

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
TEACHING & LEARNING COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL
REQUEST FOR DECISION

PRESENTED BY: Richard Long, Chair,
Teaching & Learning Committee of Council

DATE OF MEETING: June 17, 2010

SUBJECT: **University of Saskatchewan Learning Charter**

DECISION REQUESTED:
That Council approve the University of Saskatchewan Learning Charter.

At the May, 2010 meeting of University Council, the Teaching and Learning Committee of Council presented the University of Saskatchewan Learning Charter as a Notice of Motion.

Background to the Learning Charter

The Teaching and Learning Foundational Document, approved by Council in 2008, recommended that the university should develop a student “bill of rights” or set of “guiding principles” for effective teaching and learning. In the spring of 2009, the Teaching and Learning Committee of Council (TLCC) agreed to research the questions of whether it would be useful to develop such a document and, if so, what would be the most appropriate form of such a document. The terminology of “Learning Charter” was subsequently developed by the TLCC as a more useful terminology than “bill of rights” or “guiding principles” because it establishes the document as a partnership for learning between students, instructors, and the institution, as well as providing a unique identification for the document.

We reviewed a large number of documents on student rights and responsibilities from this university and others. We noted that the University of Saskatchewan already has approved various documents which deal with academic conduct and learning goals, but that these lack a structural framework. We agreed that the University of Saskatchewan would benefit from developing a statement about commitments and responsibilities for learning, which would act as the basis for policies, programs and services. We also noted that although individual programs have learning goals for their students, the University of Saskatchewan has had no overarching goals for student learning, nor any overarching vision for learning. We also agreed that it was important to strive to produce a succinct and clearly written document which could be distributed widely to our students, faculty,

and other staff, and that could be used in a variety of ways to enhance the student learning experience.

A subcommittee of the TLCC was struck, and worked during the summer of 2009 to develop a consultation draft of the Learning Charter. After preliminary consultations, the Learning Charter document was presented to Council at its December 2009 meeting in the form of a “Request for Input.” Since then, extensive consultations have been carried out, as detailed below, and the results of these consultations have informed further development of the Learning Charter.

At its May 6, 2010 meeting, the Teaching and Learning Committee of Council agreed to approve the Learning Charter and to recommend its approval to Council.

Content and Purpose

The University of Saskatchewan Learning Charter is grounded by the values and principles enunciated in the Teaching and Learning Foundational Document, and informed by the “Guidelines for Academic Conduct” approved by University Council in 1999. It references other key documents including the Standards for academic and non-academic conduct.

The Learning Charter defines aspirations about the learning experience that the University of Saskatchewan aims to provide for our students, and the roles to be played in realizing these aspirations by all parties in the learning partnership. The overarching goal of the Learning Charter is to optimize the learning experience of every student at the University of Saskatchewan.

The Learning Charter consists of three main parts. First, it sets out a vision for learning at the University of Saskatchewan. Second, it defines the core learning goals that the University of Saskatchewan aspires to for all of our graduates. Third, the Charter defines expectations, in terms of commitments and responsibilities, for the roles that all parties to the learning partnership—students, faculty and other instructional staff, and the broader university community—need to play in enhancing the student learning experience, and achieving the learning vision and learning goals to which we aspire.

A graphic representation of the Learning Charter components and intent has also been developed as a visual display and reference, to reinforce the concept of the learning experience as a partnership between students, instructors and the university.

Consultation

The Teaching and Learning Committee of Council has undertaken a broad consultation process for the Learning Charter draft in the period since the December Council meeting, including distribution to university offices, colleges and departments, and discussions at the Undergraduate Forum, the USSU, the Graduate Students Association, Dean’s Council, the Graduate Council Executive, the University Learning Centre, Council

Committees (Coordinating Committee, Planning and Priorities, Academic Programs, Academic Support, and Research, Scholarly, and Artistic Work), presentation at the University Senate, and numerous other groups. The Learning Charter was featured in an article in the January 22, 2010 edition of *On Campus News*, in which input was solicited. We have also received input from many individual members of the university community, including students, faculty, and others. We would like to thank all those who provided their input and suggestions, which the TLCC has found to be very useful. We have revised the Learning Charter based on the feedback we received, and believe it to be much improved as a result.

Implementation

The manner in which the University of Saskatchewan Learning Charter is implemented will dictate its level of success in enhancing the student learning experience and in achieving our learning vision and goals. Ultimately, successful implementation is up to the university community—including students, instructors, and the institution.

However, to facilitate implementation, leadership will be necessary. We believe that the focal point for this leadership should reside in the Office of the Provost, with implementation spearheaded by a senior official in that office (such as the Vice Provost of Teaching & Learning), with the active involvement and support of the Provost, as well as other senior officials of the university administration. The University Learning Centre can also play a key role in the implementation process, as well as the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union and the Graduate Students Association.

If the Learning Charter is approved by Council, the Teaching & Learning Committee of Council will support the implementation process in whatever ways it can, as well as working to achieve the ongoing success of the Charter. We see many possible ways in which the Charter might be used to affect change, and we mention just a few here.

First, the Charter itself should be used as a tool to communicate to all learning partners our learning vision, learning goals, and the commitments and responsibilities that need to be fulfilled by each learning partner if we are to fully achieve our learning vision and goals. It therefore needs to be distributed widely in a variety of media.

Second, the Learning Charter can be used as a template to guide decision making. For example, when an academic program is being initiated or reviewed, it can be compared against the core learning goals to ensure that these are being addressed in the program.

Third, the Learning Charter can be used to inform policy review, so that all existing policies relevant to teaching and learning are consistent with the Learning Charter, and to inform policy development, so that appropriate policies to support the aims of the Learning Charter are developed.

Fourth, indicators of the success of the Learning Charter in bringing about the necessary attitudes and behaviours need to be developed, so that progress towards implementation of the Learning Charter can be assessed on an ongoing basis. These indicators need to be

multi-faceted, and could include attitudinal measures, such as student and instructor satisfaction with the learning experience being provided, but also objective indicators, such as student attraction, retention, and graduation rates.

ATTACHMENTS:

[Learning Charter \(May 6, 2010\)](#) with graphic
[Learning Charter text version](#) (August, 2010)