorities are:

5. **Progress towards University-level Plans and Goals.** Since 2002, beginning with the *Strategic Directions*, the University has developed a series of institution-wide goals and priorities. It has developed a substantial collection of Foundational Documents, implemented its *First Integrated Plan*, and just approved its second. Good practice in assessment requires that progress towards goals is monitored and communicated broadly to internal and external stakeholder groups. The first step in this regard was taken when the Provost devoted his 2006 annual Academic Agenda address to the first integrated planning “report card.” A second ‘report card’ was distributed in early Fall 2007 and a final report on the *First Integrated Plan* will follow in 2008/09. In addition, the Vice-Presidents, acting as Executive Sponsors for the Foundational Documents, have provided occasional reports to the general University community beginning in the 2006/07 academic year. There is a strong University-wide interest in the results of this effort, given that all of these documents have been approved by either University Council, the Board of Governors, or both.

Typical assessment efforts associated with institutional goals and priorities involve the development of performance measures aimed at tracking progress and the identification of peers for comparison and benchmarks. Other universities are in the process of creating ‘scorecards’ or ‘dashboards’ to highlight progress. At our University, a critical first step will be the establishment of an information strategy to provide the information needed for institutional decision-making.

As a matter of priority, the IPO will be responsible for coordinating/leading the development of a set of performance measures to identify progress against the *Strategic Directions*, current and
future Integrated Plans, and the Foundational Documents and, working with the Office of Communications, for ensuring that the results are broadly communicated within the University community and beyond. Critical to the success of this responsibility will be a broadly-based consultative approach drawing from the expertise available within the campus community and from exemplary practices in other universities in Canada and around the world.

6. **Selective Reviews of Academic and Administrative Units For Quality Assurance and Accountability.** Increasingly, review processes encompassing all university organizational entities are occurring. Integrated Planning has hastened this trend at the University of Saskatchewan as academic and administrative planning are increasingly connected. While some academic and administrative units were assessed in the past decade (See Attachment Three for details), a systematic unit review process has not been established. Such a process is not intended, but it is anticipated that, from time to time, the President, Vice-Presidents or Deans will wish to sponsor single reviews of academic or administrative units independent of the enhanced planning reviews described below to gauge quality or to address specific issues/concerns.

During the second planning cycle, selective reviews of academic and administrative units will continue. A process spearheaded by the Provost will be devised for these occasional and selective reviews, and will include the establishment of clear terms of reference, timelines, expectations, external peer evaluations, for both academic and administrative units. The IPO will be expected to develop standards and supervise the process. Support will be provided by the appropriate Vice-Presidential office for reviews conducted within their portfolio.

The emphasis on unit reviews does not compromise the University’s ability to look at aspects of operational activity selectively. For example, deferred maintenance, financial processes, and information technology systems might all be reviewed to ascertain whether they are achieving goals/expectations.

7. **Unit Reviews for Quality Improvement and Enhanced Planning.** Universities the world over conduct ‘unit reviews’, usually college or department based, to determine, through a process of informed judgment, the quality and suitability of academic endeavours and their alignment with institutional priorities and goals. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the University of Saskatchewan conducted unit reviews linked to appointments of deans; many universities in Canada have adopted this approach. As already indicated in Attachment Three, the University conducted a substantial number of ‘one-off’ reviews of units over the past decade at the same time as the SPR process examined the quality of the University’s degree programs.

Building on the important connection between unit reviews and resource allocation processes, colleges, schools, academic support units such as the Library and the University Learning Centre, and major administrative units will participate in a voluntary, formative, pro-active process of self-assessment during the second planning cycle (2008/09 to 2011/12) and thereafter intended to support the development of the college/unit plan. For academic units, the self-assessment may include curricular innovations, teaching and learning practices, the quality of scholarship and research, administrative and organizational structures, the performance of outreach and public service activities, and the state of facilities and infrastructure. The purpose of the assessment will be to assist colleges, schools, academic support units, and major administrative units in their planning efforts. The Dean, Executive Director, or Associate Vice-President will consult the Provost’s Office for general advice, standards and/or templates and make a determination about the nature and scope of the assessment to be undertaken but the impetus for a decision to proceed with a formative assessment will rest with the Dean, Executive Director or Associate Vice-
President. Following from the Final Report of the Task Force on Centres, the Vice-President Research will develop a review process in collaboration with the IPO and be responsible for reviews of research centres.

Reputational Assessment
This area of assessment encompasses those activities which assist the University to position itself within the higher education landscape in Canada and internationally; i.e., the University’s external profile. Initiatives are based on examination of relationships with particular ‘stakeholder’ groups (e.g., guidance counselors, parents, faculty peers, Canadian business and social leaders, other universities, alumni, etc.), and typically examine how the University is perceived by external constituencies. Current efforts in this area of assessment are very limited as is our ability to evaluate how efforts to improve visibility and reputation translate to value for the University (recruitment and retention of faculty and students, policy decisions, funding, partnerships, etc.). We need to move from qualitative observations to quantifiable results. The immediate priorities are:

8. **Strategic Communications.** The University of Saskatchewan’s reputation is built by the academic programs we teach, the research and scholarship we create, the people we hire, and the business practices we follow. Working with the IPO, the Communications Office will establish a strategic communications plan which is based on a series of periodic surveys aimed at understanding how the University is perceived within Saskatchewan, Western Canada and nationally. This work will be geared to support college/unit efforts which are already in place and it will help to position the University within Canada’s higher education landscape.

Conclusion
The areas of priority described above represent a reasonable, measured approach building on the lessons learned through SPR and other recent review processes at our University and exemplary practices elsewhere. While they represent a substantial institutional assessment commitment, they do not exhaust all assessment possibilities. For example, Deans or administrative unit heads might commission reviews of programs, services, or units reporting to them, or access workplace assessments provided by the Human Resources Division. University Council might identify other aspects of University activity which would warrant in-depth scrutiny, such as interdisciplinary programs, honours programs or ‘first year experience’ initiatives for students. By starting with those areas that provide the greatest impact and utilize existing University-level resources most effectively a comprehensive assessment strategy will be initiated. This strategy should fulfill the expectations outlined in the Strategic Directions, in the First Integrated Plan and in the Second Integrated Plan, but it will undoubtedly evolve based on our collective experience.

Implementation: Who is Responsible for What, by When?
Learning from the SPR process and using it as a base allows the University to meet the assessment challenge by being selective in its approach and less time and resource intensive in aggregate. Care must still be taken to avoid poor investments. Put another way, the University cannot afford to over tax its faculty and staff by failing to coordinate planning and assessment activities as much as possible. Scarce resources must be preserved for the work of actually delivering a high quality educational experience and conducting research, scholarly and artistic work; outreach; and operational excellence.

This paper should make it clear that responsibility for assessment is widespread within the University; no one unit can or will be assigned responsibility to implement this process. Further, oversight of progress towards collective goals is shared between the governing bodies of the University. The Board of Governors, University Council and Senate all have an interest in the University’s progress,
in the quality of its programs and services, in the efficiency of its use of resources, in its reputation. The Board has signaled an active and ongoing interest in quality assurance and in understanding institutional progress against national competitors. University Council has an intense interest in the quality of the academic programs and can provide advice about the use of institutional resources. At a minimum, all three governing bodies will require regular reports on progress. In some cases, described earlier in this paper, Council will play a significant role in the identification of programs for review and in the interpretation of results.

Given the diversity of assessment initiatives identified, responsibility for implementation needs to be assigned (see Table One below). Administratively, the IPO is uniquely positioned to link University-level assessment initiatives with institutional planning and decision-making and it will be assigned the tasks of high-level analysis to inform University-level planning and coordination. In addition, the

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<tr>
<th>TABLE ONE: Overview of University-level Assessment Initiatives</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment Category</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ACADEMIC</strong></td>
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<td>Graduate Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Curriculum Reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding the Student Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Accomplishment and Success</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OPERATIONAL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress towards University-level Goals and Plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit reviews for Enhanced Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selective Reviews of Academic and Administrative Units</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>REPUTATIONAL</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Communications Plan</td>
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</table>

* New graduate programs will only be reviewed following completion of a sufficient cohort of students.
** Undergraduate programs which are subject to external accreditation by professional bodies will normally not be subject to a University-sponsored curriculum review (the accreditation review will be determined to be 'in lieu of'). If the Provost’s Committee or the President determines that a University-sponsored review should be undertaken, the cycle of accreditation will be taken into account in establishing dates for a University-sponsored review to occur.

NOTE: The Integrated Planning Office (IPO) will coordinate efforts under each assessment category by maintaining and publishing an annual schedule of assessment initiatives, will consult broadly with units or programs which may be subject to review, and will support a limited number of assessment activities at the request of the Provost’s Committee on Integrated Planning (PCIP).
IPO will be asked to develop standards for assessment initiatives associated with planning and quality assurance, maintain an inventory of reviews/assessments, integrate and communicate outcomes to ensure better decision-making at all levels. It will also be asked to provide advice to colleges and units wishing to conduct an assessment initiative and be a referral point for other types of assessment which might be brought to bear on specific issues (financial, human). It will also be expected to provide analysis of the information provided through the various assessment processes and to make regular reports with aggregated interpretations/conclusions about the results available to the general University community.

It is important to underscore the responsibility of both the Board of Governors and the University Council in oversight of institutional progress towards collective goals.

Table One (above) provides a high-level overview of the implementation plan for University-level assessment initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan.

Table Two (below) provides a rough guide about when to expect University-level assessment initiatives to unfold now that the Second Integrated Plan has been approved and implementation has begun.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE TWO: Proposed Implementation Schedule</th>
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<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Submission for approval to University Council and Board of Governors by October, 2008.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establishment of assessment function within the Integrated Planning Office (Fall 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Participation in University-level surveys and communication of results</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Development, finalization, and approval of Graduate Program Review process, template, standards, and schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Development of University-level performance indicators and benchmarks to assess progress against the Strategic Directions, the Foundational Documents, and the Integrated Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Development of standards for academic and administrative unit reviews for quality assurance including research centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Final Progress Report on First Integrated Plan and First Planning Cycle</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Selected unit and program reviews (as identified by President and/or Provost)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Graduate Program Review begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development of standards for academic and administrative unit reviews for enhanced planning for all units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development of template for optional undergraduate curriculum review(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participation in University-level surveys and communication of results continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other assessment activities continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Formative academic unit and academic support unit reviews begin in advance of Third Planning Cycle</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Participation in University-level surveys and communication of results continues</td>
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<td>• Other assessment activities continue</td>
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**Conclusion and Next Steps**

The assessment initiatives described above represent a substantial commitment of University of Saskatchewan resources toward an effort which may seem to some observers as somewhat tangential to the core mandate of the institution. It is true that to do assessment well will mean that scarce resources have to be allocated to support assessment initiatives. Many of the initial resources that are needed are already in place or can be reallocated from existing central resources to support assessment. However, a modest level of new resources (less than $200,000) will be required to support Graduate Program Review, University-level surveys, and academic and administrative unit reviews (although these will be cost-shared).
It is important to note, however, that costs associated with doing assessment pale in comparison to the costs of not doing assessment at all. The strategy proposed in this paper is a selective one, focusing on University–wide priorities and goals and linking assessment to resource allocation processes. This approach should give good value for the investment because the outcomes will shape the future of the University. While assessment is a broad topic, our assessment program does not need to be so broad that it is all consuming; it does, however, need to exist and it needs to measure those activities that matter most to us. We cannot afford to do anything less.

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Attachment One: *The Assessment Context at the University of Saskatchewan and Beyond*
Attachment Two: *A Selected List of Major Surveys Conducted at the University of Saskatchewan: 1994 – 2007*
Attachment Three: *A Selected List of Unit Reviews Conducted at the University of Saskatchewan: 1994 – 2006*