

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
RESEARCH, SCHOLARLY, AND ARTISTIC WORK COMMITTEE
FOR INFORMATION ONLY

PRESENTED BY: Carol Rodgers, Chair, Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee

DATE OF MEETING: June 17, 2010

SUBJECT: Areas of Pre-eminence '*Signature Areas*'

COUNCIL ACTION: For information only

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

The University's *Second Integrated Plan* contains the commitment "to identify a select and definitive set of existing areas of exceptional research and scholarship and promote these widely." The commitment follows upon the earlier investment in identifying areas of strength and promise through the *Extending Horizons* 'research landscape' document: Building upon the knowledge of the University's collective research and scholarly activity as described in the 'research landscape' document, the *Areas of Pre-eminence Commitment* committed to identifying those areas of research and scholarship that have achieved pre-eminence regionally, nationally, or internationally, or are on the cusp of doing so.

Under the direction of President MacKinnon, Executive Sponsor and VP Research and commitment leader Karen Chad, and the members of the Areas of Pre-Eminence Commitment Working Group [Jim Basinger, Beth Horsburgh, Jim Miller, Bill Thomlinson, Andrew Van Kessel, Kathryn Warden, Peggy Schmeiser, and Janet Wagner] work towards realizing the commitment has proceeded over the course of the year.

CONSULTATION:

Following an environmental scan of other Canadian medical-doctoral universities and the development of the criteria and process to identify the signature areas, consultative workshops on the potential areas for consideration were held in the fall of 2009. Those consulted included members of Deans' Council; the Centres Forum; Canada Research Chairs Forum; Associate Deans Research; Department Heads; the Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee; the USSU/GSA Executives; and several Open Faculty Workshops. From the initial consultation process, a high degree of consensus emerged regarding the broad themes for the areas. In March 2010, all those consulted previously were invited to a workshop led by President MacKinnon and VP Chad, which sought feedback on the refinement of the theme areas.

Further details on the mandate for the commitment and process followed leading to the identification of the signature areas can be found on the Vice-President Research website at: www.usask.ca/vpresearch/workshop/

Throughout the process, members of the Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee were kept apprised of the process and progress towards identification of the areas, and reported to Council in January through the committee's mid-year report. The President further reported directly to Council on the substance and progress of the commitment at the April and May Council meetings.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY:

The commitment is founded upon the goal of bringing distinct recognition to the University of Saskatchewan and positioning it among the most distinguished universities in Canada and among the very best in the world. The signature areas are critical to advancing the University's national and international profile, recruiting top students and faculty, and accessing resources in an increasingly competitive post-secondary landscape. The areas selected have the potential for sustainable impact well beyond a single individual or unit. Through the identification and promotion of these distinct areas, the University will enhance its reputation, and thereby create new synergies and advance the institution as a whole.

The areas selected were broadly defined by their research capacity, investments, history and sense of place. Specific selection criteria included: relevance to issues of national and international priority; impact of the benefit/betterment of society; contributions to innovation; strategic significance to Canada and the world; ability to attract resources; prominent reputation; and significant collaboration and engagement. Throughout, the commitment was informed by the progress of the Institutional Positioning initiative, which seeks to define a positioning statement that will define the University as a whole.

The Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee supports the commitment to identify the University's areas of pre-eminence and the collegial process by which the commitment was realized. The areas of pre-eminence or '*signature areas*,' as they will be known, are now finalized and submitted to Council as a key outcome of the commitment in the *Second Integrated Plan to Enhance the University's Profile in Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work*.

FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED:

With the endorsement of the President, the signature areas will also be submitted to the Board of Governors. Over the coming months, the description for each signature area will be fully developed and submitted to Council in the fall. Following, the signature areas will be shared widely with external and internal stakeholders to build the profile and recognition envisioned for the University.

ATTACHMENTS:

University of Saskatchewan '*Signature Areas*'

Attachment

University of Saskatchewan ‘Signature Areas’

Aboriginal Peoples: Engagement and Scholarship

Agriculture: Food and Bioproducts for a Sustainable Future

Energy and Mineral Resources: Technology and Public Policy for a Sustainable Environment

One Health: Solutions at the Animal-Human-Environment Interface

Synchrotron Sciences: Innovation in Health, Environment and Advanced Technologies

Water Security: Stewardship of the World’s Freshwater Resources