

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL  
**PLANNING AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE**  
**REPORT FOR INFORMATION**

---

**PRESENTED BY:** Lisa Kalynchuk, chair, planning and priorities committee

**DATE OF MEETING:** April 16, 2015

**SUBJECT:** **Institutional Priorities**

**COUNCIL ACTION:** For information only

**PURPOSE:**

This report is submitted to update Council on the planning and priorities committee continuing discussion regarding the institutional priorities identified by senior leadership in September 2014. The planning and priorities committee last reported to Council in December 2014 on the institutional priorities. At that time, the committee committed to continue to inform Council about its ongoing discussion with priority leaders and about any broader themes that emerge during the course of these discussions.

**BACKGROUND**

On November 12, 2014, the planning and priorities committee invited the chair and vice-chair of Council and the Council committee chairs to join the committee for an initial discussion of the eight institutional priorities. The conversation focused on what the institutional priorities mean for the university, the timelines that relate to their advancement, and how progress will be measured against the implementation plans.

At that time, relative to its mandate and terms of reference, the planning and priorities committee identified three main themes with related questions that apply to the institutional priority areas, as follows:

1. *Low enrolment programs:* When does it make sense to continue to offer low enrolment programs even if these programs do not generate enough resources to sustain themselves?
2. *Prioritization of strategic areas:* Given that prioritization is necessary, how can balance be achieved between a focus on areas of strategic importance versus other areas of activity that are important but do not fall within the defined strategic areas?
3. *Shared services and support for faculty members teaching and research:* How can

the shared services approach to the provision of support services deliver the support that faculty members have identified they need to achieve their teaching and research mandates?

An enrolment subcommittee comprised of members from the planning and priorities committee and academic programs committee was subsequently created to examine the various factors affecting low enrolment programs. The subcommittee has developed terms of reference for its work based on the general goal of revising the existing policy on low enrolment programs, which was approved by Council in 2007. These terms of reference are attached to this report. A report from the subcommittee will be presented to Council in June 2015, or as soon as possible thereafter, depending on how quickly the subcommittee can complete its work.

## **DISCUSSION SUMMARY**

On February 25, 2015, the planning and priorities committee had a second meeting focused on the institutional priorities. As with the previous meeting, the Council chair, vice-chair, and Council committee chairs were invited to join the meeting. The meeting focused on four priority areas that had not yet been discussed by the committee: the reorganization of teaching and learning structures, inter-professional health education and inter-disciplinary health research, inter-disciplinary and cross college academic programming, and advancing Aboriginal achievement. The named leader of each of these four priority areas was invited to the meeting to inform the committee about progress within the priority area and to receive feedback from the committee on this progress.

Each priority area is addressed separately below.

### *# 6 Complete the re-organization and revitalization of centrally organized teaching and learning activities and functions*

Patti McDougall spoke to the committee about progress within this priority. The goal of the steering committee and transition groups involved with the restructuring has been to reorganize centrally organized teaching and learning structures with the overall goal of enhancing student services. The reorganization involves the University Learning Centre, the Centre for Discovery of Learning, Educational Media Access and Production (eMAP), the University of Saskatchewan Language Centre (USLC), the Distance Education, Off-Campus and Certificate (DOC), and Professional Development Community Engagement (PDCE). **Reorganization of these entities will largely be complete by May 1, 2015, at which time the planning and priorities committee will report to Council with specific details.**

### *#1 Accelerate the delivery on our commitment to Aboriginal achievement*

Joan Greyeyes and Candace Wasacase-Lafferty spoke to the committee about progress in this area. In support of this institutional priority, two campus-wide workshops were held

in November 2014. The workshops were well attended and led to the identification of action items, teams and internal leads.

A wide array of initiatives related to this priority area exists. There are numerous examples of engagement, including consultation with tribal band leaders to find out what the university can do to improve the quality of life in Aboriginal communities, the development of an executive leadership series, the revitalization of Indigenous languages, and the integration of Aboriginal symbols within the university. English River serves as a broker between communities, a sharer of information, and provides opportunities to partner with the university. The recruitment of Aboriginal faculty and staff members is a priority, but largely occurs at an *ad hoc* level. The committee identified the need for the development of an institutional framework for Aboriginal recruitment.

Although there is much activity in this area, the vast majority of activity occurs in pockets throughout campus. Focused, daily attention at a leadership level is required to advance this priority area. **In order to elevate these activities to an institutional level, the planning and priorities committee supports further discussion by senior administration about the creation of a vice-provost Aboriginal affairs or similar position at the senior level.**

#3 *Deliver on the promise of inter-professional health education and inter-disciplinary health research*

Karen Chad spoke to the committee about progress within this priority area. There are two primary outcomes associated with this priority. The first of these is to develop a renewed governance model for the Council of Health Sciences Deans, and the second is to develop a blueprint for action to deliver on the promise of inter-professional health education and inter-disciplinary health research over the next five to ten years.

A review of the Council of Health Sciences Deans (CHSD) has occurred, with the goal of enabling the CHSD to focus on its strategic mission. Since its establishment in 2009, the completion and operation of the Academic Health Science Complex has occupied the Council. A new governance model of the CHSD will be announced in the near future. The committee was informed that the current plan is to create new positions to help the CHSD achieve its mandate. These positions include an Executive Director, and three additional positions with responsibilities related to inter-professional research, inter-professional education, and operations. The terms of reference for these positions are under discussion. **The planning and priorities committee was supportive of these changes, and encourages the CHSD to move forward as quickly as possible. The committee also felt that the objectives for the blueprint for action should focus on substantive, measurable outcomes, with clear timelines for delivery.**

*#7 Focus on the creation of inter-disciplinary and cross college academic programming*

Toddi Steelman spoke to the committee about this priority area. Presently, this priority is focused on interdisciplinary programs in three areas: environmental studies; economics, policy and applied business programs; and food and nutrition. No changes are planned to the food and nutrition programs, as these programmatic areas have indicated they wish to remain as presently structured. The planning and priorities committee has reviewed a notice of intent for a cross-college Ph.D. in Applied Economics; however, a commitment of faculty teaching resources is required to advance the proposal. Long-term, an undergraduate degree in Applied Economics is a possibility.

The focus to date has been on undergraduate environmental programs utilizing a grassroots approach of discussion among faculty teaching in these programs. A request will be made to PCIP to hire an ASPA-level environmental services program coordinator to provide clarity regarding the various program offerings, to develop a single web site as a point of entry for all environmental programs, to facilitate networking among programs, to work with the university's Office of Sustainability, to organize learning communities, and to develop a common capstone course and symposium to bring together students from across all eight of the university's environmental programs.

Longer term goals are how to better integrate the university's environmental programs. Committee discussion of this priority centered on the securing of resources for interdisciplinary programs, formal recognition of interdisciplinary work in faculty members' assignment of duties, the effect of TABBS, and sharing of resources of cross-college interdisciplinary programs. The planning and priorities committee supports further and continued discussion of these broader goals. The current focus on environmental programs provides a good test case for solving some of these issues.

**Addressing the fundamental issues of how interdisciplinary programs should be resourced, including teaching assignments across colleges and sharing credit and resources across units is critical to advancing this priority area across the institution.**

**SUMMARY:**

The planning and priorities committee appreciates the time taken by the institutional priority leaders in meeting with the committee. Overall, the feedback from the committee and others was that the initiatives outlined were positive, but there was also some disappointment that more tangible progress had not been made in advancing these priorities, with the exception of the reorganization of teaching and learning structures, which will soon be completed. However, it is equally important to realize that the institutional priority areas were identified and goals for each area defined on the basis of ensuring that some progress was made this year, and not on the expectation that each priority would be completed this year. The committee recognizes that it is more important to take the time necessary to complete each priority area in the proper way, rather than moving quickly to implement sub-optimal changes.

The committee is required by its mandate to consider more broadly the larger goals associated with each priority area from a strategic viewpoint. It is this perspective which forms the basis for the committee comments (bolded) on each area above. The committee acknowledges the progress made to date and encourages priority leaders and administration to continue to seek avenues and means to advance each priority area and to set out goals whose achievement will strengthen the institution.

This report focuses on four of the eight institutional priority areas discussed by the committee. As the planning and priorities committee continues to consider the institutional priority areas, future reports to Council will focus on the other four priority areas:

- #2 *Continue the restructuring of the College of Medicine*
- #4 *Advance the reorganization and strengthening of graduate studies and support for graduate students*
- #5 *Continue the capital project for the transformation of our library collections, facilities, capital and services*
- #8 *Align our administrative services culture to support and facilitate our academic missions*

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Enrolment subcommittee terms of references and membership

## **Enrolment Subcommittee – Purpose and Terms of Reference**

The Enrolment Subcommittee is a joint effort of the Planning and Priorities Committee and Academic Programs Committee of University Council. The subcommittee is supported by the Institutional Planning and Assessment (IPA) office, with administrative support provided by the University Secretary's Office.

The Enrolment Subcommittee was constituted in March 2015 to review the current enrolment policy document and make recommendations about low-enrolment programs. In 2013, the TransformUS academic programs prioritization report identified low enrolment programs as an area for further scrutiny. Since that time, the university has undergone a shift in the way resources are allocated to colleges and units. This shift includes envelope funding and the adoption of a responsibility centre management (RCM) budgeting system. This will likely impact the perception and management of small academic programs in the future.

The current [viable enrolments policy](#) was developed and passed by University Council in 2007. The Enrolment Subcommittee will use that policy document as the basis for its discussions, and it will present an updated version of this document to University Council at the conclusion of its work.

As part of its work, the subcommittee will:

1. Review the “Issues and Criteria when Considering Viable Enrolments at the University of Saskatchewan” document approved by University Council in 2007;
2. Survey enrolment and graduation information provided by IPA to decide on appropriate metrics for defining low-enrolment programs;
3. Develop principles and a process for reviewing low-enrolment programs that can be used by deans and department heads as tools to gauge the value of these programs;
4. Identify broad issues for further conversations, such as service teaching and the efficient delivery of programs within units;
5. Distinguish between graduate- and undergraduate-level programs;
6. Consider a streamlined process for the omnibus removal of programs that are currently moribund;
7. Examine how low-enrolment programs are considered and managed at a number of other post-secondary institutions;
8. Make recommendations to the Planning and Priorities Committee, the Academic Programs Committee, and other Council committees as relevant and to University Council about the consideration and management of low-enrolment programs and courses.

### **Subcommittee membership:**

Lisa Kalynchuk, chair, Planning and Priorities Committee (PPC)

Leslie Walter, PPC

Desirée Steele, PPC

Sina Adl, Academic Programs Committee (APC)

Kevin Flynn, APC

Patti McDougall, APC

John Rigby, resource member, PPC

Troy Harkot, resource member, PPC

Sandra Calver, secretary, PPC