



The University of Saskatchewan School of Environment and Sustainability Background, June 2007

What is the School of Environment and Sustainability?

The School of Environment and Sustainability is an interdisciplinary framework designed to connect teaching, research and community outreach under one programming umbrella to focus on the Saskatchewan environment and its sustainability. This transformative School and its resources will advance, profile and sustain research, graduate training and outreach on issues related the environment and sustainability.

Why create this School?

Saskatchewan may face some intense climate changes in the century ahead. A sustainable future for the province is dependent on striking a careful balance between resource use and environmental quality. This future includes a growing role for Aboriginal people in environmental decision-making and management. The establishment of the School for Environment and Sustainability provides the strong research capacity essential to the economic development and well-being of Saskatchewan people, and satisfies a growing public interest in this area.

What will the School do?

A focus on the human/environment intersections and the need to establish partnerships within and beyond the University to resolve common problems will be the driving force to shape the philosophy, research and graduate programs of the School. Four themes will surround activities of the School: (1) ecological integrity and resource use (biodiversity, toxicology, reclamation, etc.); (2) energy use and climate change; (3) links between earth system processes (hydrology, atmospheric physics, etc.); and (4) environmental ethics, justice and governance.

The School will become a major player in addressing issues such as environmental pollution, climate change, water resources, biodiversity loss, environmental impact assessment, governance for sustainability, as well as the transition from a fossil-fuel economy to a bioeconomy.

In terms of academic programming, graduate programs will include a Master of Environment (M.Env.), a Master of Applied Environmental Processes (MAEP), interdisciplinary thesis-based MA or M.Sc. degrees as well as a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

Local, national and federal partners will include Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Environment Canada, Parks Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Saskatchewan Research Council, Saskatchewan Environment, National Hydrology Research Centre, National Wildlife Research Centre, Meewasin Valley Authority, and the City of Saskatoon Roadmap 2020, to name a few. The School will also work to incorporate sustainability principles into University operations.

Who's involved and how will the School operate?

The School will function much the same as a college, and will be led by an executive director, who will report to the Provost and be a member of Dean's Council. An interdisciplinary balance will avoid heavy reliance on any one discipline and a critical mass of faculty will deliver programming. Care will be taken to ensure School activities do not jeopardize any current programs. Faculty appointments to the School can take four forms, primary joint appointments, secondary joint appointments, associates and adjuncts. Initial resources for the School will be supplied by the University's Academic Priorities Fund.

When will the School be operational?

With the approval of the School by U of S Council in June 2007, the executive sponsor, appointed by the Provost, will now choose an acting director, recommend founding faculty and oversee the selection of an executive director. The acting director, in turn, will develop programs, establish a budget, hire personnel and find space for the School. It is expected the School will offer programming in fall 2008. The School's executive sponsor, who will oversee the project, is Jim Bassinger.