Managing Enrolment Strategically at the University of Saskatchewan
2009 Status Report

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Enrolment is an important risk factor for the University of Saskatchewan. A university that strategically manages its enrolment knows the size and characteristics of its current student body, is aware of external environmental factors that influence enrolment (such as demographics) and understands that there are ways in which it can act to influence enrolment. The overarching goal of an enrolment management strategy is to ensure alignment of student activity with the University's capacity and in so doing to fulfill institutional goals (academic, financial, engagement) and students' educational goals. Strategic enrolment management commits the university to an extraordinary level of coordination, to the setting of precise milestones, to reporting progress on identified individual initiatives and to making progress towards achieving enrolment goals around the size and shape of the university's student population.

Contextual Factors

For most of the last three decades the demand for post-secondary education in Canada has exceeded the supply. As a result, most Canadian universities have not worried much about enrolment, and have limited experience in managing enrolment proactively. However, the environment within which universities are currently operating is changing rapidly on a number of fronts, and these changes are beginning to have noticeable effects on university enrolment in many parts of the country, including Saskatchewan.

Demographics

Perhaps the most significant changes are demographic. Across Canada, and in most provinces, the size of the 18-21 year old cohort is decreasing. In Saskatchewan, the drop is particularly dramatic, as shown below.
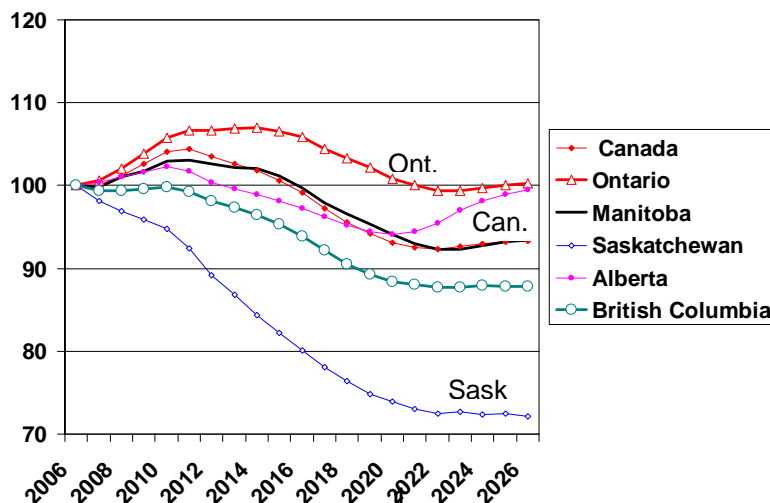
The Saskatchewan high school population has already declined by more than 10% during the last six years (1999/2000 to 2005/2006) and this trend is expected to accelerate over the next few years. While past declines in the traditional university age population were offset by increases in post-secondary participation rates, participation rates are significantly higher now than they were twenty years ago, and it is by no means certain that they will continue to increase sufficiently to make up for the decreasing number of young adults in the future.

The Changing Student

Not only is the size of the university age cohort decreasing sharply, but their motivations, interests, attitudes and other characteristics are also changing. While most of our undergraduates are still in the traditional 18-24 age range, they are now predominantly female, and come from increasingly diverse ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds. They have been characterized as more "careerist" and "employment-focused" in their orientation than past generations, which causes many of them to become more "driven", more reluctant to chose programs based on their interests alone, and less willing to "experiment" in their selection of courses. Many of them work twenty or more hours per week, and are juggling numerous other commitments in their lives. Consequently, fewer take full course loads or follow the "traditional" enrolment pattern of three to four years of full-time study immediately after completing high school. It is not uncommon for students to "stop out" prior to or during their post-secondary studies, alternate between full- and part-time study, or transfer among two or more institutions during their university years. Their learning styles are also changing; they have less experience in listening to lectures, are more accustomed to active and engaged learning, and are completely comfortable in today's highly "plugged in", networked, and multi-tasking world. Finally, they have increasingly high service expectations, especially as the costs of higher education increase, and are not shy about letting us know when their expectations are not being met.

Changes in the Higher Education Landscape

Major changes are also taking place in the broader higher education landscape in Canada. Several new universities and campuses have been established in BC in recent years, and both Alberta and British Columbia have committed to major increases the number of post-secondary seats in their provinces. Not only is post-secondary capacity increasing, but as institutions have been encouraged to offer new types of programs and authorized to grant new types of degrees, there has also been a blurring, blending and overlapping of institutional types and boundaries. New methods of program delivery have also been growing in popularity; enrolment in on-line courses and programs has been growing faster than any other sector of post-secondary education. Today's students perceive themselves as having more institutional choices and being less locally or regionally bound than students were a decade or two ago. The combination of increasing capacity, decreasing demand, blurring institutional boundaries, and the increasing availability and popularity of on-line learning opportunities has led to a more complex and competitive post-secondary market than most of us have ever faced.

Furthermore, because universities have historically operated as quasi-monopolistic organizations with limited competition, they have developed practices and a culture that can make it difficult for them to adapt to the changing demographic, economic and social circumstances in which they now find themselves. For example, because there has historically been strong demand for university seats, there have been limited incentives for universities to develop new and innovative programs, or to offer existing programs in new and innovative ways that will be attractive to students. In some cases a philosophy of "weeding out" that developed in some quarters during the period of high demand continues to function today, and many campuses still lack a strong "culture of service" toward students and prospective students. Until very recently the University of Saskatchewan had strict (and limited) admission quotas for out-of-province and international students, and actively discouraged such students from applying here. Finally, many of the policies, procedures and practices that developed during the period of excess student demand have continued to operate and decision-making within our institutions continues at the slow and leisurely pace that it always has, despite the changing environment.

Graduate Students' Characteristics and Expectations

Many of the same factors that influence undergraduate enrolment influence graduate enrolment, although sometimes in a slightly different way. The impacts of provincial demographic changes differ since graduate students are drawn from an older age cohort (25-35 years of age) and a much wider geographical area than undergraduates. For example, over 25% of our graduate students come from outside Canada and their choices are often affected by their home country demographics and social policies, international political events and immigration policies. The behavior and motivations of graduate students are changing and, like undergraduates, they are now more likely to stop and restart their education, to have multiple commitments and to be strongly career-focused.

Expectations of graduate education are changing. Master's degrees are increasingly viewed as providing specialized skills and an essential credential for professional careers. PhD students are no longer primarily bound for academia and expect training in a broader set of skills. Approximately three-quarters of science and engineering PhD students now pursue careers outside of universities. Successful recruitment toward our enrolment targets for graduate students will require, just as for undergraduate students, aligning our capacity with demand in a way that is consistent with broader University goals. In achieving our graduate student enrolment targets, we need to give attention to innovative programming, competitive student stipends, appropriate research and study space, and exciting research opportunities. We also need to ensure that these are combined with an appropriate array of services to build our reputation for a positive graduate student experience.

Summary

Given all of the changes that are occurring in the post-secondary education sector, in demographics, and in the needs and expectations of learners, it is no wonder that universities across the country are focusing increasing attention on all facets of enrolment management. Some of this effort is targeted at improving institutional marketing and student recruitment, but institutions that approach the issue more strategically understand that effective enrolment management must extend beyond marketing and recruitment. To compete successfully in today's increasingly challenging market, universities must offer innovative programs that are

attractive to students, use effective and engaging pedagogies, provide competitive financial aid packages, ensure that appropriate student housing is available that supports student learning and contributes to the overall student experience, support student retention and success, improve the quality of the physical and social campus environment, provide timely and relevant information, advice and decisions to students, and demonstrate flexibility in its administrative processes. Universities need to be able to explain to prospective students and other audiences what is unique and special about them - what differentiates them from other institutions, in order to provide learners with a compelling reason to choose their institution over their competitors.

Enrolment Goals

The overarching goal of an enrolment management strategy is to ensure alignment of student activity with the University's capacity and in so doing to fulfill institutional goals (academic, financial, engagement) and students' educational goals. The success of the strategy can be measured in a number of ways, including the number of students enrolled at the institution using headcount, 3 credit unit (3CUE) teaching activity, graduation rates, retention rates and average time to completion. While these measures speak to the efficiency of program delivery, the quality of programs and of the learning experience and the level of satisfaction and engagement of students are equally important.

The *Strategic Directions* (2002) declared our intention to make the changes necessary to be among the most distinguished universities in Canada and in the world. We aimed to increase the graduate student population and to diversify our undergraduate population. Building on those goals, the enrolment foundational document (2003) set ambitious targets of 2,500 graduate students and 18,500 undergraduate students for a total institution headcount of 21,000 students by 2010. While the university has had success in attracting increasing numbers of graduate students, our undergraduate enrolment has not grown as had been anticipated. In the Multi-Year Operating Budget Framework, approved alongside the *Second Integrated Plan* in May 2008, the university reiterated the goal to continue the steady growth in graduate student numbers. Given the changing post-secondary environment and the downward trending undergraduate enrolment experienced in the first planning cycle, for budget purposes the university adopted the goal to maintain undergraduate teaching activity at no less than 2007/08 levels during the second planning cycle.
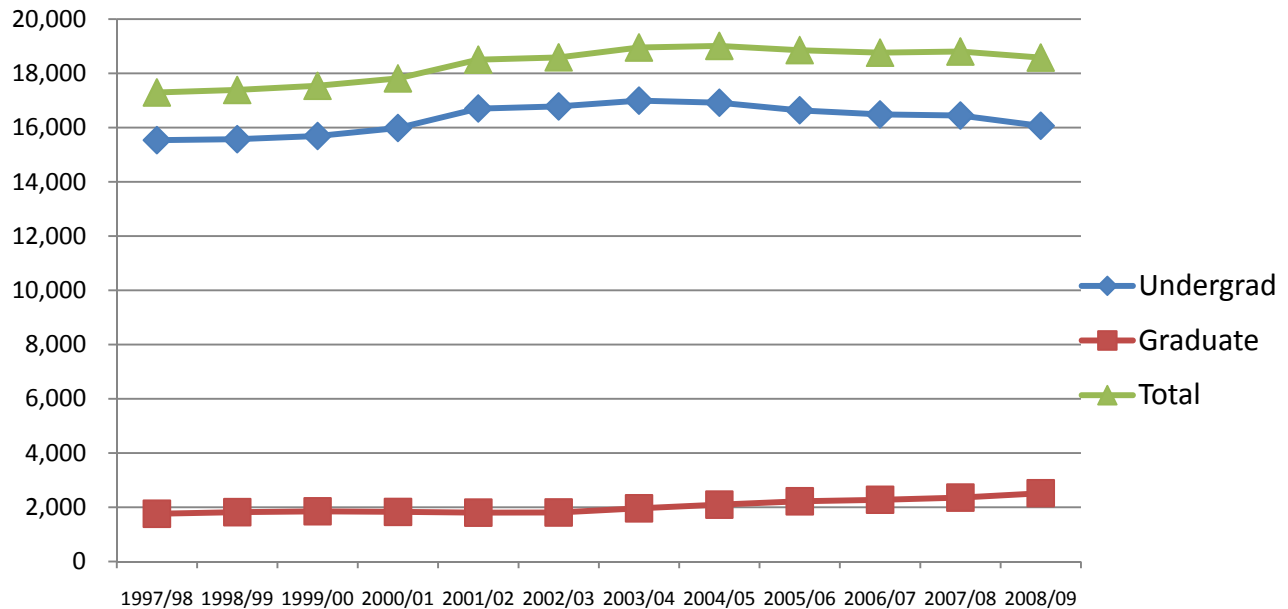
Figure 1: Degree Headcount at the University of Saskatchewan over the past twelve years.

While the university is understandably interested in total university enrolment, strategic enrolment management requires us to also pay attention to where our students come from and where they are studying within the university. The Second Integrated Plan guides us to view the student population from the perspective of different communities of potential students, notably our traditional 18-22 year old population of Saskatchewan secondary school graduates, the Greystone Scholars (a population of academically gifted students), Aboriginal communities (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous peoples), out-of-province Canadian students, and international students. In the enrolment foundational document, and reiterated in the Second Integrated Plan, the University has consistently challenged itself to increase the number of Aboriginal, out-of-province and international students. It is likely that different actions may be required to influence enrolment at the University of Saskatchewan from each of these communities.

Underlying the enrolment goals for the university as a whole are the college and program specific goals for both numbers of students and the diversity of the student population. The university must make conscious decisions to balance the changing demand for particular programs with the strategic decisions regarding capacity in our various academic units.

Strategic Enrolment Management

Strategic enrolment management at a university like ours is a multi-faceted set of functions and activities. While recruitment is an essential part of enrolment management, it is not by any means the whole story. Recruitment per se does not encompass all of the many things that a university has to do to achieve its enrolment goals. And enrolment is more than total headcount. Enrolment management strives to achieve the optimum enrolment in each of the colleges, to achieve enrolment goals for students from different learner populations, and to manage strategically between demand and capacity.

In the *Second Integrated Plan* (2008), the university acknowledged that enrolment is one of the key risks that must be addressed in a more focused and coordinated manner. Accordingly, the student experience was named as one of our three highest priorities and a set of commitments were enunciated, many of which embrace initiatives directly related to enrolment management.

Recognizing the many activities being performed or anticipated that could affect enrolment, and understanding the need for coordination and collaboration, the Provost initiated the Enrolment Action Plan (Appendix 1). This enrolment action plan commits the university to an extraordinary level of coordination, to the setting of precise milestones, and to reporting progress on these individual initiatives and on progress toward achieving overall enrolment goals for the size and shape of university we desire to be. This project will enhance the coordination and communication among commitment leaders, colleges and senior administration around actions related to strategic enrolment management. It will assist commitment leaders as they concentrate on action within a single commitment while knowing how their work intersects and complements the work of others in influencing and managing our enrolment. This project will assist colleges as they clarify and shape their roles in the University's enrolment management strategy. It will help the University to identify and address gaps in our enrolment action plan where specific actions may be needed that appear likely to fall outside the attention of any unit or Integrated Plan commitment.

The university has many opportunities to influence its enrolment – both the size and the shape of the student population. Appendix 2 articulates a framework for understanding these opportunities. The strategies developed to address these opportunities will differ for postgraduate and undergraduate students. While there will be more projects and initiatives during the planning cycle, the enrolment action plan team identified twelve projects that need to proceed first and fastest. Those initiatives include investments and activity to address retention and the student experience along with recruitment. This is not all that we will be doing during this planning period but it is a list of the projects that are considered to be of primary importance, that we need to make progress on now.

Table 1: Priority Initiatives for 2009/10

Initiative	Impact
University Positioning: Undertake an Institutional Positioning process to clarify the University's position in the broader post-secondary landscape, define what is most distinctive about the U of S, identify what differentiates us from our competitors, and help us develop a set of clear and compelling messages that will make the U of S a university of "destination" rather than simply one of convenience. Increase national and international profile and reputation.	Increase headcount, especially out-of-province and international. Increase student diversity.
Recruitment and Marketing: Develop and implement a new, data-driven, comprehensive, campus-wide recruitment strategy.	Increase headcount, particularly to targeted programs with capacity. Increase student diversity.
Admissions Polices and Procedures: Review current admission policies and practices; Develop and implement	Increase headcount. Increase headcount,

policies and practices that maximize the probability that qualified prospective students are admitted to and enroll in programs that will fulfill their learning and career goals	especially by improving access for non-traditional learners. Increase student diversity.
Transfer Articulation: Develop and implement transfer credit and articulation policies, agreements and practices that make it easier for students with previous post-secondary education experience to transfer to and complete their studies at the U of S. Improve access for learners who have not traditionally attended the U of S.	Increase headcount, especially by improving access for non-traditional learners. Increase student diversity.
Financial Aid: Conduct a comprehensive, campus-wide review of current student financial aid programs (both merit- and needs-based). Develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated strategy for entrance (recruitment-related) and continuing (performance-related) awards that is aligned with the University's *Strategic Directions* and *Second Integrated Plan*. Become more financially competitive for academically talented students. Reduce barriers and improve access for financially disadvantaged students. Provide direction and inform priorities for future scholarship fundraising.	Improve retention. Increase headcount, both academically gifted learners and those who need financial assistance to attend university.
Program Innovation: Increase program innovation through new and revised programs that will attract new students and meet the evolving needs of learner populations. Programs would include Aboriginal programming, globalization of curriculum, interdisciplinary and/or interprofessional aspects. Conduct a study to determine barriers and drivers of program innovation.	Enable more effective recruitment. Improve retention. Increase student diversity.
Distributive Learning: Develop a strategy for distributive and off-campus learning, considering, in particular, how the University serves Aboriginal communities, northern communities and adult learners.	Increase headcount by improving access for non-traditional learners. Improve the student experience.
Experiential Learning: Engage third partners in the learning circle through experiential education (co-op placements, internships, service learning, practica, etc). Strive for more engaged students and provide an experience that is competitive with what is offered by our peers and aligned with government priorities.	Enable more effective recruitment. Improve the student experience.
Learning Communities: Aid the first-year transition through learning communities which improve student engagement & affinity to the University through the development of a community of learners with similar learning goals (especially in larger colleges).	Increase retention. Improve the student experience.
Academic Advising: Improve academic advising by understanding learning and career goals of every student, helping students with unclear goals to clarify their learning/career goals, helping them navigate within the university within and between programs as their understanding	Increase retention. Improve the student experience.

of their learning and career goals change, supporting and providing clear options to students who may not achieve their initial goals (e.g. those not admitted to high demand professional programs).	
On-Campus Experience: Enhance the on-campus experience by improving the "culture of service" campus-wide, including respect for students, food services, managing the bureaucracy, accommodating special needs, etc.	Increase retention. Improve the student experience.
Housing: Increase the number of residence beds available to students. Create a positive, engaging residence life experience that attracts prospective students, supports student success, and builds affinity to the University of Saskatchewan	Enable more effective recruitment, particularly out-of-province and international students. Increase retention. Improve the student experience.

Risk and Consequences

Enrolment is a key risk for the University of Saskatchewan. The consequences of not addressing this risk are somewhat dependent on which enrolment goal is not met. If we do not enroll significantly more international and out-of-province students, the opportunity for all of our students to experience a more diverse, more global university will be limited. The reach and influence of the University nationally and internationally will also be limited. If we do not enroll significantly more Aboriginal students in a broader range of programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, we will have missed an unprecedented opportunity to embrace different cultures and different ways of knowing. We will have done less than expected to assist Aboriginal communities to increase the participation of Aboriginal people in post-secondary education and to participate more equitably in the economy and the life of the province. If enrolment decreases, and especially if the University's share of the provincial post-secondary enrolment decreases, the University will have reduced operating dollars. The institution would then have to reduce its capacity for scholarly work, knowledge translation and engagement that is of importance to the province and the country. If enrolment goals are not met, the University runs the risk of losing ground in reputation and influence relative to our peer universities, ground that has been gained over the past ten years. Saskatchewan needs a world-class medical-doctoral university and a successful university today needs sufficient students with appropriately diverse backgrounds in order to fulfill its mission and vision for learning, discovery, outreach and engagement.

There are many challenges and it is fair to acknowledge that achieving any one of the projects described in this plan, let alone all of them, requires a high level of discipline and commitment. There are uncertainties, such as how the current global economic situation will affect the provincial operating and capital grants for the university in coming years and how it will affect participation rates, especially of Saskatchewan students. There are significant investment challenges, both in capital projects (i.e. housing) and in operations (i.e. marketing, recruitment, scholarships, student information systems, and experiential education) which need to be considered. Our challenge will be to continue to prioritize our investments and to broaden the resource base for funding new initiatives.

Through our integrated planning process, we have stated that Aboriginal engagement and internationalization strategies must permeate all of our high priority commitments in the second planning cycle. The projects and initiatives described above, and others, need to model this permeation.

Finally, as new dimensions are added to the student experience (such things as learning communities, experiential learning, on-line and e-learning) all of these enrichments require the engagement of our faculty and staff and all will make a draw on the same sources of revenue that already support other activities. Because our peer institutions are doing it, and because our students expect it, adding these new dimensions to the student experience is not really optional, but how we do it and how we re-prioritize all of our activities is within our own hands. These are not easy choices to make, but they are necessary as we aim to change our competitive position relative to other post-secondary institutions in Canada and elsewhere. During the current planning cycle, the University will need to update and clarify enrolment goals and opportunities for each college and for each program. It will need to collect the appropriate data to assess the effectiveness of enrolment-related initiatives and to determine the correct levels of ongoing investments in programs and initiatives, and to ensure that there are appropriate incentives and consequences related to the achievement of enrolment goals.

Conclusion

This enrolment action plan is designed to address current and future enrolment challenges and opportunities. The plan is drawn from the *Second Integrated Plan* and is informed by our *Strategic Directions* and by a series of *Foundational Documents*. The continuing engagement of the campus community, commitment leaders, unit leaders, senior administration and the governing bodies is essential as we make investments of time and money and as we monitor our progress toward meeting our enrolment goals.

Appendix 1: Enrolment Action Plan

Project Team

Ernie Barber (co-lead), David Hannah (co-lead), Lawrence Martz, Carol Rodgers

Administrative Support   Kyla Shea, Laura McNaughton

Roles and Responsibilities
- responsible for ensuring the completion of project goals and work packages, for ensuring timeliness, accountability, communication, decision-making and prioritization within the project
- responsible for ensuring communication with the steering committee and other stakeholders

Implementation Steering Committee

Commitment Leaders   Jim Greer, Ernie Barber, David Hannah, Tom Steele, Susan Bens, Tom Allen, Charlotte Ross, Trever Crowe, Greg Fowler

Deans   Lawrence Martz, Graham Scoles, Jo-Anne Dillon, Peter Stoicheff, Kevin Schneider, Harley Dickinson, Grant Isaac, Carole Rodgers, Janusz Kozinski, Lorna Butler, Bill Albritton, Vivian Hajnal, Dennis Gorecki, Gerry Uswak, Chuck Rhodes, Vicki Williamson, Brent Cotter,

Roles and Responsibilities
- providing input, advice and support to the Project Team as members of key units/groups
- assisting with communication across campus
- building collaboration and commitment across campus for the project and the work packages that fall within the project

Stakeholders to be Consulted

Students through the USSU and GSA
University Council and its various committees
University Administrative and Academic Support Units
Government through the Director of Government Relations
University Senate
University Board of Governors

Deliverables/Measures of Success

Situation Analysis
        Overview is already completed
        Review of best practices in Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) required
Identify gaps
Establish priorities for new activity and/or investment
Facilitation and coordination across units and commitments
Internal Communication

Timeline

This project will use rolling wave planning, that is the project will begin before all of the planning is complete and planning and implementation will occur simultaneously throughout the life of the project.

Timelines for work packages will be defined by the work package leader and communicated to the Steering Committee.

Constraints (items to be aware of during the planning and implementation of work packages)
- Aboriginal engagement and internationalization strategies must permeate all of the project work
- There are significant investment challenges, both capital (i.e. housing) and operating (i.e. scholarships, student information system, experiential education)
- We are part of a PSE system in the province and in the nation and need to be aware of missions, aspirations and capabilities of others. Provincially, we also need to link to government interests.

Assumptions
- That the enrolment goals described in the Enrolment Plan (2003) remain valid, although the timeline may not be achieved
- That this project and the work within is supported by the Senior Leadership of the University of Saskatchewan
- That there is an understanding on campus that enrolment is everyone's business. While the opportunities and challenges for each college may differ, all colleges must be involved in the project and in strategic enrolment management.

Risks (unknowns which may become challenges or opportunities)
- Current economic crisis and how it might affect the provincial operating and capital grants for the U of S
- How the current economic crisis will affect participation rates, especially of Saskatchewan students
- Provincial and national policies of support for Aboriginal communities, including governance and funding of post-secondary education
- Provincial government priorities and policies affecting the establishment of University tuition levels
- Changes in our competitive position relative to other post-secondary institutions in Canada and elsewhere
- Saskatchewan University Funding Mechanism

Appendix 2: Situational Analysis: What can a University do to shape its student enrolment?

Since the *Enrolment Plan: Bridging to 2010* foundational document was approved in 2003, enrolment as a planning dimension has taken on increased urgency, particularly in light of the current demographic situation in the province. If the goals in the foundational document are to be achieved, there are numerous actions to be taken, separately or in concert, by various parts of the University. At the request of the Provost, the commitment leaders of the six commitments in the priority area of *improve the undergraduate and graduate student experience, both inside and outside the classroom*, with leadership by the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning, worked together to identify and analyze numerous factors affecting enrolment at this University and over which the University can exert some influence.

Their analysis produced the nine broad themes described below within which an array of priority initiatives or possible actions have been identified. The priority initiatives have been described above. This framework will assist commitment leaders as they concentrate on action within a single commitment while knowing how their work intersects and complements the work of others in influencing and managing our enrolment. And while the focus of this analysis and of the framework has been on university-level enrolment strategies, colleges may also find the framework helpful as they clarify and shape their roles in the University's enrolment management strategy. The framework is also intended to help the University to identify gaps in our enrolment action plan where specific actions may be needed that appear likely to fall outside the attention of any unit or Integrated Plan commitment.

The factors identified in this document must be viewed in the context of the different communities of potential students, notably our traditional 18-22 year old population of Saskatchewan secondary school graduates, the Greystone Scholars (a population of academically gifted students), Aboriginal communities (First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous peoples), out-of-province Canadian students, and international students. It is likely that different actions may be required to influence enrolment at the University of Saskatchewan from each of these communities. So too, the strategies will be different for learners at the certificate, undergraduate, and graduate program levels.

While there are perhaps fifty or more distinct factors affecting enrolment over which the University of Saskatchewan can exert influence to shape our enrolment, these factors appear to cluster within a set of themes. These themes will provide a framework for prioritization of enrolment related initiatives during the second planning cycle.

Quality and Relevance of Academic Programs

In order to attract students, our academic programs must be relevant to today's learners and be of such quality that they are known provincially, nationally and possibly internationally. They must be flexible enough to accommodate part-time and full-time students, transfer students, and students from multiple backgrounds. They should be distinguished by the consistent delivery of quality instruction and by opportunities for students to actively engage in their own learning. They should be complemented by opportunities for experiential education and for alternative delivery formats. As an institution, we must ensure that our programs deliver a quality education that meets the needs and expectations of our current and potential students and their potential employers, both in content and delivery. Given the large number of courses

and the very wide range of scholarly work at the University of Saskatchewan, we must also ensure that we are sufficiently flexible and innovative about the ways we assemble and deliver our academic programs. This may mean we want to reshape, add or discontinue programs to get the right combination of programs for our students and our institution.

Positioning, Marketing and Recruiting: Locating U of S within Postsecondary Landscape

In the past number of years, the University of Saskatchewan has purposely moved from a focus on primarily providing undergraduate education for 18-22 year old Saskatchewan residents to becoming a medical-doctoral institution known nationally and internationally for academic and research pre-eminence and for graduate education. Through this transition, the University has struggled to articulate its "brand" among the various communities of potential students. The University of Saskatchewan must define what is special, unique, or distinctive about an education experience at our institution. We must take action to manage or influence how we come across to students seeking a post-secondary education and effectively market our academic programs and the student experience at the University of Saskatchewan during the recruitment process. Amid an increasingly competitive post-secondary landscape, the University of Saskatchewan needs to be doing all that it can to be seen as a competitive institution in the minds of potential students, parents, guidance counselors, high school teachers, alumni, employers, industry partners and academic peers. Lastly, as an institution, we must understand why our students chose the U of S, why others didn't and do what we can to encourage academically able students to attend the U of S.

Building Relationships with our Communities

In addition to direct marketing, our success in student recruitment is dependent on the quality of the relationships that the university builds on an ongoing basis with particular constituencies. Successful universities will cultivate the kinds of relationships and partnerships that will make it more likely students from those constituencies will choose to attend university and that they will select the University of Saskatchewan. With constituencies such as the Aboriginal communities, we must demonstrate that we are willing to work with these communities to understand their needs and to assist them with their own particular needs and styles of development. We need to engage with these communities to understand and then to adapt our academic programs and students services to meet the needs of a diverse body of students. As an institution, we must work to expand existing relationships established through research and outreach activities and through community education that will lead to a higher rate of participation in our academic programs.

Managing Capacity Flexibly amid Fluctuating Student Demand

The U of S has proven that we can adjust to slowly evolving, long-term changes in student demand. We are now faced with the challenge of increasing our flexibility to adjust to short-term changes in demand as well. This flexibility could encompass changes to the way we develop our academic timetables and the way we manage the faculty and staff complement. A responsive university may have more flexibility in its teaching capacity and support infrastructure in order to be able to respond more quickly and more adequately to leverage relationships with others in the community and to assist in dealing with fluctuating demand for specific programs and courses. In a highly competitive post-secondary education environment,

no university can afford to turn away students unnecessarily because of inflexible management practices.

Admissions Policies and Practices

Prospective students interact with the University of Saskatchewan in a variety of ways. They may visit the website, attend Experience US, talk to a recruitment officer, visit a college, or talk with current students and alumni. When a prospective student shows an interest in the University of Saskatchewan, action must be taken to maximize the chances that they apply, and if qualified, that they ultimately register at the University of Saskatchewan. In terms of the timeliness and effectiveness of communication to prospective students, the university must compare itself to other western and national universities. Our standards and policies for admissions and English as a Second Language (ESL) should be similar to other universities and, if different, we must understand why. We must have clear and accepting admissions policies for non-traditional students (i.e. international, home-schooled, mature, missing high school credits). We are obliged to work together across all our academic and administrative units to ensure that applying for admission to the U of S is a clear and smooth process for potential students.

Accessibility and Student Mobility

These days, students are looking to access education in increasingly flexible and different ways. Some may want to learn at home, in their workplace or in their own community. Some will want to transfer their credits mid-program from one institution to another. Some will want to move through the post-secondary education system from diploma to degree to post-graduate certificates through a number of clearly defined paths. Some will want to be able to access direct entry programs from anywhere in the province. We must ensure that the current policies and practices at the U of S enable and encourage students to pursue this type of flexible access to postsecondary education and that the pathways for moving from one program to another, whether within our own University or within the larger post-secondary system, are clear, well-known and easily navigable.

Campus Environment for Students

Universities across Canada are facing increasingly challenging demographic numbers resulting in a progressively competitive market for recruitment. Before students commit to an institution, more and more often they consider the academic support and ancillary student services along with the academic programming that will be available to them at the institution where they enroll. Their interests include the services and support that will meet their particular needs for housing, food and dietary restrictions, social opportunities, recreation, health and counseling, learning commons and spiritual needs. They want to know that they will be welcomed and assisted to adjust to a new city, a new province or a new country. They want to be assured of the tangible and intangible aspects of student life that will make them feel welcome on campus. They must be aware of and satisfied that our range of services will meet their needs and expectations. In all of their interactions with the University, before and after registration, we must ensure that our students are treated with respect.

Support for Student Success

Given the substantial investment of time, commitment and financial resources required to attend a University, it is important that students be given every possible opportunity to succeed in their academic goals, even as those goals mature and change. Retention of students once enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan is a joint responsibility and is of interest to both individual students and to the University. At the University of Saskatchewan, 85% of all attrition occurs in the first year after first enrolment. During the Retention Study conducted in 2006, voluntary leavers identified a number of reasons for leaving university including a lack of clarity of their career goals, unclear relationship between academic programs and potential careers and personal maturity, motivation and effort. These issues could be addressed in a number of ways, such as transition programming for students with lower high school averages, access to career and academic goal-setting and advising services and ensuring students have the learning support systems they need to be part of the campus community such as learning communities, mentors, tutoring, etc. It is our obligation to ensure that our students understand their role in their success at University and to provide the appropriate tools and services to assist students in learning the skills and strategies they need to be successful.

Financial Aid

Tuition costs, the costs of educational materials, and housing and living costs for students have risen substantially in the last decade and scholarship and bursary funding in Saskatchewan and at this University have not kept pace with other Canadian jurisdictions. Across campus, there is uneven access to scholarship or stipend funding. The strategies for student financial aid need to be aligned with multiple university goals, such as research intensity and diversity of the student body and funding should assist in both recruitment and retention efforts for a variety of students. In order to do this successfully, we must have enough scholarships, and the right kinds of scholarships, to attract the most academically qualified students, such as the Greystone Scholars, from across the province, nation and the world. We must also have the right kinds of financial assistance to lower the barriers preventing access to post-secondary education for those who are not able to afford to attend on their own. We should have an institutional strategy for increasing financial assistance for students.