



## The Teaching and Learning Foundational Document

*December 15, 2008*

### ***I. Executive Summary***

Teaching and learning are central to what universities do as institutions of higher learning. At the University of Saskatchewan, this critical mission has been taken seriously. From its inception in 1907, the University of Saskatchewan has assisted thousands of students to meet their educational and vocational goals by offering one of the broadest arrays of degree level programs in Canada. Underlying the breadth of program offerings is the talent, expertise, skill and devotion of the University's faculty and instructional staff<sup>1</sup> who help students learn and inspire them to exceed their own expectations, who advance the frontiers of knowledge through their research, scholarly and artistic activities and who engage students and society by sharing their expertise beyond the University itself. Over the years, the University of Saskatchewan has built a strong reputation for high quality undergraduate and graduate teaching programs. Our students perform exceptionally well on national examinations, national and international competitions, and are in high demand in both graduate and professional programs.

Much of the teaching and learning direction has been left up to individual faculty and instructional staff, to departments, to colleges, and to academic support units. This decentralized approach has served us extraordinarily well over the past decades, but needs to be examined in light of approaches at other universities and student learning needs and goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This Foundational Document has sparked a University-wide conversation about the motivations, guiding principles, issues, and initiatives which should be undertaken to support the University's critical teaching and learning mission. It is anticipated to lead to an action plan and the development of new initiatives that will demonstrate our University's continued commitment to teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Originally conceptualized as part of the Enrolment Plan (approved by University Council in 2003), this Foundational Document has moved beyond student numbers and composition to address the critical and complex questions of teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This Foundational Document must be read in conjunction with others which have gone before it – the Aboriginal, International, Research, Outreach and Engagement Foundational Documents and the Enrolment plan which directly address aspects of the teaching and learning environment. Together, these documents provide a comprehensive overview of the factors affecting the University's teaching and learning environment.

This Foundational Document begins by describing the perspectives of students and faculty on teaching and learning at the University of Saskatchewan. Student perspectives are informed by responses to major surveys between 2000 and 2007, focus groups conducted between January and May 2006, and the Student Retention Study completed in 2006. Faculty perspectives are provided through discussions sponsored by the Provost and held between January and June 2006. Both

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<sup>1</sup> In this Foundational Document, the terms faculty and instructional staff are intended to include and highlight the important contribution made by sessional lecturers, teaching assistants, and laboratory instructors to the learning experience of University of Saskatchewan students.

perspectives suggest alternative approaches to teaching and learning but also point towards common ground. Informed by trends and exemplary practices in teaching and learning in higher education in other jurisdictions, these perspectives provide opportunities to make the University of Saskatchewan teaching and learning experience an even more exceptional one through the deliberate planning and implementation of strategies to support common goals.

At the heart of the Integrated Planning Initiative is the development of key planning documents – Foundational Documents – which signal institutional direction and commitment on key planning dimensions. In the case of our teaching and learning efforts, we need to consider whether what we are currently doing is appropriate for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. This Foundational Document suggests a number of critical questions which should be addressed through the University’s planning process and which should be used as the basis to inform college, department and administrative unit plans. Some of the critical questions are:

- To what extent should the University rely on or increase its commitment to e-learning?
- What practical, hands on, learning opportunities should be provided to students?
- What should be the primary characteristics of a University of Saskatchewan educational experience?
- What educational values does the University of Saskatchewan aspire to and how should its educational programs demonstrate them?
- What new strategies and approaches should be adopted to support these goals?
- What organizational structures, both leadership and support, need to be created to support teaching and learning and promote and celebrate new approaches and innovations and excellence in teaching?
- Do we want to be exemplary and/or pre-eminent in teaching and learning or just ‘good enough’?

These are questions which go beyond one planning cycle or even one decade. They will all require concerted institutional effort to be adequately addressed.

This Foundational Document has been drafted as the *Second Integrated Plan* was developed and approved by University Council and the Board of Governors (May 2008). Its impact is already significant: the *Second Integrated Plan* identifies ‘improve the undergraduate and graduate experience, both inside and outside the classroom’ as one of three priorities for the University’s second planning cycle. Institutional attention will therefore be focused on achieving the commitments in the *Second Integrated Plan*<sup>2</sup> over the next four years. It is expected that initiatives which will support the broad general goals of this Foundational Document will be presented for approval by the various University governing bodies as well as implementation in the colleges and academic support units in the next four years and beyond.

Foundational Documents are, however, intended to guide institutional activity for a decade or longer. This Foundational Document is no exception. The ideas presented in the pages which follow represent a substantial challenge to the University. While immediate action can be anticipated as initiatives supporting the commitments in the *Second Integrated Plan* are developed, continued

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<sup>2</sup> The six commitments associated with the priority area ‘improve the undergraduate and graduate experience, both inside and outside the classroom’ are: the teacher-learner experience; innovation in programs (including engagement of students in research and discovery, engagement of students in community-based learning in Saskatchewan and Canada, and engagement of students in international and global learning); a diverse body of students; retention strategies and initiatives; Aboriginal engagement; and the campus environment for students.

dialogue and action on many of the areas for improvement will need to occur over the coming decade and beyond. Specifically, the areas for improvement identified in Section VI of this Foundational Document and further described therein are:

1. develop core skills in students
2. curriculum development (program and course design)
3. focus on transition to university life and on the first year experience of students
4. explore alternative approaches to deliver programs and to support lifelong learning goals
5. establish mechanisms to support our commitment to teaching and learning
6. engage students in consultation about their experience

This Foundational Document asserts that the University of Saskatchewan is doing a good job of teaching and learning, but that improvements can and should be made. It opens a critical dialogue within the academic community about the nature of the teaching and learning experience for the next decade and beyond since decisions today will have lasting implications for future students, faculty and instructional staff. We must ask ourselves whether our efforts meet today's standards, and more importantly whether they will stand the test of time.

## ***II. Preface: Student and Faculty Voices***

"I feel that the University of Saskatchewan has provided me with an excellent educational experience. The learning environment is very productive and I feel that my degree has a high standing in the 'real world'." *Senior year student (NSSE)*<sup>3</sup>

"This is my very first term of University and it is everything that I thought it would be." *First year student (NSSE)*

"So far I have had mostly very positive experiences at university. The transition from high school has been made relatively easy by helpful teachers and an effectively implemented system for the University to communicate with students (i.e. PAWS)." *First year student (NSSE)*

"Overall I'm vaguely disappointed with my university experience right now. The residence life isn't all it's cracked up to be, students are rude for the most part and obsessed with drinking and just getting through with a degree so they'll make a huge salary at the end...the class sizes are huge, making each class very impersonal unless I make specific efforts to make it not so. It's an expensive review of high school for the first year, and I don't agree with that. Yes, there are programs and support offered, but they're hidden away, and often the times available conflict with my schedule." *First year student (NSSE)*

"A positive educational experience is being with a professor who is passionate about their topic rather than just 'teaching'. If the instructor finds something exciting about the topic, the student will too." *Student focus group participant*

"Having a doctorate and knowing how to teach are not synonymous ... having a PhD means you are a good student." *Student focus group participant*

"Good teaching is not rewarded. It is assumed and expected whereas research activity is rewarded from the moment a faculty member arrives, through [grants], physical space, supports, and publication. Further, research recognition is cumulative not episodic." *Faculty member, Spring 2006 discussion meeting on teaching and learning*

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<sup>3</sup> National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) 2006.

“A teacher needs students. However, to learn, a student does not necessarily need a teacher. This suggests that students are more important to teachers than are teachers to students. Teaching is about students who learn, not teachers who perform.” *University of Saskatchewan Master Teacher Award recipient*

“The message needs to be not ‘teaching versus research’, one against the other, but ‘teaching and research’. Both are part of a connected, whole, process. The divide is a false one. Teaching is not separate from research. Teaching has to be informed by scholarly inquiry. Teaching and research should both be valued as equal. The University must take it for granted that faculty will do research, but they are not expert teachers. They need help to teach.” *University of Saskatchewan Master Teacher Award recipient*

“Teaching isn’t filling a bucket, it’s lighting a fire.” *University of Saskatchewan Master Teacher Award recipient* (original references to W.B Yeats and Mark Twain, among others)

### ***III. Introduction***

Since its inception in 1907, the University of Saskatchewan has assisted thousands of students to meet their educational and vocational goals by offering one of the broadest arrays of degree level programs in Canada. Underlying the breadth of program offerings is the talent, expertise, skill, and devotion of the University’s faculty and instructional staff who help students learn and inspire them to exceed their own expectations, who advance the frontiers of knowledge through their research, scholarly and artistic activities, and who engage students and society by sharing their expertise beyond the University itself. As the Systematic Program Review (SPR) process revealed, our faculty and instructional staff demonstrate a high degree of commitment to teaching, to students, to academic excellence, and to sustained delivery of high quality programs. In turn, our students perform well on national examinations, national and international competitions, and are in demand in both graduate and professional programs. Our graduate students are similarly highly valued and well trained, many going on to accomplished academic, professional, educational or other careers in a wide variety of fields in Canada and internationally.

This is not surprising. Teaching and learning is central to what universities do as institutions of higher learning and, at the University of Saskatchewan, we have taken this critical mission seriously. The University has built for itself a strong and well-deserved reputation for many of its undergraduate and graduate teaching programs. Yet, much of the teaching and learning direction is left up to individual faculty and instructional staff, to departments, to colleges, and to service units. This generalized approach has served us well over the past decades, but there are reasons we should not be complacent.

Some pressures for change are external. In an era of increased competition among universities for the best faculty and students, where differentiation among universities boils down to innovative programs and experiences for students, where population shifts and demographics are becoming increasingly important, and where reliance on technology is increasing and access to information is virtual, the situation has changed. There is a need to engage the University of Saskatchewan community in a dialogue about the teaching and learning experience that the University should strive to provide. We need to be informed about leading edge practices at other universities and we need to adjust our practices and approaches to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, primarily from Saskatchewan, but increasingly from other parts of Canada and from other countries.

Arguably the most important reason for us to renew our commitment to teaching and learning is internal. Simply put, we *care* about excellence in instruction and in student outcomes. We want our students to be exceptionally well-prepared for their roles as citizens and members of society. There is always room for improvement in this regard. It may indeed be that the world today, precisely because

of its complexities and uncertainties, requires more from universities of the things they have always promised: the skills and knowledge for people to be productive, capable, and self-conscious citizens. Derek Bok expressed the dilemma particularly well in his 2006 book *Our Underachieving Colleges*<sup>4</sup>: while students are largely satisfied with the education they are getting (a finding that applies to the University of Saskatchewan, as we shall see), their education nevertheless falls short of the loftiest goals of ensuring students are equipped for critical thinking, reasoning on ethical and moral issues, quantitative reasoning, knowledge of other languages and cultures, and so on. From a Canadian perspective, George Fallis has written in 2007<sup>5</sup> that one of the highest functions of a university is to nurture and sustain democratic life. Are we satisfied that the learning environment at the University of Saskatchewan does everything it can and should do towards such overarching educational goals?

This is not to suggest or imply that teaching and learning discussions are not taking place at the University of Saskatchewan nor that all of our teaching methods and approaches are outdated. Within departments and colleges discussions about the nature of the curriculum and the pedagogy that should be employed are connected to program revisions or accreditation visits. Efforts to integrate new technologies and approaches into teaching and learning continue to grow, both for on-campus teaching and for distance learning.<sup>6</sup> Faculty and instructional staff have accessed programs and services sponsored by the University Learning Centre (ULC) or the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness (GMCTE) or programs sponsored by individual colleges (such as Medicine and Engineering) specifically to improve their individual teaching skills or to learn about a particular technique or approach. Student and Enrolment Services Division (SESD) has responded to recent studies and surveys that have highlighted areas of necessary adjustment such as student retention and student health and wellness. The Provost has recently created an Undergraduate Forum aimed at bringing together administrators and students to ensure that urgent and pressing matters are identified and addressed in a timely fashion.

What is strikingly absent in all of these efforts is the existence of an institutional policy or perspective on the nature of the educational experience we want all of our students to have had when they leave the University of Saskatchewan and the types of programs and supports that we need to put into place to ensure that they are successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. One part of the equation is the continual necessity, more urgent now than ever before, for effective innovation within our broad range of programs – to ensure that each of them is not only up to date but also captures the imagination of faculty and students, generates excitement, and taps into the realities and needs of external communities and their needs. Innovations in courses, programs, and curricula come from faculty working alone or, increasingly, in teams and groups. We must strive towards an institutional culture that encourages, supports, and assists this kind of innovation.

But learning is not only about program design; indeed, the perspectives collected in the preparation of this Foundational Document suggest that our University's greatest potential for improvement may lie outside of formal learning activities. While we recognize that the student experience does not begin and end at the doorway to the classroom, laboratory, or studio, based on the design of most curricular offerings an observer might conclude that the student experience at the University of Saskatchewan is

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<sup>4</sup> Derek Bok (2006), *Our Underachieving Colleges*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

<sup>5</sup> George Fallis (2007), *Multiversities, Ideas, and Democracy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

<sup>6</sup> The terms distance education and e-learning are both used in this document. They do not mean the same thing. Distance learning normally uses technology but can be simply print-based. Its defining feature is that the teacher and the learner are geographically separated. E-learning always uses technology and may involve students in a classroom (e.g. Powerpoint) or at a distance, or both. One of these methods of educational delivery is not a subset of the other, but they can be visualized as overlapping Venn diagrams or circles, the overlap being those students who are at a distance and where technology is used.

primarily a classroom exchange of information. The social, cultural, and working lives of students represent a critical part of the student experience and can be described as ‘the hidden curriculum’; they are not included or designed in programs and curriculum offerings in a systematic way. And, while the University cannot, and should not, assume responsibility for all aspects of a student’s life, it would be folly to presume that learning in a university setting is confined to those formal occasions in which it is scheduled to take place. It is for this reason that universities all over the world are concerned with providing programming that extends well beyond academic coursework and intentionally creating a living and learning atmosphere that fosters both academic and personal growth. This orientation implies a concern for the physical and psychological well-being of students, as well as for their academic preparation and success.

Additionally, facilitating student success involves addressing the complexities of student life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While students bring a full range of skills and interests to the university, they also bring personal challenges and needs which must be addressed. Students with children require appropriate day care facilities. Aboriginal students need to know that their cultures and intellectual traditions are respected. International students benefit from assistance in their adaptation to Canadian lifestyles – and to Saskatchewan winters. Students with disabilities or medical conditions require specialized assistance. For many students, both undergraduate and graduate, financial support is a requirement for attending university. And so the list continues, through campus recreation programs and chaplaincy services, residence spaces, varied dietary requirements, and inter-university athletics. The University must adapt to ensure that the students it enrolls have every opportunity to succeed.

This Foundational Document is informed by two separate discussions in 2006, with students and faculty, as well as by the results of a series of recent University-level surveys and studies on the aspects of the student experience (2000-2007). Both reveal a strong desire by students, faculty and instructional staff to move an already good educational experience to an exceptional one.

Students want the University to give them a voice in their educational experience, to support their diverse needs and learning styles, to provide them with stimulating and engaging programs and activities, to prepare them for the challenges of the modern world. Students want their educational experience to move beyond the classroom towards all of the environments where they learn, providing them with the support they need to succeed and thrive, and ensuring that they receive a high standard of teaching. They want the University to acknowledge different learning styles and respond to greater diversity within the student population. More importantly, students want the University to focus more directly on their teaching and learning experience, to value the solutions they put forward, and to involve them in their learning more directly.

Faculty and instructional staff want the University to acknowledge their teaching efforts more visibly and to provide them with the support they need to provide exceptional educational programs to undergraduate and graduate students alike. They yearn for a clear articulation of the value and importance of teaching within the context of the University of Saskatchewan. They want their efforts to be supported and recognized.

This Foundational Document is also informed by exemplary practices in higher education world-wide. What we have learned is that the University needs to be more student-focused, more learning-centered. By proposing an unapologetically student-focused approach to teaching and learning, this Foundational Document opens a critical dialogue within the University community about the nature and quality of the student experience in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because the University of Saskatchewan has a strong base on which to build, it identifies some areas for further development as well as some areas in which critical attention is required. By making adjustments and more intentionally directing our efforts, we can ensure that existing and new initiatives address common

goals and priorities. Recent initiatives have spurred some early successes. We need to acknowledge progress, but we need to accelerate momentum to adapt to emerging challenges and to inform our current practices with new developments in other jurisdictions.

Teaching and learning is at the heart of what we do as a university. Engaging in University-wide discussion about our goals and direction in this fundamental mission is long overdue and critical to our future success.

#### ***IV. Perspectives on Teaching and Learning at the University of Saskatchewan***

If attention at the University of Saskatchewan has been focused on either one of teaching or learning, it has most often been focused on teaching. Over the past several years, the University has re-written its standards for promotion and tenure, University Council has approved principles and policies on teaching evaluation, and most recently, a University-approved instrument for the evaluation of teaching (Student Evaluation of Educational Quality, SEEQ). Programs and services at the Gwenna Moss Centre provided guidance and advice on the development of teaching portfolios and peer mentors for faculty to improve their teaching. While this focus on teaching does not mean that student learning has been ignored, our tendency has been to address classroom issues as teaching related, rather than to emphasize learning outcomes or expectations of students upon completion of specific courses, or degree programs, or varied learning environments or experiences, or even learning communities.

Early on in the development of this Foundational Document, it was clear that attention needed to shift to the needs of students, to have a better understanding of the learning requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century students, and specifically those of students at the University of Saskatchewan rather than relying on the primarily USA-based literature to identify areas for development. This conclusion resulted in a year-long study of student opinions, including the integration of the findings of several University-wide studies and surveys conducted between 2000 and 2007 (and ongoing).

Attention was also centered on faculty and other instructional staff perceptions of the teaching and learning environment at the University of Saskatchewan and specifically on barriers which need to be addressed. It is clear from conversations undertaken in the February to May 2006 period that an action plan is urgently needed to address barriers and perceptions.

There is however common ground and opportunity to move forward. Given the substantial information currently available about student views of their educational experience, we begin with the views of our students on the teaching and learning environment.

##### ***Student Perspectives on Teaching and Learning at the University of Saskatchewan.***

The University of Saskatchewan has historically been heavily reliant on Saskatchewan students to fill its programs. This trend continues today as almost 90% of our students claim this province as their place of origin.<sup>7</sup> Still, our student body is changing. Marked differences are observable in the proportion of female to male students overall and in some colleges. There is a slowly increasing international component at the undergraduate level. Almost half of our students report working an average of 15 – 20 hours per week and even though they recognize that working has at least ‘some’ negative impact on their academic performance, almost 38% are doing so to support their studies. While the proportion of Saskatchewan residents attending is still strong, it is

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<sup>7</sup> The latest information available is 2004/05 data. In that year, 89% of the undergraduate student body were Saskatchewan residents.

less strong than it was even a decade earlier. Some of these changes are direct effects of the Enrolment Plan (approved in 2003) which signaled the need to shift our reliance on Saskatchewan students towards out of province and international students given the demographic realities facing the province. The drop off in the number of grade 12 graduates in Saskatchewan anticipated has already begun and is expected to accelerate over the next decade. Other changes are due to the increasingly competitive nature of higher education, including the scholarship enticements for students to study at other universities, but also the much more aggressive recruitment environment, both nationally and internationally. The University has been accustomed to sitting back and waiting for students to arrive at its doors; that can no longer be the case. Over the next decade, we expect to see a major shift from an enrolment environment characterized by a steady supply of students, a local/provincial focus, traditional programs and delivery methods, and minimal competition towards an increasingly competitive recruitment environment, a decreasing supply of students, a stronger national/international focus, a need for stronger and more innovative programs and delivery methods, and an intensified and more competitive higher education sector.

At the graduate level, there are changes as well. There are more graduate students of all types to begin with. For example, PhD enrolments have increased by 86% since 2001. The move towards Professional Masters programs has accelerated with more students taking these programs during the Spring/Summer session than ever before. There are fewer students taking post-graduate diploma programs given decisions to de-emphasize these programs, a direct result of SPR recommendations from external examiners. The University continues to be a destination of choice in Canada for international students studying in advanced degrees and the diversity in country of origin for international students is substantial.

Through its participation in a series of surveys, focus groups, and the recent Retention Study, the University has available to it current and powerful information about the opinions of students, both undergraduate and graduate, in its programs. While students are clearly satisfied with their educational experience, improvements can be made which would dramatically affect the nature of their experience. Let us begin with an overview of what the surveys, focus groups, and retention study tell us about the student experience at the University of Saskatchewan.

**Surveys and Survey Results.** The University has participated in six major University-wide surveys over the period 2000 – 2007: the *Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC)*, 2001 – 2007; the *National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)*, 2006; the *Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)*, 2003; the *Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment: Graduate Outcomes of 2004/05 Class* (with other post-secondary institutions), 2007; the *Student Outcomes Survey* (2000); and the *Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (GPSS)*, 2007.<sup>8</sup> While the results of these surveys have been or are in the process of being distributed to the campus community using a variety of methods, (e.g. presentations as part of the Provost's Teaching and Learning Series in Fall 2006, to Deans' Council, to student groups, or to selected Council committees; postings on the Integrated Planning or other websites; articles in *On Campus News*), no one office has, until recently, analyzed them for common themes or trends which might assist the University to better address the emerging and priority needs of its undergraduate and graduate students.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For a summary of each survey's purpose, an indication of sample size and number of respondents, please see Attachment One.

<sup>9</sup> This Foundational Document can only provide a high-level overview of general trends identified by the analysis completed to date. More information on the results of all of the surveys can be viewed at [http://www.usask.ca/vpacademic/integrated-planning/planning\\_office/surveys.php](http://www.usask.ca/vpacademic/integrated-planning/planning_office/surveys.php).



While the purposes of the survey instruments conducted on undergraduate student populations vary, results converge. There is, for instance, a remarkable consensus among undergraduate (first year, undergraduate, graduating)<sup>10</sup> students about the overall quality of the education they experience at the University of Saskatchewan. Graduating students report being slightly more satisfied (89-91%) than undergraduate students (86-88%) based on CUSC responses over four survey years, while first year and senior students reported overall satisfaction as 'good' based on the NSSE (2006) results. Compared to results at peer universities, University of Saskatchewan students are more satisfied with the overall quality of education they experience here with 86-91% of students rating it as 'good' or 'excellent' compared to 82-87% in the Canadian peer group (CUSC) which included universities offering both undergraduate and graduate degrees and professional schools. Students at the University of Saskatchewan are at least as satisfied as first year and senior students when compared to students in the Canadian peer group (NSSE) which includes universities in the medical/doctoral category. They tended however to rate their satisfaction with the overall quality of the education they received as 'excellent' less often (21-23%) than students in their Canadian peer group (25-30%) and in the North American peer group (32-35%).<sup>11</sup>

The University of Saskatchewan has participated in CUSC since 2001 and has seven years of data to draw on. Based on these data, we know that our students are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching they receive, although typically first year and graduating students are more satisfied (80-89% and 87-90% respectively) than undergraduate students in first-level (direct-entry) bachelor's programs (79%). When compared to responses of students at Canadian peer universities, the experience of our students is slightly more positive: 83-85% of first year, 84% of graduating, and 79-80% of undergraduate students at other universities report that they are satisfied with the quality of teaching they received (CUSC, 2001-2007). These results were recently confirmed by the province-wide *Graduate Outcomes of 2004/05 Class* post-graduate survey conducted in partnership with the Department of Advanced Education and Employment. In that survey, 92% of students reported being either satisfied (61%) or very satisfied (31%) with the quality of teaching at the University of Saskatchewan. Further, 89% of our students were satisfied with program content and 84% would choose the same program again if given the opportunity to do so.

**Based on the survey data, it is important to state categorically that students at the University of Saskatchewan are, in general, satisfied with their overall educational experience and with the quality of teaching they receive.** Undergraduate students indicate that that professors are knowledgeable in their field of study (97% CUSC and top strength in SSI) and that instructors had a major positive influence on their academic career (83-85%, CUSC). Students have opportunities to evaluate courses in most programs (84-86%, CUSC). Students indicate that faculty are meeting student expectations to be available after class and during office hours to discuss grades and assignments (SSI and NSSE). A majority of graduating students (76%) indicate that their professors provided useful feedback on their academic performance (CUSC). These results reflect the effort and dedication that faculty bring to the teaching environment at the University.

As can be expected, the surveys are designed to illuminate many aspects of a student's overall university experience, including some critical areas which receive less attention at the

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<sup>10</sup> The CUSC surveys undergraduate students, but focuses on three different 'views' of undergraduates: first year, undergraduate (in any year of their program except first year) and graduating (students who are in their final year of studies and ready to graduate with an undergraduate degree).

<sup>11</sup> This includes all North American institutions that participated in NSSE in 2006.

University of Saskatchewan but which are nonetheless crucial to understanding how students experience the University. These include:

- **Practical and ‘real world’ knowledge.** CUSC data reveal that a growing number of undergraduate students who are graduating (less than 1 and up to 27%)<sup>12</sup> have been enrolled in an experiential learning program that provides credit for work experience (e.g. co-op or internship programs).<sup>13</sup> Over 91% of the students surveyed on this dimension in 2006 were satisfied with their experience, a 10% higher satisfaction level than students in Canadian peer universities. NSSE indicates that senior students are more engaged in enriching educational experiences<sup>14</sup> than first year students. This conclusion is confirmed by CUSC data which indicate that only 2 – 9% of undergraduate students at the University of Saskatchewan reported being enrolled in a co-op (work experience) program when compared to 7 – 18% at Canadian peer universities. Further, out of a list of self-directed academic activities, graduating students cited co-op programs/internships/other practical experiences most often as contributing to their personal growth and development. Overall, University of Saskatchewan students indicated that they were less engaged in enriching educational experiences than their Canadian and North American peer groups. In all groups, senior students were more engaged than first year students.<sup>15</sup>
- **Respect for students as individuals.** Despite overall satisfaction with the University, only 55-69% of first year students, 52-56% of undergraduate students, and 46-53% of graduating students indicated that they were satisfied with the University’s concern for them as individuals (CUSC). 63-74% of first year and undergraduate students agree that professors treat them as individuals, not just as numbers (CUSC). This is comparable to the peer sample (66-71%) but slightly less than the national sample (72-77%). Responses to the SSI (2003) also reported low satisfaction with faculty concern for students.
- **Academic advising.** Academic advising was ranked third or fourth by undergraduate students in a list of priorities for improvement to facilities/services over two CUSC surveys (2002, 2005). Students placed a higher importance on and were more satisfied

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<sup>12</sup> This reflects the results of two surveys, three years apart. In the first survey, graduating undergraduate students indicated that they had very limited exposure to experiential learning programs (less than 1% of students surveyed that year indicated they had such an experience). In the second survey three years later that number had increased to 27% of the graduating student body who indicated that they had the opportunity to enroll in a work experience or co-op ed program. Given the number of such programs offered by the University, this might not be as negative a comment as it might first appear.

<sup>13</sup> The significant growth may in part be a response to a change in how the question was stated on the survey instrument between 2003 and 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Enriching educational experiences as described in NSSE include: co-curricular activities, practicum, internship, field experiences, co-op experiences, clinical assignments, community service or volunteer work, foreign language coursework or study abroad, culminating senior experiences such as capstone courses, senior projects or thesis, or comprehensive examinations.

<sup>15</sup> These findings are consistent with an earlier study sponsored and conducted by the University which identified significant student interest in closing the gap between the classroom and the workplace. In the *Student Outcomes Survey* (June 2000), our 1994 graduates clearly indicated that we can improve the quality of the educational experience at the University of Saskatchewan most profoundly by providing work experience or “practical knowledge.” Approximately 65 percent of respondents focused on this kind of investment. No other suggestion, including smaller classes, increased funding, and better instructors, had the support of more than 15 percent of respondents in that study.

with their academic advisor being knowledgeable about requirements in their major and being approachable (SSI). Undergraduate and graduating students are less likely to be satisfied with academic advising (74-75% and 75%, CUSC; 60% for senior students, NSSE). First year students are the most satisfied with the overall quality of the academic advising they obtain (84% CUSC and 68% NSSE). Despite the high satisfaction of first year students, only 56-60% report at least 'some success' in getting academic advice (CUSC).

- **Academic development.** The majority of undergraduate (86%) and graduating (90-93%) students agree that their learning experiences have been intellectually stimulating (CUSC). Graduating and senior students rated academic skills, communication skills, analytical/learning skills, work and knowledge life skills, and personal and relationship life skills higher in contributing to their growth and development than did first year students (CUSC and NSSE). Less than half of first year and senior students reported that the University placed 'quite a bit' of emphasis on providing the support that they needed to succeed academically (NSSE).
- **Student life.** A higher proportion of University of Saskatchewan students feel part of this University or have had at least 'some success' in feeling as if they belonged here than do students at peer institutions. First year and undergraduate students are also more satisfied (83-98% and 87-89% respectively) with University-based social activities than their peers (CUSC). Graduating students reported higher than average satisfaction with the opportunity to develop lasting friendships (89-90% vs 80-83% at peer institutions, CUSC). Over 80% of first year students had at least 'some success' in making new friends with other students. First year and senior students reported that the University of Saskatchewan placed between 'very little' and 'some' emphasis on helping students to cope with non-academic responsibilities such as work, family, etc (NSSE 2006).
- **Career Development and Advice:** The single most important reason for first year students to attend university was to prepare for a specific job or career or to get a good job (CUSC). Over half to two-thirds (56 – 65%) of first year students reported 'some success' in finding useful information and resources on careers and occupations and on average 57% of undergraduate and 59% of graduating students had decided on a career field or specific occupation (CUSC) when they were surveyed.
- **Location as a Factor in Student Decision-Making: In a world of increasing mobility, the University of Saskatchewan's dependence on students from Saskatoon and surrounding areas represents an increasing risk.** The single most important reason for first year students to attend the University of Saskatchewan was that they wanted to live close to home, whereas for peer institutions it was either the quality of the academic programs offered or the availability of a specific career-related program (CUSC). In 2004/05, 83% of the undergraduate student body was of Saskatchewan origin. Of this group, nearly half (49%) came from a community of less than 10,000 and another 15% came from a community between 10,000 to 49,999 in population.
- **Communication to students/student interactions with the University.** While 73-77% of first year students have had 'some success' in finding help with questions or problems, relationships with administrative personnel/offices scored lower (64% first year, 61% senior students) in terms of being helpful, considerate, and flexible. Half of undergraduate students (49-52%) and 63% of graduating students feel like they are

caught in bureaucratic red tape or are getting the ‘run around’. Readily available channels for expressing student complaints scored low with students indicating that this was not meeting their expectations (SSI).

Because some of the above findings diverge significantly from the ‘overall assessment’ and overall student satisfaction with their University of Saskatchewan experience, they are especially important for us as we discuss the teaching and learning environment. They provide important clues about what we can do better. While University of Saskatchewan students are, in general, very satisfied with their educational experiences compared with students at Canadian peer universities, the data presented by the various survey instruments point towards some important aspects of student academic life that can, and should, be improved, by being more intentional about our program and learning supports or by other efforts aimed at ensuring that more of our students have as wide a variety of experiences as possible while they are with us rather than localized, if excellent, options.

Before moving to a discussion of focus groups and other studies, it is important to note that the surveys conducted at the University-level are not the only surveys administered in any given academic year. The recently approved document entitled *A Framework for Assessment: Beyond Systematic Program Review*<sup>16</sup> provides a lengthy list of known surveys that have been administered by central university administrative offices as well as some surveys sponsored by some colleges or units. The University-level surveys cannot supplant or address all of the needs of the colleges or units, but it is critical that wherever possible available information is used to provide context for college or unit level activity (and vice-versa).

Finally, the University-level surveys described in this section are focused almost exclusively on undergraduate students. The Deans of Graduate Colleges in Canada have recently administered the *Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey* (GPSS) to students. The Graduate Students Association and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research are in discussions about the development of a specific survey instrument for assessing the graduate student experience on our campus in conjunction with the Integrated Planning Office (IPO).<sup>17</sup> Such a survey, in addition to the exit questionnaire already offered by the College of Graduate Studies and Research, could provide important information about the nature of the graduate student experience on campus. Given the lack of specific information about graduate students at this time, it is important to keep in mind that the analysis above may or may not reflect the experience of graduate students who come to the University of Saskatchewan.

***Student Focus Groups, Spring 2006.*** In an effort to gain a better understanding of the specific challenges facing University of Saskatchewan students, a series of focus groups was sponsored by Provost Atkinson between February and May 2006 to support the development of this Foundational Document. Targeted e-mails were sent to various student bodies (i.e. graduate students, students in non-direct entry colleges, first year undergraduate students in direct entry colleges, upper year undergraduate students in direct entry colleges, Aboriginal students, students in off campus/distance education courses, and alumni) asking for their

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<sup>16</sup> Following an extensive consultation and drafting process, this paper was approved by University Council in October 2008.

<sup>17</sup> This survey is currently under development and will likely be administered between during the 2008/09 academic year as a partnership between the GSA, the College of Graduate Studies and Research and the Integrated Planning Office.

interest and participation in a focus group. Interest in the project was very strong, with close to 300 responses, but due to scheduling constraints, not everyone who was interested was able to participate. In total, 18 focus groups were conducted with 117 participants. While an effort was made to include representatives from every college, no students from the College of Dentistry participated.

Students were very forthcoming with their opinions on the teaching and learning environment at the University of Saskatchewan and especially grateful for an opportunity to express their opinion. They were enthusiastic, articulate, and insightful. While opinions varied, there was a great deal of commonality in responses. There were also some insights specific to certain student populations which are germane to the teaching and learning environment.

***Learning Environments.*** Students defined a learning environment as broadly as possible. For most students, learning was not confined to the classroom but occurred in a broad spectrum of venues and formats. Because students defined learning as involving primarily growth and transformation, student learning was perceived to be stimulated by a wide variety of environments including interactions with other students, with faculty and other instructional staff, with practical and hands-on experiences (such as laboratories, field work, experiential learning opportunities, etc), many of which could be described as ‘the hidden curriculum’ or the ‘curriculum within a curriculum’.

***Learning experiences.*** Students placed a high value on, and cited most often, the opportunity for hands-on/practical learning experiences included in their degree programs. They enjoyed laboratories, practica, and instructors who applied real world examples to class materials. Their interest in this type of education was not limited to ‘work experience’ or formalized ‘experiential learning’ opportunities. Even a simple demonstration of how theoretical concepts translated into practical application was viewed as valuable. One example cited was in a class when a specimen animal was brought into the classroom so that students could observe its characteristics more directly. Unique learning experiences such as this were more likely to be remembered by students longer than the specific course material. Students wanted more such ‘hands on’ experiences of all types. They were disappointed with the limited opportunities available to them particularly because they saw such opportunities as very meaningful for their personal and intellectual growth and development.

***Learning Outcomes.*** Students identified five positive skills gained at the University: communication skills, time management skills, research skills, project management skills, and people/inter-personal skills. They also described four negative skills learned: procrastination, thinking “politically” about how to get along with instructors and other students, excessive malleability (adapting to whatever is currently needed), and regurgitation. Again, these skills could be described as the ‘hidden curriculum’ not necessarily intended but nevertheless conveyed by practice.

***Evaluation of teaching/learning.*** Students viewed the current teaching evaluation system as generally ineffective. They commented that the process is not transparent and that students see little or no change as a result of their participation. Students were also generally dissatisfied with the examination process. They felt that success on most exams requires memorization rather than learning the material, that exams are designed to attain a certain class average rather than test for knowledge, and that exams are not written for all types of learning styles because the format is not varied enough.

**Technology in teaching and learning.** Student views of the role and impact of technology in the classroom were mixed. For students in distance education courses, the quality of the technology played a large role in their experience and satisfaction with the learning process. This is not surprising particularly given the heavy reliance of distance education on electronic media of all types. Students reported that their experience with technology in the classroom varied greatly and no discernable pattern among the focus groups was identified. However, there was agreement that technology, such as power-point presentation software, clickers, etc. is an asset only if used properly. If it is not, it is more of a hindrance to their learning than an asset.

**Respect/cultural sensitivity.** Students indicated that one of the key contributors to a negative learning experience is when faculty and staff do not treat them with respect. While the experiences of Aboriginal students were similar to those of the general student population, they expressed strong views about perceptions by other students, faculty, and staff about their legitimacy within the University. Many described negative stereotypes and negative experiences, inside and outside of the classroom, based on their race.

**Personal Development and Preparation.** One key challenge for students was related to skills. Managing time (not falling behind and building a schedule that works) and learning to study for University were frequently mentioned by students as important skills needed to succeed. Students in professional colleges spoke of stress and heavy workloads more often than any other student population.

**Ideal Instructor.** All students, regardless of the make-up of the focus group, agreed that the ideal instructor exhibited several qualities. The ideal instructor was viewed as approachable. They made student learning a priority. They were knowledgeable about their discipline or field of study and enthusiastic in sharing their knowledge and expertise with students. Students agreed that the ideal instructor had a passion for teaching and enjoyed teaching. Students commented on the impact of the instructor on the learning experience and described this as the most significant aspect in either a positive or negative experience. While students were generally satisfied with the quality of instruction, the impact a poor instructor could have on the learning experience was marked and negative experiences coloured the student's program of study.

When asked to identify the top three things that the University could do to improve the overall student experience, focus group participants identified 'training and equipping professors as teachers', 'addressing and diminishing student isolation', and 'ensuring that students have ways to provide feedback to the institution', most frequently. First-year students commented about the difficult transition from high school to University and the need for greater support to ensure that this is not 'such a rough transition'.

The overall message from the focus groups was that the University needs to focus on 'improving teaching'. While students were generally satisfied with the quality of instructors at the University of Saskatchewan, when asked what the number one thing to change would be, the answer was invariably 'improve teaching'. Stated differently, this paradox highlights the recognition by students that teaching makes a difference to their educational experience.

**Student Retention Study (2006).** The *First Integrated Plan* called for a study of retention issues aimed at determining the major obstacles to students continuing their academic studies at the University of Saskatchewan with the intention that the findings would inform institutional practices, policies, and programs at both the college and university levels.

Conducted by Student and Enrolment Services Division (SESD) and the Integrated Planning Office (IPO), the study focused on: 1) the patterns of retention, attrition, and degree completion of cohorts of students; and 2) the underlying reasons for student attrition at the University of Saskatchewan and approaches that promote retention.<sup>18</sup> To determine rates and patterns of student retention, attrition and degree completion, cohorts of entering students from 1993 to 2002 were analyzed using data stored in the Student Information System (SIS). To discover underlying reasons for student retention and attrition and approaches that promote retention, three student-based studies were conducted (a survey of voluntary leavers, interviews with students who persist after an academic failure, and focus groups with continuing students). Analysis was restricted to the direct entry colleges (Agriculture and Bioresources, Arts and Science, Edwards School of Business (formerly the College of Commerce), Engineering and Kinesiology) to ensure that comparisons were meaningful.<sup>19</sup>

Defining retention as either degree completion, continued registration in the cohort college, or transfer from one college to another, the study revealed that overall retention rates between 1993 and 2002 have hovered at 67%. One quarter of the students who leave the University of Saskatchewan without completing a degree are required to discontinue for academic reasons. The vast majority (three out of four) of students who leave the University without completing a degree leave voluntarily, i.e., they are academically eligible to continue but do not.

Defining attrition as either discontinued registration after a completed term of study, withdrawn registration in the midst of a term of study, or required to discontinue by the institution, the study found that attrition is greatest during or after the first year of study with almost 30% of first year students leaving the University of Saskatchewan. While other studies may very well define retention and attrition outcomes differently than this study, it would seem, based on both Canadian and American research, that University of Saskatchewan attrition rates are higher than others. First year attrition also represents 85% of total attrition in the study, a proportion greater than in other universities where it is typical for first year attrition to account for half of total attrition. Following second year, an additional 7% attrition occurs. Beyond second year, changes in attrition rates are small with a trend of modest gains of returning students of less than 1% per year.

Retention rates were studied based on four student origins or admissions patterns: 1) students coming directly from high school, 2) students who took a break of one or more years after high school, 3) students who transferred from another post-secondary institution with 18+ credit units, and 4) students who transferred within the University of Saskatchewan from one college to another. Not surprisingly perhaps, students who have been successful in one University of Saskatchewan college are more likely to succeed in another college. Students who enter directly from high school are more likely to succeed than students who enter from another post secondary institution. Interestingly, students who take a break after high school before entering the University of Saskatchewan have the lowest retention rates of all four origins or admission patterns. Differences in retention rates between the direct-entry colleges are notable. The Edwards School of Business consistently retained over 80% of its students, Agriculture and Bioresources, Engineering and Kinesiology fluctuated around the mid to high 70%*s*, and Arts and Science retained approximately 60% of its students.

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<sup>18</sup> To learn more about the study, please contact Susan Bens in Student and Enrolment Services.

<sup>19</sup> The only other University-level retention study undertaken was completed as part of the Program Audit Project in 1996. It reviewed retention and completion rates of both direct entry and non-direct entry colleges and demonstrated that attrition rates were higher for students in direct entry colleges.

Over two-thirds of the student body enters through the College of Arts and Science annually. Perhaps not surprisingly, given its size, purpose as an entry point for some students to access professional programs offered at the University of Saskatchewan or elsewhere, or admission average, the College of Arts and Science had the highest level of attrition and the lowest level of degree completion of the direct-entry colleges studied. However, students who had previously been registered in the College of Arts and Science had the highest degree completion rate suggesting that they were well-prepared to succeed in other colleges as well as the importance of recruitment to the college as a key factor in institutional enrolment management. The Edwards School of Business had the lowest level of attrition and the highest level of degree completion.

At least half of the students in all colleges who obtain a degree do so within four years. Engineering is the exception with only 33% of students doing so in four years. Another 25 – 67% depending on degree program complete a degree by seven years after initial enrolment. Taking more time to complete a degree program may be in part due to the growth in part-time work among university students, but may also relate to course availability and selection based on the responses of voluntary leavers included as part of this study.

A telephone survey of *voluntary leavers* (students who either discontinued or withdrew from their studies before completing a degree in 2003, 2004 or 2005)<sup>20</sup> administered by Inshgtrix Research Services in March 2006 revealed that:

- The primary reasons for attending university were to prepare for a specific job or career (36.6%), to obtain a general education (24.5%) and to get a good job (18.9%); the primary reason for choosing the University of Saskatchewan was its proximity to family (76.1%).
- 31.9% felt unprepared for the workload of university, 29.8% were unprepared to balance their external demands (such as jobs, family, and other responsibilities) with their schoolwork, and 27.7% were unprepared for the financial costs. More than 20% also mentioned the learning environment and academic standards as areas in which they were unprepared. 29.2% felt prepared in all of these areas.
- 42.2% left the University of Saskatchewan because they wanted to transfer to another post-secondary institution, but only 25% said that this was in their original plan, suggesting that 75% of voluntary leavers came to this decision after or during their University of Saskatchewan experience. Of those who transferred to another institution, 54.5% said this decision was based on university factors such as course/program offerings, inability to enroll in desired area of study, and dissatisfaction with campus. The others (45.5%) transferred for personal reasons that did not relate to the University itself, such as a desire to relocate.
- Almost half (48%) of voluntary leavers surveyed had attended or were attending another post-secondary institution. The majority (67%) stayed in Saskatchewan and the majority (63%) left university-level education. One-third of the voluntary leavers identified subsequent attendance at SIAST, followed by the University of Regina (16%) and Saskatoon Business College (less than 1%). Approximately 6.1% of students attending other post-secondary institutions were attending universities in Alberta.
- Over 80% of voluntary leavers reported that they had sought university help or advice prior to leaving from sources such as academic/college advising, consultations with professors, and career counseling prior to leaving.

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<sup>20</sup> This represented a population of 2285 students; 339 chose to participate in the study (an overall participation rate of 14.8% resulting in a margin of error of 4.9% at 95% confidence).



- 21% of students transferring to another post-secondary institution said the University could have provided better assistance to them such as more support and more programs and classes. 30.5% of students who left because of academic difficulties said the University could have done more including more support and advice.

A group critical to the understanding of barriers to student learning and causes of academic-related attrition is *students who were required to discontinue because they did not meet program standards but who later returned to university and advanced in their program in good standing*. Interviews conducted with this group revealed that ‘lack of a clear academic/career goal’ and ‘lack of commitment/dedication to studying in the first year’ were the primary reasons for initial failure. In turn, the majority of participants indicated that taking personal initiative to ‘develop an academic/career plan’, ‘commit to getting a degree’, and ‘improve study habits’ was imperative in helping them succeed. This group of students suggested pro-active, career-focused academic advising and enhanced engagement with professors as the most significant ways the University could improve the first year experience and promote student success. They recommended that academic advising be pre-emptive and even mandatory for all entering students, ongoing (advising sessions that begin early in the program and happen at regular intervals) and well-timed (before or directly after December exams). Some noted that a compulsory meeting with a college advisor at the first sign of academic trouble would be helpful. Further, they suggested that academic advising should be career-focused (especially those from the College of Arts and Science), acknowledging the need for both career and program advising and the huge gap between program and course advising and broader advising (such as career, personal, academic exploration and decision-making, goal-setting etc.)

Students in focus groups, described in an earlier part of this document, were asked a direct persistence-oriented question: ‘what are the key challenges you have faced in your studies at the University of Saskatchewan?’ These were:

- challenges involving professors, especially the effectiveness of teaching and lack of meaningful and timely feedback and appropriate forms of assessment (relevant assignments, exams that require more than memorization of material)
- adjustment from high school to university, especially in math and writing skills and to the higher academic standards of university education
- developing the skills for academic success (study skills, time and workload management)

For Aboriginal students, additional challenges included: feeling marginalized including a sense of ‘not being welcome, not fitting in, and a gulf between Aboriginal focused services or programs and the mainstream’; financial difficulties such as budgeting and unanticipated costs for textbooks, food and services on campus; and balancing school with other responsibilities, such as child care.

The results of this comprehensive study have been shared with various groups over the past year. It will take time to address the issues and to see the impact of changes but it should be used as a benchmark by which to assess progress.

The above section provides a summary and an indication of the rich data that are available to us and when taken together (surveys, focus groups, retention study) presents powerful information about the teaching and learning environment at the University of Saskatchewan as experienced by

its students. While it is skewed to undergraduate students,<sup>21</sup> the data point towards a number of ways to improve student learning and to increase the lasting impact of education on student lives.

It is important that the University of Saskatchewan, through its colleges and service units, acts on these data. We know students are attracted to programs in other jurisdictions that offer more creative approaches to delivery of course and program material or where innovative programs and supports are provided. Increasingly students are getting their information about higher education from the popular media. *Macleans* and the *Globe and Mail* both publish annual ‘rankings’ of the universities and students are engaged in the process.<sup>22</sup> True, these publications tend to accentuate small differences between and among institutions, but, over time, there is a strong impact/impression left on students from both the province and elsewhere on the nature and quality of the degrees that are provided/obtained based on how others perceive their selected institution of higher learning. Further, while Saskatchewan students have typically selected the University of Saskatchewan over universities in other provinces, we cannot be complacent. The demographics in Saskatchewan over the next decade are daunting. To remain successful and retain many of the degree programs we currently have, the University needs to recruit students from other jurisdictions and retain Saskatchewan students interested in university education at a time when the economic boom in Saskatchewan and Alberta is a major attraction for many highly qualified and potential students and the number of students graduating from the Saskatchewan K-12 system is substantially reduced.

The surveys, focus groups and retention study all point towards some very clear messages from students:

- The quality of teaching at the University of Saskatchewan is good, but it can be improved.
- Students do not compartmentalize their lives into classroom instruction and other; rather, learning takes place in a variety of settings, times, formats and approaches, both formal and informal. Students make judgments about their post-secondary educational choices based on a wide variety of experiences, many of which do not take place in a lecture theatre, laboratory, tutorial, or rehearsal hall.
- Students want the University to hear their feedback and make adjustments. They want to know that their feedback counts.
- Students want their programs to be more innovative and to provide more opportunities for ‘real world’ experiences.
- Students want to be intellectually challenged and engaged in their learning.
- Students want an academic experience that will propel them towards their career goals. At the same time, critical thinking, ethics, reasoning, and other skills, while important for jobs, are also fundamental to the development of students as persons.

***Faculty Perspectives on Teaching and Learning at the University of Saskatchewan.*** The University of Saskatchewan has been experiencing a major change in the nature and composition of its professoriate over the past decade and this change is expected to continue at least to 2010. The *Strategic Directions* identified ‘attract and retain outstanding faculty’ as one of four critical goals for the University of Saskatchewan, noting that ‘faculty hiring is an investment in the future, probably the single most important investment any university can make’. It predicted that the University would recruit over 500 new faculty over the decade 2002 – 2012. The University

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<sup>21</sup> The results of a national graduate student outcomes survey will soon be published by the Integrated Planning Office in collaboration with the College of Graduate Studies and Research.

<sup>22</sup> For the 2007 edition of the *Globe and Mail University Report Card* over 43,000 students in 53 universities completed the Report Card Survey an increase from 32,700 and 49 universities in the previous year.

hired 233 faculty members over three hiring cycles (2004, 2005, 2006). Almost 40% of the entire faculty complement has been recruited in the past five years (385 of 1012). Anticipated faculty turnover between now and June 2011 is an additional 330 new faculty; 170 of these positions will be available due to attrition from retirements and a further 160 due to predictable patterns of resignations or other factors. This influx of new faculty members brings with it a fresh set of perspectives and new challenges as the University strives to meet its teaching and learning, research, and outreach and engagement goals. The demographic features of the faculty, their time in rank, and their gender may have a major impact on faculty perceptions about teaching and learning and specifically about expectations associated with obtaining a tenured position within the professoriate.

The high turnover in faculty makes it imperative that our university's approach to teaching and learning not be a policy that is cast in stone, but rather a flexible and evolving commitment that invites the energies and ideas of a dynamic and evolving community of instructors. We don't need a blueprint for teaching; we need a greenhouse for learning.

Between February and May 2006, Provost Atkinson engaged faculty and instructional staff in a series of discussions associated with the development of this Foundational Document. The effort was intended to illuminate faculty perceptions about teaching and learning. Meetings were held with faculty in all colleges except Law and Graduate Studies, with sessional lecturers and with graduate teaching assistants. Multiple meetings were held with teaching award recipients and new faculty. An 'open mike' session was also held in April. Over 240 faculty members participated in the 25 meetings scheduled and a handful provided additional written comments following meetings using the 'information request' form that was distributed.<sup>23</sup>

The overarching theme which arose from these discussions was the *perceived value of teaching within the University*. There is a strong perception among faculty that there is an imbalance in the reward system which favours research and scholarly work over teaching. Faculty pointed to messages and signals received at appointment, surrounding consideration for tenure and promotion, for merit and recognition as evidence supporting this perception. They talked about the language associated with teaching when compared to research activity; invariably teaching was referred to as a 'load', not 'work' or 'opportunity'. They talked about how there was an apparent need to choose between placing more of one's effort into teaching or research and concluded that teaching would always be 'shortchanged' because efforts associated at being a good teacher or a better teacher or in developing innovative programs/courses/activities within courses were not rewarded in the same way as success in research (as demonstrated in publication). They further indicated that being successful as a teacher and receiving an award did not always translate into recognition either within a college/department or within the University.

This perception was pervasive throughout all of the group discussions. New faculty thought that the rewards for teaching excellence were insufficient for the effort expended. Teaching award recipients felt undervalued for their contributions and lamented the lack of a support structure to provide opportunities to share expertise of experienced faculty with others. They had a wide-ranging conversation about the necessity for the University to explain that both teaching and research are a priority, not just research. Although sessional lecturers provide a critical teaching resource teaching one-third or more of courses in many departments or colleges, they felt undervalued because they are not connected to curricular discussions and are challenged to keep current in pedagogy and best practices. Graduate Teaching Assistants thought that their efforts

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<sup>23</sup> A summary of the meetings was prepared by the Director of Institutional Planning and is published on the Integrated Planning website, [www.usask.ca/ip](http://www.usask.ca/ip).

were undervalued because they were not treated as colleagues and they received limited support for their teaching.

The discussions with faculty were wide-ranging and several other topics were brought forward in these meetings which could be grouped together as themes. Illustrative of the varied nature of these discussions, some of the issues raised included:

- learning outcomes (what is meant by them?, is it possible to achieve a learning outcome on a university-wide basis?),
- identifying and celebrating what we do well in teaching (talking about the innovative efforts we are already doing and building awareness of pedagogical innovation),
- the difficulties and work associated with curricular innovation (identifying supports which ensure that the workload of faculty is reduced to the critical elements rather than the administrative arrangements and providing policies or guides to ensure that faculty don't expend energy unnecessarily),
- the possibility of 'teaching only' positions or 'contracts' with faculty at different stages in their careers to acknowledge different areas of focus at different times in their careers,
- the supports faculty need to work with varied student populations (such as students with disabilities or international students),
- the need to emphasize teaching in the rhetoric and symbols of the University and in its publications and public relations activities.

Faculty and instructional staff who participated in these meetings were passionate about teaching and committed to improving it. Faculty generally want to learn effective techniques and new approaches to teaching, to provide creative and innovative opportunities to engage student learning, and be recognized for excellent teaching and rewarded for the effort associated with teaching innovation. They had many suggestions and ideas which would address some of the issues which they identified. For example, they suggested that the University consider:

- *creating a teaching certificate for faculty and making participation in the certificate part of the work assignment for all new faculty.* Several new faculty commented on their graduate experience indicating that such certificate programs were available at institutions where they obtained their graduate training. Some faculty thought that a certificate program would be a good idea, but that it should only be mandatory for doctoral level students since many of them might find themselves in front of a classroom at some point in their career. The Graduate Teaching Assistants suggested that GSR 989 [Introduction to University Teaching] should be made more available to graduate students (through more offerings).
- *providing and/or reinstating peer mentoring and coaching programs to improve teaching.* We were told several times about the value faculty placed on the peer mentoring program previously provided by the Gwenna Moss Centre. Faculty often spoke about the need to have a 'safe place' in which to get feedback about teaching ability and performance. They talked about concerns associated with 'experimenting' with pedagogical approaches in classes and the potential impact of that experimentation on teaching evaluations from students particularly in the lead up to tenure or promotion decisions. They thought that the largest benefit of a peer mentoring program would be the opportunity to discuss approaches to teaching with colleagues.
- *authorizing faculty to attend professional development opportunities related to teaching within sabbaticals or separate funding to support attendance at a conference devoted to improving teaching.* This might also include a teaching development award for new faculty along the lines of the existing research development award. It might also include the development of formal agreements at different stages of a faculty member's career which

- would have the effect of reducing research expectations while providing an opportunity to focus on, for example, an innovative approach to teaching.
- *ensuring that classrooms and physical spaces support different modes of teaching and learning* – from chalkboard to clickers. Faculty often spoke about the difficulties in innovation based on the physical space assigned for particular classrooms. Faculty also wanted to have the necessary resources to support changes in course delivery methods and support as they transitioned from one pedagogical approach to another. Some faculty spoke about the need to ensure that the traditional classroom continued to exist but that technological enhancements could also be available for use if desired.
  - *promoting and celebrating teaching achievements, innovations, and successes and increasing attention within the University's symbols and rhetoric to teaching excellence.* It was clear from many of the discussions that insufficient time is taken to acknowledge, celebrate, reward and promote excellent teaching. Many discussions pointed to the lack of prominence of teaching award recipients on the University's web page and on the College Drive banners and the apparent inconsistency between what students remember about their education (great or good teachers) and the public symbols of the University. The creation of 'teaching chairs' was suggested as one additional way to acknowledge accomplishment and give prominence to teaching.
  - *requiring all faculty to prepare teaching dossiers.* Faculty who spoke to this idea thought that the creation of a teaching dossier and its annual maintenance would ensure that teaching activity is 'mindful' and 'reflective'. A worthwhile idea might involve the creation of a new category on the University standard CV where teaching innovations, leadership, or curricular contributions could be listed.
  - *acknowledging different expectations and work at different times in a faculty member's career.* Faculty want to have the opportunity to experiment with new approaches to teaching but find themselves constrained by the necessity to perform in all three components (teaching, research, outreach and public service). Several discussions focused on the idea that 'contracts' outlining expectations/assignment of duties could be established with faculty members at different stages in their careers. For example, a faculty member at the Full Professor level might wish to devote some time (say, a three year period) to researching and applying a particular teaching technique or approach and that this should be accommodated in the 'assignment of duties' discussion with department heads or deans.
  - *creating an organizational structure that supports teaching and learning on campus.* Many faculty were struck by the investments that have been made in providing an organizational structure to support research and scholarly work and suggested that an organizational structure, including Vice-President for Teaching and Learning/Innovation, should be established to act as an advocate for teaching and learning.

The above section provides a very high level overview of what can only be characterized as engaging, passionate, and animated discussions with faculty and instructional staff. Many more ideas were presented in these discussions than are outlined here. It is clear that faculty at the University of Saskatchewan are very committed to teaching and learning and in finding solutions to address and overcome obstacles and barriers to their success. Faculty are looking for signals from the University that the effort that they have placed in teaching is appreciated. If that signal is provided, it is clear that there is the genuine good will and interest in change.

### ***Common Ground***

It should be apparent from the discussions above that faculty and students both want the teaching and learning environment to be an exceptional experience. While there are barriers which must be

overcome, and while there is recognition that the barriers are not unique to the University of Saskatchewan, there is clearly common ground.

Both students and faculty want the University to value teaching and learning. For students this means connecting the research of faculty members more closely to the teaching that students receive, or providing a better explanation of why a more ‘research intensive’ university is beneficial to their educational program/experience. For faculty, valuing teaching and learning is about celebrating teaching excellence, talking about teaching strengths and innovations, rewarding faculty for efforts and achievements, and including teaching in the visible symbols and rhetoric of the University.

Both students and faculty want to receive/provide a more intellectually stimulating and challenging learning environment. For students this means more opportunities for more intellectual excitement and less regurgitation in the classroom and on examinations. For faculty and students, the opportunity to experiment or engage in different teaching and learning styles and approaches is important but along with that must come understanding and empathy, particularly for the faculty member who may choose a ‘less than successful’ approach the first time an innovation is attempted. For students, there is a need for faculty to have a better understanding of the pressures on the student within the context of ‘life’, not just the classroom. Faculty spoke passionately about the need to balance expectations and activities, particularly the need to recognize work/life balance and personal and professional pressures they face.

Both students and faculty understand the imperative of today’s world – and the necessity to build lifelong learning skills into the educational experience. Students want to be skilled in communication, time management, research, technology, project management, people/inter-personal relationships, -- all skills that they will access throughout their lifetime. Faculty and instructional staff acknowledge that the development of lifelong learning skills is key to student success and that experiential learning and other new skills must be incorporated into courses and programs.

Both students and faculty acknowledge the ‘excitement of discovery’ and its transformational power, its ability to ignite passion for learning, for a particular discipline, for intellectual stimulation and engagement. The earlier this can be designed into curricular offerings the more likely students will be engaged in their own learning.

The above overview provides a powerful indication of student and faculty perspectives on teaching and learning at the University of Saskatchewan. Faculty and students both see needs and opportunities for change. But before attempting to pick strategies and priorities out of what they have told us, we also need to compare our ideas against what other institutions are experiencing, and ground our emerging proposals in scholarship.

## ***V. Raising our Sights: Trends and Exemplary Practices in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education***

While every faculty member has experience as a teacher and every student has experience as a learner, excellence does not come exclusively from individual experience or innate ability. As comments by students and faculty have made plain, both learning and teaching represent roles and sets of skills that can be learned and continuously developed. Teaching and learning are reflective, self-conscious forms of practice that can be enriched by ideas and models from elsewhere. For this reason, consideration of teaching and learning needs to take into account the burgeoning, diverse, and

provocative literature that now exists concerning post-secondary education. We don't have to borrow someone else's template. We do have an obligation to test and locate our own ideas within the wider field of scholarship and reflection about the nature of learning and teaching.

In the development of this Foundational Document, several seminal works by a variety of authors, commissions, and others were examined by the steering committee, staff at the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness, and the Provost's Office. The most influential works, critical for the discussion of teaching and learning, describing exemplary trends, ideas or influences which should shape teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are described in Appendix One. While this literature is often heavily USA-based, this section of the document draws on the wider field of scholarship by outlining a few general themes based on key recent contributions in the field.

One of the most important themes in recent literature relates to the observation that teaching is not a self-contained or independent activity, but rather is embedded in context. It is, first of all, embedded in an institutional setting, in which the culture of the organization, the rewards for faculty, the nature of physical infrastructure, and the academic supports for students all contribute significantly to the effectiveness of what is accomplished. In the setting of a university, teaching co-exists with research and works best when the two are synergistic. But second, education is embedded in students' lives and acquires its full meaning and impact only in that context. It is for this reason that so many writers have urged a shift in thinking from looking at teaching as an isolated practice, to looking at learning in students' lives and what (including teaching) contributes to it.

### ***Emerging Themes: Core Skills for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learners***

At some risk of over-generalizing, certain general themes emerge from the literature and the recent scholarship on the nature of higher education.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the most important new thinking is around the question of what we want students to have gained from their university experience by the time they leave the campus. It is important to remind ourselves that outcomes such as expanded knowledge and improved career prospects are not trivial: these are important to many students, and are areas in which students here and elsewhere are largely satisfied. But the tenor of the recent literature by professional educators is that such outcomes are not in themselves sufficient for what a university is intended to accomplish. Something more is needed, or at least highly desirable. There are indications in survey responses and focus groups that students themselves respond positively to "something more" – experiential learning being an example – though understandably they are less articulate than professional educators about what a university has not given them. The following are glimpses, gleaned from the literature, of the distinctive added value of a university education compared to other life experiences. As such, these are indications of possible directions and priorities for the University of Saskatchewan to pursue across our programs and functions:

- ***Strong analytical, literacy/numeracy skills and methodological sophistication.*** It is insufficient in today's world for university graduates to merely collect and reproduce data/information and ideas. With the advent of the internet and the explosion of information, students must know how to access, evaluate and use information of all sorts. Students who acquire strong analytical, literacy and numeracy skills and whose methods are innovative and cross-disciplinary offer important challenges within scholarly communities and have a far greater chance of contributing in significant ways to vibrancy and growth in those communities. In a global environment characterized by environmental, economic, and social challenges, universities are major sites for

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<sup>24</sup> Please see Appendix One for the literature review conducted in the development of this Foundational Document.

creating engaged citizens and democratic habits of mind. Critical thinking is a primary requirement for these roles as it is for many jobs, professions, and positions of leadership. It goes beyond formal logic as such and also includes skill in working with incomplete evidence, ability to evaluate quantitative evidence and reasoning, and coherent discussion of moral and ethical issues.

- ***The ability to communicate in a variety of settings with a variety of media.*** Clear communication is an indispensable counterpart to clear thinking and is a quality expected in every university graduate whether in sciences, professions, arts, or humanities. University courses and programs have long (and, in some areas, increasingly) featured oral and written communication as activities for students to practice and perfect. Institutions that are serious about such skills as an important learning outcome build them systematically into their programs and feature them as essential aspects of what a university does. Concentration on strong communications skills as a primary outcome of all academic programming is important.
- ***A level of comfort with and proficiency in information and communications technology.*** Today, proficiency in society as in the university requires a high level of capability in the use of digital information systems of many kinds. A well-educated person is also one who knows how to extract appropriate information from a database, a multi-media object, an e-learning module, an online learning community, and from other sources whose shape we can hardly predict today. So far the University of Saskatchewan has invested heavily in its information and communications technology infrastructure to support learning and teaching. Our campus portal (PAWS) offers several ways for members of the university community to communicate with each other, to access University services, and to support teaching and learning. The reception of this information and service portal, particularly by students, has been enthusiastic, and suggests that such a medium will continue to be the backbone for communication within the campus community. Also, with the explosion in new communication vehicles and new online instructional technologies, it is becoming more difficult (and less important) to distinguish between online and campus-based courses. A growing number of instructors are migrating their courses or portions of their courses to online environments, and students are building their programs out of mixtures of conventional face-to-face, online, and blended offerings. As technology continues to pervade our learning and teaching activities, ensuring students' and faculty capability to make the most of technology requires our constant attention.
- ***A deep understanding of a particular area of academic work.*** In undergraduate programs, the university strives to cultivate educated persons; in Hannah Arendt's powerful phrase, to foster and celebrate "the life of the mind."<sup>25</sup> Such an education strives for both breadth and depth. While strong academic programs and faculty with disciplinary expertise ensure deep and rigorous specialization, undergraduate distribution requirements and electives are intended to ensure that students encounter fields of inquiry to broaden their understanding of contexts shaping contemporary life, their own and other cultures, and different ways of knowing. These fields range from history, the arts, literature, philosophy, cultural studies to the natural and social sciences and various professional fields. Such breadth is also fostered by significant interaction within a diverse student body and through service learning. Through the systematic study of particular areas of academic/scholarly work, students have the opportunity to engage in a deep approach to learning<sup>26</sup> with faculty and other students. In this way they come to construct their

<sup>25</sup> Arendt, Hannah (1978) *The Life of the Mind*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

<sup>26</sup> For the distinction of deep and surface approaches to learning, see Marton, F and R. Säljö (1976) "On Qualitative Differences in Learning" — 1: "Outcome and Process"; 2: "Outcome as a function of the learner's conception of the task" *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 46, 4-11; 115-27. For more



understanding and feel for particular ways of knowing the world – key insights, theories, methodologies, practices, beliefs, and an accumulated body of knowledge. Also, sustained interaction with faculty and other students – in communities of practice<sup>27</sup> – helps students to develop understanding that involves analyzing literature, asking questions, recognizing assumptions, conducting research, integrating a field as a coherent whole, and communicating in a field. Because such deep learning is often developed through observation and practice more than directly taught, interaction among faculty and students in disciplinary programs and professional programs is critical to engaged and lasting learning.

- ***An advanced appreciation of intercultural knowledge.*** Students leaving university, be they domestic or international students, progressively live and work in a global context where a wide variety of mores and abilities exist. A learning experience which takes account of these contexts (global, sexuality, ability, gender, politics) and equips students with a positive, culturally aware and sensitive outlook and approach to life, learning and work contributes positively to the development of tolerant and strong democratic communities into the future. This does not mean only studying *about* global or gendered issues; it also means finding the global or gendered issues and forces, the cultural divides and diversity that exist within Saskatchewan itself. Opportunities for learning, which provide for an understanding of diversity and the ways in which diversity manifests itself, should be included into the curriculum as well as into the general campus life experience. Writers have pointed to the importance of exposure to second languages, persons with different abilities, courses in cultural and gender studies, travel abroad, exposure to politics, or experience in diverse communities as essential aspects of what a university education is intended to achieve. The University has the potential to provide a vastly enriched educational and work experience while students are here and when they move on to new contexts.
- ***A strong and developed capacity for collaborative problem-solving skills.*** The complexity of today's knowledge/art has placed high value on the outcomes gained by multi-disciplinary teams who have worked together to solve perplexing problems within specific timeframes. Urgent and complex problems, such as HIV/AIDS, the effects of greenhouse gases, or the nature of poverty and social exclusion foster collaborative multi-disciplinary approaches both inside the university and in the communities where citizens and professionals grapple with these issues. University graduates need to know how to work with others to achieve goals. Joint decision-making, pacing, and persistence are difficult to measure but are important aspects of how our graduates will need to live their lives.
- ***A heightened appreciation of ethical issues.*** Human endeavors have impacts on people and on our shared environment. The connections brought to our awareness by globalization raise critical ethical issues that are an integral part of university students' curricula no matter what their field of study. In all areas, ethical questions must be posed and possible ways of addressing them considered. Our graduates need to be able to pose these questions and live by ethical standards that they understand and appreciate. Higher education has a role in helping people to identify and understand their own ethical standards.
- ***Habits of mind that foster integrative and interdisciplinary thinking.*** An often-remarked-upon feature of university-based knowledge is the habit of viewing complex problems through

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recent use and development of this distinction, see Ramsden, Paul (1992) *Learning To Teach in Higher Education*. London: Routledge and Tagg, John (2003) *The Learning Paradigm College*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.

<sup>27</sup> Wenger, Etienne (1998) *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

simplified frames. While this technique is powerful, it has always been true, and is increasingly so today, that students need to be able to understand the frames they are employing and go beyond them when a problem requires it. Experience with integrative and interdisciplinary thinking develops this capacity. Learners who are well practiced at the habit of integrative thinking are open to oppositional or contradictory information or ideas and see them as an interesting challenge rather than not knowing how to respond to them. Integrative thinking fosters curiosity and innovation, two critical learning outcomes of high value in today's world. It is an ongoing challenge for universities to continue dividing the world into useful boxes while enabling and encouraging students to think outside them.

The above themes and core skills represent the kinds of 'learning outcomes' we might wish to ascribe to our students or to the degrees they obtain, but they are not an exhaustive list. The issue for the University of Saskatchewan is that we have not stated these outcomes directly nor have we systematically ensured that they are reflected in program or course planning and development. We need to ensure that we have agreed on the attributes of a University of Saskatchewan graduate and that we have institutionalized these commitments by ensuring that degree programs and courses as well as services are designed with these outcomes in mind. One way to do this is to ensure that the Academic Programs Committee of Council requires learning outcomes in all programs and courses as part of the program approval process.

The preceding ideas are common ones in the contemporary literature on higher education, indicating directions and potentials towards which universities are currently striving. They are exciting, energizing, and challenging ideas that renew the spirit of what a university education is about. No one has a single best model for how to accomplish them – there is opportunity for the University of Saskatchewan to be excellent and to be a leader in the areas of its choice. But, we do have to choose, at least where we wish to begin.

## ***VI. Implications for Teaching and Learning at the University of Saskatchewan: What are we doing? What else do we need to do?***

This Foundational Document began by acknowledging the University of Saskatchewan's reputation for excellence in high quality undergraduate and graduate programs. The University has already made significant commitments in a number of key areas to support student learning and enhance teaching effectiveness. We are not starting from scratch. Indeed, the development of this Foundational Document has already been paralleled and accompanied by incremental action to support teaching and learning. Recent initiatives, some of which are still fledgling, include:

- *creation of the University Learning Centre (ULC) in January 2007 to provide a focal point for the delivery of support services for students and faculty campus-wide. The ULC has as its goal the active advocacy of exemplary practices and innovations in teaching and learning on campus and beyond. Addressing teaching and learning needs of both instructors and students, the ULC works collaboratively with colleges, departments, and administrative units to coordinate and, where appropriate, conduct programs and initiatives that complement and augment existing efforts in teaching and learning support; enhance student success; nurture teaching excellence; yield research opportunities; and support University-wide goals to improve the student experience and to deliver high quality educational programs. The ULC is the home for three related subunits: the ULC student programming group which provides service learning, peer counseling, writing and math help and readiness programs to students; the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness (GMCTE) which focuses on supporting faculty and instructional staff on campus to*

improve teaching and instructional content; and the Centre for Distributed Learning (CDL) which focuses on research into learning and teaching technology within the University.

- *implementation of the Undergraduate Forum* in September 2007 to provide a vehicle for bringing together students and administrators to discuss issues related to the student experience which have University-wide implications. Early indications are that this Forum is providing a venue for sharing practices and developing policies to address student issues.

- *adoption of the Student Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) by University Council as a validated instructor/course evaluation instrument for use by any or all academic units at the University of Saskatchewan* in June 2007. An implementation plan for full distribution and utilization of the SEEQ was developed during the 2007/08 academic year and the SEEQ was used in 22 departments within seven colleges and one school (Agriculture and Bioresources, Arts and Science, Education, Engineering, Kinesiology, Medicine, Nursing, and the Edwards School of Business).

- *amalgamation of the Registrar's Office and Student Services into Student and Enrolment Services Division (in 2002) and the creation of Student Central* to provide a 'one-stop' centre as an entry point and front-line service provider for undergraduate and graduate students with the University. In operation since 2004, Student Central is now a well established centre on campus. Annually, graduate and undergraduate students phone, e-mail or visit Student Central for a variety of services and support. Staff are trained to provide information and options with consideration for each student's individual needs and unique situation. In addition, online services and other technologies have improved accessibility and relieved staff from some of the more routine tasks, allowing them to focus on more complex student needs. More deliberate and automated forms of activity tracking are being developed and implemented this year (2008) to direct future service enhancements.
- *creation of the Aboriginal Student Centre (ASC)* to provide support programs and services to students who self-declare as being of Aboriginal ancestry and who register with the centre. The ASC assists with setting up cultural meeting places and ceremonies both on and off campus, acts as a resource for faculty and staff, as well as provides essential supports for Aboriginal students. It works with the Aboriginal First Year Experience Program (AFYEP) which aims to increase first-year retention rates and encourage Aboriginal student enrolment in all areas of study. Since 2005, the ASC has been working with the College of Arts and Science Math and Science Enrichment Program.
- *implementation of the GSR 989, Introduction to University-level teaching course, and its further development* into Transforming Teaching, a primarily online course for faculty. The Gwenna Moss Teaching and Learning Centre (now the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness) established GSR 989 and created the framework for Transforming Teaching. Both courses are being offered annually with three sections of GSR 989 planned for the fall of 2008.
- *approval of new Standards for Tenure and Promotion [2002]* which provide a clearer articulation of the evidence that needs to be assembled to support teaching as one of the mandatory categories of assessment for tenure and promotion considerations.
- *creation of a Vice-Provost for Teaching and Learning* in July 2008 to provide inspirational and visionary leadership for academic innovation at the University of Saskatchewan by facilitating,

supporting, and leading the University's academic innovation agenda including innovation in programs, instruction, outcomes, and the student academic experience.

- *college/department/unit based initiatives*: Many departments and colleges have been reviewing and implementing program innovations in ways too numerous to record here. As the *Second Integrated Plan* developed, it became clear that teaching and learning were prominent in the planning of colleges, departments and administrative units. This high level of interest translated into the first priority area in the plan: improve the undergraduate and graduate student experience, both inside and outside the classroom. The implementation plan for the *Second Integrated Plan* should highlight college/department/unit based initiatives which support teaching and learning.

While we have addressed some critical gaps and needs, there is still much more that we can do. In this regard, it is worth re-stating the argument presented by Derek Bok in *Our Underachieving Colleges*. Bok argues that **universities are not engaging in systematic program design, delivery and evaluation to improve the quality of education.**<sup>28</sup> He suggests that although educational research provides evidence that engaging students in learning is more effective than traditional methods of teaching, this research is largely ignored. While course content is updated on a regular basis, **there is a lack of emphasis on core skills such as analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, writing skills, and civic engagement.** Teaching must be rewarded and **universities need to develop a clear set of values, educational priorities and directions that are implemented campus-wide.** Learning from others and building on shared experiences, we need to make important advances. By grouping the areas for improvement together, the work ahead becomes more obvious.

1. **DEVELOP CORE SKILLS IN STUDENTS.** Building on the description provided in the previous section, every student should demonstrate a set of core competencies at graduation. These should include (but not necessarily be limited to):
  - Strong analytical, literacy/numeracy skills and methodological sophistication
  - The ability to communicate in a variety of settings with a variety of media
  - A level of comfort with and proficiency in information and communications technology
  - A deep understanding of a particular area of academic work
  - An advanced appreciation of intercultural knowledge
  - A strong and developed capacity for collaborative problem-solving skills
  - A heightened appreciation of ethical issues
  - Habits of mind that foster integrative and interdisciplinary thinking.

While many of our academic programs implicitly and sometimes explicitly contribute to the development of these core competencies in our students, we need to be more mindful and deliberate in incorporating these outcomes into our curricula and instructional activities. In the creation of new programs and the delivery and assessment of existing programs, explicit attention to these competencies ought to be demonstrated. In the evaluation of the effectiveness of our instructors and the performance of our students, these competencies need to be taken into consideration.

2. **CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT (PROGRAM AND COURSE DESIGN).** Building on the description provided in the previous section, the University should commit to the systematic analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation of courses and programs. This effort should include opportunities for interdisciplinarity, new teaching techniques and new learning opportunities for students. Initially, we should:

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the following chapters: learning to communicate, learning to think, building character, preparation for citizenship, improving the quality of undergraduate education.

- ***Build experiential learning programs of all types more deliberately into curricular offerings.*** The idea of experiential learning<sup>29</sup> is intuitively straightforward. Students use direct, concrete, experiences to construct generalized knowledge that can be applied to new situations. The emphasis is on the individual learner, who, sometimes with a minimum of direction, confronts a learning opportunity and extracts a learning experience. This type of learning is deeply personal and requires the learner to be actively involved, not simply attentive. The teacher is responsible for constructing the learning experiences, but the evaluation process itself is shared between student and instructor. Examples range from internships, clerkships, and co-operative education programs, to group presentations, field work, service learning programs, and independent research projects. These are powerful learning opportunities. Supports will have to be provided to assist faculty, but the message from students is clear: we need more of these opportunities. Experiential learning also can involve engagement, through credit learning activities, with external communities and their frequently interdisciplinary issues and ideas. In these respects experiential learning not only makes the world real to the student by giving them an academically relevant experience in the community, but also makes the university real to the outside public by inviting the community into the university more systematically. Such learning also assists with a related task, facilitation of students' transition into the roles that will be expected of them as productive members of society and as citizens. Forms of experiential learning with a focus on community and critical reflection, such as service learning, or community service-learning (CSL) have great potential to provide meaningful interchanges between students and a variety of local or international communities, to provide opportunities for research linkages, and to experience multidisciplinary, issues-based team approaches. At the university level, capacity to support new experiential and community-based learning needs to be further developed. It would, in addition, be of interest to explore a possible supportive role by the University of Saskatchewan Alumni Association in developing experiential learning opportunities in settings where alumni are active.
- ***Build inquiry-based learning opportunities into the curriculum to connect learning with discovery more deliberately.*** The University of Saskatchewan has built a considerable infrastructure to support research and scholarly work, particularly in the sciences, over the past decade. The University needs to ensure that the full benefit of these investments is made available to undergraduate and graduate students. As the Boyer Commission articulated, only in a research intensive and engaged university can a student make the connection between learning and discovery. The *Second Integrated Plan* makes a strong commitment to innovation in programs and specifically singles out the need to link teaching and research/scholarly and artistic work through the creation of inquiry-based learning opportunities for students throughout their programs.
- ***Develop multiple measures of learning outcomes for courses and programs.*** Continuous improvement or development of courses and programs in universities is an idea which

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<sup>29</sup> Experiential learning is normally defined as engaged learning in which the learner experiences a visceral connection to the subject matter. Good experiential learning combines direct experience that is meaningful to the student with guided reflection and analysis. It is a challenging, active, student-centered process that impels students toward opportunities for taking initiative, responsibility, and decision making. There are many forms of experiential learning including cooperative education programs, internships, service learning, inquiry-based learning, practicum, work study, international study abroad programs. For some definitions, please see: [http://www.communityservicelearning.ca/en/welcome\\_glossary.cfm](http://www.communityservicelearning.ca/en/welcome_glossary.cfm) or <http://www.compact.org/faqs/sldefinitions.html> or go to [www.usask.ca/ip](http://www.usask.ca/ip) to access a document prepared by the University Learning Centre describing varieties of experiential learning.

assumes that even things that are good can always be made better. In the past, the majority of changes took place at the course level; overall learning outcomes and the design and sequencing of courses received less attention. Student complaints signal that there were design/sequencing/overlap issues in a number of cases. The focus is beginning to shift from course to programs, particularly for the professional programs, but there is more that we can do. A key element in a learning-outcomes-based program is the authentic assessment of student achievement. While the traditional multiple choice quiz and/or essay can still be valuable if used appropriately, instructors and students must strive to find alternative ways to measure outcomes from the various learning activities within the program. These can include such things as portfolios, interviews, and team projects. Course evaluations are critical but must focus on what students thought of the learning and not just whether they “liked” the course or instructor. Part of this should measure how involved they became in their own learning and how much effort they put into the activities. Exit interviews are one way to also measure how effective whole programs have been and how they might be adjusted to meet student and instructor needs. Here it is important to distinguish between “wants” and “needs”. Authentic assessment means that it is something meaningful in process and outcome for both instructors and learners and that it blends both wants and needs across the diversity of instructors and learners in a particular program. In other words, it is not only the individual student or the individual instructor who is evaluated, but the learning environment and the program; it is not only performance that is evaluated, but outcomes. Thinking in this fashion involves something of a paradigm shift. Leadership needs to come at each level of the university: departments, colleges, and the Office of the Provost and Vice-President Academic.

- ***Encourage innovation within our courses and programs.*** Generally the University relies on the individual faculty member to create a course and envision all of the learning opportunities, methodologies, etc. Somewhat too often, courses are designed individually with little apparent attention to the connection between courses and the program of study. Students often complain about the repetitive nature of course offerings, a sure sign that the program content is not clearly articulated or that learning outcomes have been advanced. Some aspects of this problem can be addressed by specific measures outlined in this Document. However, the solution also more generally lies in an organizational culture that values learning and expects innovation. The tone for such a culture is set by the university’s academic leaders, among whom the Provost and Vice-President Academic should be charged with a particular responsibility. Colleges and departments can also assist through the creation of committees which support program innovations which enhance teaching and learning throughout the University.
- ***Engage students in community based learning and experiential learning of all types.*** Students and scholars of education agree that hands-on learning focused on practical problems provides important benefits to students: not only that they develop and retain deeper understanding, but also that they learn integrative thinking. Where experiential learning takes more formal shape as an identifiable activity or component such as internship or volunteer service, it also helps students document their experience for career purposes. The key feature is that engagement with real – physical, social, or spiritual – issues makes clear both to students and to the outside public that university education *matters* and makes a difference. Some institutions have set a goal that every student complete an experiential-learning activity prior to completion of an undergraduate degree.
- ***Commit to periodic assessment of programs and of academic and support units.*** Much has been learned from our experience with the Systematic Program Review (SPR) process,

particularly in the review of academic programs. Yet, we know that there are many more activities within the University that directly relate to the student experience which can and should be evaluated. We know that many other universities focus on the unit (department, college, administrative unit) or the services provided as the points of measurement. We know too that unit reviews are increasingly undertaken to ensure that appropriate systems and processes are in place to support the academic goals and directions of the University, not just to evaluate the quality of a particular unit (although that continues to be an important consideration). While we will constantly strive to improve our programs, our services, and our organizational structures, we need to assess our progress against exemplary practices in other jurisdictions to ensure that we are not ‘stagnant’ while others are moving ahead. This can be done in conjunction with the development of college and unit plans which are an integral component of the Integrated Planning Initiative. This may also be required where critical programs and services are identified or singled out for specific attention. While a systematic review of units will not be centrally sponsored, standards need to be created and reviews need to be conducted to inform planning. The Provost and Vice-President Academic has a clear responsibility in this regard.

- ***Provide excellent support for improvement of classroom teaching and innovation in course design.*** In the course of the discussions about this Foundational Document, various faculty members expressed an interest in professional development including peer mentoring and coaching, using sabbatical leaves and conferences to develop teaching ability, creating an in-house system of teaching certification, working with all faculty to create teaching dossiers, and many other approaches. Behind many of these ideas lies the common goal of encouraging innovation and experimentation with a wide variety of teaching methodologies – active learning, problem-based learning, first year seminars, and generally a richer array or options to suit different learning styles within programs. While many of these ideas need to be worked on within colleges, units, and programs, at the university level the University Learning Centre and the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness were created to be the University’s main agent for leading, promoting and supporting excellence and innovation in teaching. EMAP, which has a core group of instructional design experts, should also provide assistance in course and program design and in particular in ensuring that program goals are mapped throughout the curriculum and that programs and courses are intentionally designed to offer a wider array of possibilities for students.

- ***Provide excellent physical space, IT infrastructure and multi-media support for teaching.*** Although the University has undertaken a classroom renewal and upgrade project beginning in 1998 under the leadership of EMAP, there is still considerably more that needs to be done. Students and, particularly, instructors made plain that space and equipment provide constraints on adopting new formats and methods of learning in many cases. By definition it is difficult to adjust constructed physical spaces quickly, but it is urgent to ensure a continuing dialogue between evolving academic needs and learning innovations on one hand, and essential support services provided by Information Technology Services, EMAP and by Facilities Management on the other, all of which need to be integrated into long-term capital planning. In this context the Provost’s Committee on Integrated Planning needs to work with the Planning and Priorities Committee of University Council, to ensure the smoothest possible co-ordination between different parts of the University.

### 3. **FOCUS ON TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY LIFE AND ON THE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS.** Much of the information gleaned from the University of

Saskatchewan Retention Study pointed towards the need to address the critical transition from high school to university and to build a strong support system for first year students. This will require the effort of the whole university community, ensuring that new students are welcomed and supported as they experience higher education. Initially, we should:

- ***Reach out to facilitate a successful transition into university education.*** Many students face great difficulties in their first year at the University. The move to a new city, a different scale of educational institution, a less controlling educational environment combined with a myriad of social and personal pressures to make the first year on campus difficult and challenging. Students have to learn how to be university students and have to do so under considerable pressure and with severe time constraints. The University needs to work with guidance counselors, parents, community leaders, teachers and prospective students to gain a better understanding of their needs before they enter the doors of academe. It needs to work more closely with the K-12 system to make university education less of a mystery and a more intentional choice for students and to help the K-12 system find ways to ensure that students coming to university have the preparation they need for advanced study. Student Enrolment Services Division (SESD) is the University's most important facilitator and point of contact with the secondary system, and SESD needs to draw in colleges and faculty for direct dialogue with K-12 educators. At the same time, the direct-entry colleges need to concentrate on supporting successful transition, to provide adequate counseling and advising, and to rapidly identify at-risk learners.
- ***Focus on the first year experience of students and develop retention strategies that ensure academically talented students complete degree programs.*** At the University of Saskatchewan, we guard our academic standards with great vigour. At the same time, we must examine our practices and make adjustments to ensure that we are not systematically deterring capable students from completing programs of study at our University. Stated differently, we must ensure that we provide appropriate learning and social support mechanisms so that students achieve success in our academic programs. The recently completed Retention Study and the results of a growing number of student surveys highlight the need for the University to be pro-active, to create necessary support programs and services, to ensure that these talented students obtain the help they need to succeed at this crucial stage in their academic career. Student and Enrolment Services Division, the University Learning Centre, and the colleges and academic departments all have important roles to play in ensuring student participation and retention. Among strategies to be pursued, particularly, within colleges, the fostering of student "learning communities" and other forms of peer-to-peer student interaction is particularly promising, notably for students of Aboriginal background.

4. **EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO DELIVER PROGRAMS AND TO SUPPORT LIFELONG LEARNING GOALS.** The University of Saskatchewan has traditionally counted on students to come to the University campus to study. In this era, we must explore and adopt alternative approaches to deliver our programs. Initially, we should:

- ***Expand flexible opportunities to access the University in community settings.*** New and emerging information communication technologies (ICT) make it possible for the University to expand access options for those wishing to undertake a University education, including, for example, improved access for rural, remote and regional communities. Yet as a University our standard model of teaching and learning might be called "assembled learning." In this model, learners and a teacher assemble at the same time in the same room. Learning is



facilitated largely through the use of spoken language in real time. This model has great advantages, which is why it has persisted for centuries. However, it also has disadvantages for some learners, who may have difficulty getting to the place where this “assembled learning” occurs or getting there at the designated time, or even keeping up to the pace set by the instructor. At the University of Saskatchewan, there is growing use of e-learning technologies in our various academic offerings, supporting both the standard model and a new distributed learning model where the “learning assembly” is virtual and the constraints of special co-location, time synchronicity and pace of activity are relaxed. However, it can create new problems such as the challenge of creating “social presence” in a learning environment that may rely more heavily on written rather than spoken communication, particularly when that communication is asynchronous. The colleges and departments need to work with the academic support units (Centre for Continuing and Distance Education (CCDE), Educational Media Access and Production Division (EMAP), University Learning Centre (ULC) and Information Technology Services (ITS)) to ensure that the University of Saskatchewan grows in its competency and capacity for distributed learning. While the CCDE and EMAP have expertise in program delivery and e-learning design, the roles and activities of these units do not replace those of departments and colleges which will continue to have overall responsibility for courses and programs, including those delivered by non-traditional means.

- ***Expand the University’s emphasis on e-learning.*** At the University, we make use of a variety of e-learning technologies including presentation technologies (e.g. Power Point), communication technologies (e.g. e-mail, chatrooms, discussion forums, video-conferencing), learning management systems (e.g. Blackboard), websites and learning portals (e.g. PAWS), learner response systems (e.g. surveys and Clickers), and discipline specific software (e.g. simulations, educational games, etc.). There are a number of courses that are fully online (without face-to-face classroom interaction), while many other courses employ blending of e-learning technologies with face-to-face instruction. All indications here and elsewhere point to significant growth in e-learning in the next several years. Unfortunately, we have not yet fully articulated a strategy for e-learning. A draft e-learning strategy document has been discussed with the Teaching and Learning Committee and Deans’ Council in 2007, but the document has not received widespread discussion and no implementation plan has been finalized and approved. An ad hoc committee has been created to set priorities in e-learning, but to date has focused mainly on how to allocate Government Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) funds to develop new online courses. As we increasingly adopt more of the distributed learning model in all our teaching and learning endeavours, we must pay attention not only to the relevant administrative and financial issues, but also to relevant pedagogical issues. Several ideas were advanced in the draft e-learning strategy document, including the structure for e-learning leadership, planning and coordination; improved integration of online courses into the curriculum; and enhancement of e-learning research. It is clear that the University of Saskatchewan needs to make systematic and systemic advances in e-learning to remain competitive. We also must move beyond the situation where a small group of enthusiasts do e-learning projects. E-learning technologies must be appropriately and systematically built into our courses, programs and procedures.
- ***Give students the tools for self directed learning.*** Colleges and other specialist units, such as the Library and the University Learning Centre, play an important role in assisting students to become self-directed, life-long learners, well beyond the initial years of their University education. In this context, teaching students to find their way through the maze of information currently available (including on the Internet) and evaluate it, is critical. Students gain skill at learning through experience and mentorship. It is important that through

our academic programs, students have opportunities to hone their learning skills and are provided the tools to become more successful learners. One goal of a university education is to prepare students for a lifetime of learning; to offer them skills in communication, literacy, numeracy and critical thinking valuable throughout their lives. Academic programs and supplemental educational experiences need to be coordinated to achieve an appropriate level of disciplinary knowledge, measured by explicit planned learning outcomes, as well as a suitable capability with the complementary learning skills that cut across knowledge domains. Explicit teaching of the skills associated with self-directed learning rarely finds its way into disciplinary courses. Auxiliary learning opportunities afforded through the Library and the University Learning Centre are directed toward these foundational learning skills. Partnerships between academic departments and the Library and the University Learning Centre can provide a beneficial synergy to help students acquire these important life-learning skills.

5. **ESTABLISH MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT OUR COMMITMENT TO TEACHING AND LEARNING.**

From the research conducted in the development of this Foundational Document, it is clear that the University of Saskatchewan has to re-state its commitment to teaching and learning and reinforce that commitment at every level within the University. Initially, we must:

- ***Recognize and reward outstanding teaching by individual instructors and academic units.*** Recognizing and rewarding teaching excellence is one way to encourage instructors to focus and concentrate on improving their teaching. Outstanding teaching comes in many styles and many forms. Carefully designed courses, lectures, and instructional activities along with pedagogically sound curricula and programs contribute to outstanding educational experiences for students. Because the University values excellence and innovation in teaching, those academic units and instructors who are identified by students or peers as providing excellent instruction deserve special recognition and treatment. Thus it remains important to encourage and document accomplishments and improvements in teaching, and those providing a comparatively low standard of instruction must be guided to seek out assistance and make improvements. Department heads and deans have a primary responsibility to guide their faculty to document their teaching and to access support services such as those of the University Learning Centre; to guide tenure and promotions committees to recognize what has been documented; and where appropriate to institute new awards and forms of recognition. The Provost and Vice-President Academic has a supportive role to play. A possibility would be to focus a segment of the Department Head Leadership Development Program on brainstorming and problem-solving around this issue. Another might be the creation of a *Provost's Series on Teaching and Learning* to provide an opportunity for excellent faculty and instructional staff to showcase their approaches or to provide a high profile venue to discuss issues related to teaching and learning, such as articulation agreements with other post-secondary institutions, the relationship of the University to the K-12 system, e-learning, course and curricular design, international, discovery-based and experiential learning approaches and opportunities. It will be important to commit to publicize and promote the University's teaching and learning innovations, successes, approaches through University Advancement vehicles, such as the University's website, the Annual Report, the *Green and White*, *On Campus News* and college or department-based publications of all types.
- ***Demonstrate at all levels that the University of Saskatchewan values learning and teaching.*** There can be no doubt that effective teaching and successful learning are vital to

the academic mission of the University. Commitment to our teaching and learning mission needs to be made visible, through recognition of and rewarding teaching and learning excellence, through public displays celebrating learning and teaching, through participation in national teaching and learning societies, and through investment in improving teaching and learning. Recognition and rewards, celebration of success, and investment in improving teaching and learning needs to occur at department, college and University-wide levels. College Review Committees can take steps to systematically recognize and reward excellence in teaching, the University Review Committee can review the Standards for Tenure and Promotion to ensure that they adequately reflect teaching requirements and roles, academic units can make investments in supporting innovation in teaching, and the entire university community can applaud demonstrations of success. These affirmations of the value of teaching and learning need to be embraced and endorsed by students, staff, faculty and senior administrators alike. University teaching is a learned skill for which assistance is required. Further, learning and teaching initiatives need to be celebrated in a wide variety of ways to ensure that prospective students, the people of Saskatchewan, parents, faculty, and other interested groups understand that the University values teaching and learning as much as it values the research, scholarly and creative work of its faculty. The efforts recently undertaken to promote research and scholarship need to be extended to the realm of teaching and learning, not as a separate exercise, but as an integral part of a mutually reinforcing effort to promote the University to the widest possible constituency of prospective students, undergraduate and graduate, as an institution striving for excellence in all key dimensions. In so doing, we articulate a critical message about the value that we place on teaching and learning that resonates both on and off campus.

- ***Adopt a bill of rights or a set of guiding principles for teaching and learning.*** This should initially be the work of the Teaching and Learning Committee of Council and should focus the attention of the entire University on the importance of new approaches and renewed commitment to teaching and learning. While such a statement would be non-binding, it would set direction, influence organizational culture, and authorize particular kinds of experiments (to be developed through normal processes). Such a statement could include:
  - equality and interdependence of teaching and research
  - respect for academic freedom
  - integrity and ethical practice in academic endeavours
  - student-centered learning and teaching
  - support for lifelong learning
  - research-enhanced learning and teaching
  - an integrated and coherent student experience
  - recognition and celebration of diversity
  - continuous improvement of teaching and learning
  - variety in learning environments and learning experiences
  - commitment to enabling student academic success
  - preparation of students for roles as citizens
  
- ***Assist students to develop a portfolio that captures their learning experience and conveys student interests and skills.*** One way of articulating the key outcomes of a university education is to identify the elements of personal development that result from the academic experience and prepare learners to deal with new situations. These elements, sometimes referred to as capabilities, typically include critical reflection, self-assessment, goal-setting, problem formulation, and negotiation skills. A learning portfolio is both a process and a product that provides the context for presenting these capabilities in a systematic way. The term “portfolio” is well-known in fine arts fields, and is increasingly valued in other fields of

higher education and professional preparation. The evidence of personal growth consists primarily of written entries by the learners themselves, complemented by the presentation of artifacts collected in the course of experiential learning. In some universities, students are guided to develop a learning portfolio that monitors their personal growth and presents their achievements over the course of their undergraduate experience.

6. **ENGAGE STUDENTS IN CONSULTATION ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE.** This Foundational Document attempts to systematically record the impressions and evaluations of students about their teaching and learning experience at the University of Saskatchewan. It is essential that this not be an episode in time, but an ongoing conversation, with a wide variety of students and with regular feedback opportunities. Further, from the research conducted in the development of this Foundational Document we know that features of institutions which foster student engagement and persistence demonstrate an unshakeable focus on student learning, clearly marked pathways to student success, an improvement oriented ethos, and shared responsibility for educational quality and student success.<sup>30</sup> As a starting point, we must:

- ***Ensure regular on-going and systematic consultation with students and visible outcomes from these consultations.*** There are three interrelated needs in connection with ensuring that student voices and student interests are present in shaping teaching and learning. First, students need to be present and visible as is now frequently the case on many university-level and departmental committees. Second, student input, student reactions, and evidence about student experiences need to be solicited regularly at all levels. Listening to student representatives, conducting surveys and student evaluations of teaching, and holding focus groups or other meetings are all aspects of collecting necessary views and information. But third, the impact of this information on subsequent decisions needs to be documented particularly when it comes to teaching evaluations. Because the time of many students on campus is comparatively brief, they will not often be able to see directly how their own input has changed a program or an educational strategy. This makes it all the more important for departments, colleges, and university leaders to document how the positions they take have been influenced by past student input. Creating a narrative of student involvement is part of creating an inclusive campus community.

## VII. Next Steps

Teaching and learning are high priorities of the University of Saskatchewan. This fact is evidenced by what we have done, what we are currently doing, and what we will do over the next few years.

The development of this Foundational Document has already informed the *Second Integrated Plan* as well as activity in colleges, departments and units in small but meaningful changes in our University. It will continue to do so.

As indicated in the preceding pages, the University of Saskatchewan has made a number of key commitments to change and improve the teaching and learning environment, and we have allocated new resources to achieve our goals. Significant changes include the establishment of the University

<sup>30</sup> Kuh, G, Kinzie, J., Whitt, E. & Associates, (2005). *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions that Matter*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons. In a study of 20 universities involved in the Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project, six shared institutional features were identified to foster student engagement and persistence. In addition to those mentioned in the text, these included a 'living' mission and 'lived' educational philosophy and environments adapted for educational richness.

Learning Centre, the creation of an Undergraduate Forum, and the establishment of Student Central. Faculty members have been doing a great deal to introduce innovative new practices in courses, to evaluate and improve teaching and course design, and to ensure quality education through ongoing redevelopment of courses and programs.

As a university, we need to take this activity to a higher level: to build inquiry-based learning, experiential learning, and other quality approaches systematically into our *programs* in ways that will distinguish undergraduate and graduate learning at the University of Saskatchewan. The focus needs to shift from individual efforts by individual faculty to broad, shared, and defining approaches across and between programs. This also means a shift from organizational structures providing general, central support services to *leadership* structures and priorities for curricular change. Critically, the connection between learning and discovery needs to be more prominent and the skills which we want students to demonstrate upon graduation need to be articulated. Resources will need to be allocated to support these new priorities; the Integrated Planning process provides the opportunity to do so.

New ideas about the importance of teaching and learning have informed the development of the University's *Second Integrated Plan* as well as the plans of colleges and administrative units, and part of the implementation of the ideas outlined in this document is to be found in those plans. Now that the Plan is approved, the University's focus is shifting towards implementation. While a broad-scale discussion on major elements associated with this Foundational Document will need to occur, it is essential that implementation begin under the leadership of the new Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning.

The University of Saskatchewan is building from established strength in undergraduate and graduate education as evidenced through Systematic Program Review and the surveys that have been completed over the past seven years. This Foundational Document asks faculty and the University to do what they have always done, to rethink and improve university learning in light of new knowledge and changing needs of students and society. It asks students to continue to help guide our efforts through participation in surveys, programs, and evaluations of all types. Collectively, not just individually, we need to consider new approaches and ideas, to identify principles and outcomes, to support and enhance existing activity and effort: all of this to create greater impact and a more unified approach towards teaching and learning across the campus. If teaching and learning are to take a more prominent place in our thinking and actions, we are obliged to ensure that what we are currently doing meets the standard and expectations of students in the 21st century. We owe them nothing less.

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## **APPENDIX ONE: *Annotated Bibliography***

Boyer, Ernest L. (1997). *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. New York: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Scholarship (which encompasses the dichotomized research and teaching) has always been central to universities. Boyer calls for a reconsideration of what scholarship means, amidst a growing emphasis on research. His central argument is that the professoriate has four functions: the Scholarship of Discovery; the Scholarship of Integration; the Scholarship of Application; and the Scholarship of Teaching. The Scholarship of Discovery means classical research. The Scholarship of Integration takes what has been discovered and puts it in perspective. It gives isolated facts meaning and makes connections across disciplines. The Scholarship of Application applies knowledge to (social) problems. “Theory and practice vitally interact” and service and citizenship are foregrounded. The Scholarship of Teaching purports that “the work of the professor becomes consequential only as it is understood by others” (p. 22). Creativity is required in measuring and acknowledging excellence in all of these. Evaluation of faculty work, including teaching should be broadened, individualized, and continuous (p. 50).

Strum Kenny, Shirley et al (The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University). (1998). *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America’s Research Universities*. New York: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The Boyer Commission report focuses on R1 research institutions (in the United States) and advocates for the importance of effective teaching in research intensive institutions, recognizing it has been lacking in the past (p. 5). Research institutions offer a “clear alternative” to a college experience (i.e. an American liberal arts institution). The authors use a metaphor of university as ecosystem (community) where everyone should be a discoverer (p. 9). They include “An Academic Bill of Rights”, outlining the institution and students’ commitments (p. 12). They name ten ways to change undergraduate education, many of which dovetail with the objectives of the Teaching and Learning Foundational Document at the University of Saskatchewan: research-based learning; inquiry-based first year; building on the first year experience; promoting interdisciplinarity; linking communication skills to course work; using information technology creatively; culminating with a capstone experience; educating graduate students as apprentice teachers; and cultivating a sense of community.

Smith, S. 1991. *The report of the commission of inquiry on Canadian university education*. Ottawa, ON: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

Smith highlights the importance of Boyer’s vision of scholarship and outlines several initiatives that Canadian universities should undertake to promote, enhance, and develop teaching. Although he suggests that assessment of teaching performance, as well changes in the faculty reward structure are critical, he also points out that faculty should be given the opportunity to decide the primary basis on which they are evaluated (research or teaching).

National Panel Report. (2002). *Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Calling for institutions that provide “learning of lasting value,” this National Panel Report urges American universities to reconsider what (and how) students should learn once they enter into post-secondary education. Universities must meet, in a cohesive manner, the expectations of students, their families, communities, the work force, and the academic culture. *Each* group’s expectations of a

university graduate can be met by producing “empowered, informed, and responsible” learners. The U of S will benefit from the report’s recommendations for supporting such learners, through adequate preparation prior to entering the institution, integrating its curricula, clearly articulating expected outcomes and standards, and collaborating with those within and outside of the academy.

Knapper, C. 2005. *Teaching and learning in Canada’s research universities*. Notes for presentation to Canadian Summit on the Integration of Teaching and Research, University of Alberta, August 4, 2005. Accessed March 2, 2008, from [http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/researchandstudents/pdfs/ChrisKnapper-TeachingandLearninginCanada'sResearchUniversities\(paper\).pdf](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/researchandstudents/pdfs/ChrisKnapper-TeachingandLearninginCanada'sResearchUniversities(paper).pdf)

This document is a set of notes that accompanied Dr. Knapper’s presentation for the Canadian Summit on the Integration of Teaching and Research at the University of Alberta in 2005. The following is taken from the summary posted at the above URL: “There is a growing body of empirical research on university teaching and learning and a growing consensus about how teaching methods and instructional climate affect student learning approaches. This keynote will describe the highlights of this research and examine its implications for the way we undertake teaching and curriculum planning in research universities. How much of our teaching practice is based on the evidence from current research? What is effective learning in university; how can it be enhanced, and what evidence do we have for the effectiveness of our programs and teaching methods? How can we encourage a culture of teaching scholarship that might inform good practice for the future?”

Kellogg Commission. (1990). *The engaged institution*. Returning to Our Roots, third report.

The Kellogg Commission provides the results of a study on “engaging institutions”, using the “institutional portraits” of numerous American land-grant universities as best practice models. Land-grant universities each boast foundations located in their extension work, so there are numerous similarities between the American models, and the University of Saskatchewan. The U of S can benefit from the Kellogg report that focuses on the historical benefits derived from prominent extension work, applied in combination with forward-looking theories and understandings about the modern student’s needs, abilities, and social context. This document provides concise recommendations for increasing institutional engagement, including a seven-part test to be used periodically to check an institution’s level of commitment to and achievement of institutional engagement. This test focuses on seven characteristics: responsiveness, respect for partners, academic neutrality, accessibility, integration, coordination, and resource partnerships.

Palmer, P.J. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher’s life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

In the chapter entitled “Teaching in Community: A Subject-Centered Education”, Palmer discusses the benefits to a subject-centered, rather than teaching or learning-centered approach. Here, he addresses the debate that has recently emerged in the literature- the idea that “students and the act of learning are more important than teachers and the act of teaching” (p.118). He suggests that rather than concentrating on the teacher or the students we should focus on the subject instead (albeit, with the right balance). He follows this discussion with examples of problem-based learning in the section entitled “Teaching from the Microcosm.” Palmer’s key message is interconnectivity- you cannot separate learning from teaching nor teaching from learning. He argues that “good teaching is always and essentially communal” leaving us with the message that cultivating a respectful, supportive, and engaging community around teaching is just as important as creating the same environment around students and learning.

Powney, J. ed. (2002). *Successful Student Diversity: Case Studies in Learning and Teaching and Widening Participation*. England: HEFCE.

Using examples of practice from twenty-three institutions of higher education (in the United Kingdom), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) identifies common principles regarding the success and retention of under-represented students, for the purposes of strategic planning. This document is valuable because rather than being prescriptive, it highlights several different yet equally effective models, allowing the reader to identify the models that are most relevant to his/her home institution and its mission. The U of S seeks, in the Foundational Document, to address the teaching and learning beliefs and practices at all levels of the institution. This document offers models that represent the institution as a whole, and models at the college, departmental, and even individual level. Powney is candid and provides cautions regarding potential pitfalls. Some of the terminology may not be immediately familiar (or comfortable), but this should not compromise what the document has to offer.

b) *HEFCE widening participation and fair access research strategy: 2008 update* [to above]

Bok, D. (2006). *Our Underachieving Colleges*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Bok argues that universities are not engaging in systematic program design, delivery and evaluation to improve the quality of education, that although educational research provides evidence that engaging students in learning is more effective than traditional methods of teaching, this research is largely ignored. While course content is updated on a regular basis, there is a lack of emphasis on core skills such as analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, writing skills, and civic engagement. Teaching must be rewarded and institutions need to develop a clear set of values, educational priorities and directions that are implemented campus-wide.

Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J., Whitt, E. & Associates. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Based on a study of twenty universities involved in the Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) project, six shared institutional features were identified that foster student engagement and persistence:

- A “living” mission and “lived” educational philosophy
- An unshakeable focus on student learning
- Environments adapted for educational richness
- Clearly marked pathways to student success
- An improvement oriented ethos and
- Shared responsibility for educational quality and student success.

Kuh is the author of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which is used on an annual basis to obtain information from hundreds of four-year colleges and universities nationwide about student participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college. Survey items in NSSE represent empirically confirmed "good practices" in undergraduate education; i.e., they reflect behaviors by students and institutions that are associated with desired outcomes of college.



Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Based on the study of the practices of three-dozen distinguished university teachers who “had a sustained influence on their students”, Bain explored six broad questions about their practice:

- What do you know about how students learn?
- How do you prepare to teach?
- What do you expect of your students?
- How do you conduct class?
- How do you treat your students?
- How do you evaluate your students and yourself?

Among the findings, he reported that exceptional teachers have an intuitive understanding of human learning. They focus instruction around student learning objectives, rather than content. They set high expectations for their students and emphasize the development of thinking and problem solving skills by providing authentic tasks for their students to grapple with. Exceptional teachers establish a trusting relationship with students based on mutual respect and are continuously looking for ways to improve their practice.

Barr, R. and Tagg, J. *From Teaching to Learning: A new paradigm for undergraduate education*. *Change*, November/December 1995, pp. 13-25. Published by Heldref Publications, Washington, D.C. 20036-1802. Copyright 1995.

Barr and Tagg discuss the shift from an ‘Instructional Paradigm’ to a ‘Learning Paradigm’ where the goal of educational institutions is to produce learning, rather than to deliver content. Focused around learning outcomes, the learning paradigm emphasizes a holistic approach in which a variety of strategies are used to enable students to construct knowledge based on past experiences. Faculty become designers of instruction while learners engage actively in experiences that allow them to integrate new knowledge and skills into their world view. Cooperative and collaborative learning are encouraged.

### ***Recommended Additional Resources***

Knapper, C.B. and Rogers, P. (1994). *Increasing the emphasis on teaching in Ontario universities*. Toronto, ON: Council on University Affairs, Task Force on Resource Allocation.

Although now a bit dated (published in 1994), this paper outlines policy and practice related to teaching and learning in Ontario universities. However, most of the barriers and challenges that Knapper and Rogers identify are still relevant within many Canadian universities. Perhaps the key message from this document is that policy is not enough; practice and institutional climate must grow to reflect the policies (and foundations) that are being developed. Knapper and Rogers provide several useful recommendations on which to model future institutional-level programs for teaching and learning. One area explored in detail is curricular change; a worthwhile initiative mentioned is at Alverno College where programs are based on learning outcomes and student progress towards these learning outcomes is measured.

Wright, W.A. and O'Neil, M.C. (1994). *Perspectives on improving teaching in Canadian universities*. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 24(3), 26-57.

Abstract: (from the article)

“As a result of increasing concerns about the quality of higher education in Canada, many universities have implemented programs and policies aimed at improving teaching. This study examines the perceptions of those individuals who are primarily responsible for teaching improvement activities at fifty-one Canadian degree-granting institutions. Respondents indicated the potential of each of thirty-six practices to improve teaching at their respective institutions. The findings reveal a widespread belief that the greatest teaching improvement potential lies in the provision of incentives to faculty in the form of employment rewards (appointment, tenure, promotion). The role of department heads, deans, and senior administrators in creating an institutional culture which encourages effective instruction is also seen as an important component of a teaching-improvement strategy. Other areas considered include activities and support structures which provide opportunities for faculty to develop their teaching abilities. Practices which seek to evaluate instruction for the purposes of making personnel decisions were seen as having the least potential to improve teaching.”

Taylor Huber, M. and Hutchings, P. (2005). *The advancement of learning: Building the teaching commons*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Abstract: (from: <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/publications/pub.asp?key=43&subkey=1254>)  
“*The Advancement of Learning* answers questions readers are likely to have: What are the defining elements of the scholarship of teaching and learning? What traditions does it build on? What are its distinctive claims and possibilities? What are the implications of the scholarship of teaching and learning for academic culture and careers? How does it shape the student experience? In addition, authors Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings introduce a new concept that expands on the scholarship of teaching and learning—the teaching commons. As the authors explain, the teaching commons is a conceptual space in which communities of educators committed to inquiry and innovation come together to exchange ideas about teaching and learning and use them to meet the challenges of educating students for personal, professional, and civic life.”