



## Faculty Members in Interdisciplinary Schools

### Guidelines Prepared by the Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic

When Council approved the creation of interdisciplinary Schools at the University of Saskatchewan in June 2006, it provided conceptual guidance to those who would generate actual Schools, but it did not set out all of the details regarding how they should be created. For example, the Schools document discussed the type of academic appointments that might be made available, but it did not address the issue of how these appointments would actually be made. It acknowledged the need for leadership, but it did not stipulate who would be responsible for selecting executive directors.

We have all benefited enormously from the work that has been done in shaping the proposals that are currently being considered and in exploring who might join these Schools once they have been created. These conversations have taken us some distance toward a resolution of the staffing and resourcing challenges, but uncertainties remain.

Sketched out below are some principles that might be helpful in ensuring that Schools are positioned to achieve their goals and that the University maximizes the potential that the Schools represent. Beyond principles is process. The next section outlines a possible process to ensure that all options have been canvassed and that a core of faculty members has been assembled to do the work of the Schools over the next few years.

### Principles

1. **Interdisciplinary balance.** There are different interpretations of what constitutes interdisciplinarity, but a commitment to transcending the limitations of disciplines, while also drawing on them for grounding and inspiration, seems to be a common theme. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to create an interdisciplinary School relying too heavily on a single discipline. Interdisciplinary Schools will be defined in large part by the societal challenge that they address and the research programs that emerge as a result. These will be among the unifying elements with which all members of the School should feel comfortable. Beyond that Schools should contain a rich array of conceptual frameworks, analytical tools and working assumptions. There is no need for strict parity or rigid rules; Schools will naturally draw more heavily on some disciplines than others. It is important that members of Schools demonstrate respect for different scholarly traditions, that founding disciplines be broadly representative,

- and that where disciplinary unevenness occurs it be modest and justified in curricular and academic terms.
2. **Critical Mass.** Each School requires a critical mass of faculty sufficient to deliver the programs and build the School's reputation in the community. It may be possible, and desirable, to rely initially on joint appointments in which a founding group of faculty build the School without necessarily committing to a permanent association. This would ensure a minimal impact on existing programs and a breadth of experience, especially during the early, critical period. Beyond this initial period, however, a strong core of faculty will eventually be required to devote most of their academic energies to the success of the Schools. Each School proposal contains some suggestions regarding the size of this initial group and the phase in of new, permanent appointees. Suffice to say that representation should be wide, that not all founding members need to hold "primary" positions in the Schools, and that the eventual permanent allocation of positions can be determined once programs are launched and demand is assessed.
  3. **Building on Strength.** It is important that the founding members, and those who are recruited to each School, have strong scholarly and research records. This typically entails the development of a research program that complements the mandate of the School and connects to existing strengths elsewhere within the university. The selection of an Executive Director and the recruitment of new faculty will be largely in the hands of the School's founding members. Schools will need names on their masthead that can provide immediate credibility in the broader academic community.
  4. **Community Contact.** The 2006 Schools document describes Schools as "a natural bridge" between the academy and the community and a "comprehensive entry point" for governments, NGOs, community groups and industry. While specific forms of service are not stipulated, members of the School must be willing to accept assignments on community boards and committees and be involved in other ways in projecting the work of the School beyond the boundaries of the University. Engaging students in community based projects should also be an important element in a School's programming. This is not simply "volunteer" work, but rather an important commitment by the University to outreach and engagement and to broadening our support base.
  5. **Curriculum Contribution.** We seek individuals who wish to work with others across a range of disciplinary backgrounds and scholarly traditions to build research and graduate programs. Members of the School will be expected to participate in developing new graduate programs and delivering interdisciplinary courses. Core curriculum responsibilities should presumably be discharged by those who are making a substantial commitment to the Schools and those who wish appointment in the Schools should be prepared to teach courses, set standards for graduate student admissions, serve on supervisory committees, and participate in recruitment, tenure and promotion deliberations.

6. **Undergraduate Teaching.** The Schools document anticipates that those appointed to Schools, including those whose primary or sole appointment is in a School, will teach at the undergraduate level elsewhere in the University. These teaching assignments need not be onerous or limited to undergraduate teaching, but there should be an active effort to connect the School with existing undergraduate programs, partly for purposes of recruitment, partly to insure equitable workloads, and partly to acknowledge the central mission of teaching and learning that all faculty assume when they join the University. Current versions of the School proposals recognize this obligation.
7. **Optimization of University Resources.** Interdisciplinary Schools afford us an opportunity to make better use of existing faculty by putting them in new environments and new teaching programs. Care should be taken, of course, to ensure that redeployment of faculty, even over the short term, does not jeopardize current programming. At the same time, our overall involvement in graduate work is well below the national average for medical doctoral institutions. To be at the national average with our current faculty complement we would need 1000 more graduate students. Redeployment of faculty to achieve these goals is a reasonable response as long as current graduate programs are not jeopardized.
8. **Reciprocity.** The leadership and membership of Schools will seek to establish and maintain mutually supportive relationships with cognate Colleges and Departments. Barriers to students who wish to take courses in the Schools or Colleges will be reduced as much as possible to ensure a strong exchange of talent and perspectives. Faculty will be encouraged to maintain linkages in research and outreach activities with Colleges and Departments and where appropriate joint course offerings will be encouraged. The Schools mandate will be to grow graduate studies at the University, not to simply deflect graduate work from one entity to another.

## Process

Both the Provost's Committee on Integrated Planning (PCIP) and the Planning and Budget Committees of Council are committed to ensuring that interdisciplinary Schools are launched with adequate resources. That means that Schools will require sufficient resources to achieve their programmatic goals, but not an overabundance of resources such that indefensible inequities or inefficiencies occur. PCIP has set aside some ongoing resources to assist in launching the Schools. However, PCIP remains committed to the original premise that while some of these resources will be supplied from the Academic Priorities Fund, there must also be buy-in from faculty members and Deans, and that buy-in must take the form of tangible commitments.

Although all of the current School proposals have provided projections of faculty requirements, it is not advisable to establish resourcing levels too firmly in advance of programs and their operation. PCIP is deliberating on the budgets of the three Schools that are currently proposed and will shortly make commitments that will allow for staff,

faculty and space to be assembled. Resources from the Colleges need to be in place as well, at least for the early years of the School's development.

The following process is suggested as a means of accomplishing these goals:

1. **Leadership.** Upon approval of a School by Council, the Provost will identify an Executive Sponsor who will be responsible for: i) choosing an Acting Director; ii) recommending a founding faculty; and, iii) overseeing the process for selecting an Executive Director. The Acting Director will: i) develop the academic programs; ii) establish a precise budget; iii) hire personnel; iv) secure and allocate space; and v) make such other operational arrangements as are necessary to bring the School into existence.
2. **Accountability.** The assembling of a faculty for the Schools will require discussion with the Deans of affected Colleges and then with PCIP and the Planning Committee of Council. Care will be taken to explain the rationale for suggested membership and the alternatives considered.
3. **Founding Members: Canvassing.** The Executive Sponsor, with the assistance of the Acting Director, will canvass those who may be eligible for, or be interested in, engagement in the School, whether or not they have been involved in creating School proposals. Deans and Department Heads will be asked to provide advice on appropriate individuals and methods of soliciting interest. An expression of interest is not a guarantee of inclusion, and the principled considerations outlined above should be used to make determinations. These decisions should be aided by the new provisions of the Collective Agreement. The following types of appointments are possible:
  - *Standard appointments.* Faculty are appointed full time to the School where they will hold tenure. No other appointments are made, but these appointees are obliged to undertake teaching assignments outside of the Department as outlined in #6 above. Those appointed in this category will be urged to establish Associate memberships in Colleges and Departments.
  - *Joint appointments: primary.* Faculty have joint appointments in the School and in another Department or College. Most of the commitments for teaching, service and research (notionally  $\geq 70\%$ ) are discharged within the School; the remainder within the Department/College. Collegial processes are constructed in the School but input is received from the Department/College.
  - *Joint appointments: secondary.* Faculty have joint appointments in the School and an existing Department or College. A substantial commitment to teaching, service, and research is discharged within the Department/College; the remainder is devoted to the School. Collegial processes are managed within the Department/College, with input from the School.

- *Associates*: Faculty elect to be included in the academic programming of the School and are invited to assist in limited functions. No formal involvement is expected beyond what is volunteered.
4. **Founding Members: Decisions.** With the advice of Deans and other appropriate individuals, Executive Sponsors will propose a set of founding members and will recommend the nature of their appointments to the School. Executive Sponsors should consider the advisability of three-year joint appointments to carry the Schools through their initial stages. All appointments will be approved by the Vice-Provost and appropriate adjustments made to their appointment status. Subsequent appointments will be for a five-year duration and will be renewable upon review by the Executive Director and the Vice-Provost.
  5. **Timing.** The founding members of the School should be identified well in advance of program delivery, ideally by the early fall of 2007 and in any event not later than nine months prior to the admission of students.
  6. **Evaluation.** It is essential that the work of interdisciplinary schools be monitored and evaluated to ensure that such entities continue to serve as vehicles for innovative activity in priority areas. They would, of course, be subject to the normal program or unit review processes which are part of the University system of evaluation and quality control. In the case of schools, there should also be mechanisms in place for addressing the broader question of whether a particular school continues to be an effective means of fostering and promoting programs or whether it should be eliminated or reconfigured.