

Enrolment Action Plan | 2009

Project Charter

Project Title: Student Financial Aid Strategies and Priorities

Project Description:

The purpose of this project is to develop an understanding of the current availability, philosophy, policy and practice around financial assistance at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and make a recommendation on strategic investment for financial aid.

Executive Sponsor:

David Hannah, Associate Vice-President, Student and Enrolment Services Division

Project Manager:

Wendy Roe

Working Group:

Wendy Roe
Representative from the Scholarship and Awards Committee
Representative from College of Graduate Studies and Research
Representative from USSU
Representative from GSA
Representative(s) from Associate and Assistant Deans Academic Forum

Consultation Group:

Students
SESD
Colleges (Assistant and Associate Deans Academic or equivalent)
Scholarship and Awards Committee

Decision Makers:

Brett Fairbairn, Provost and Vice-President Academic

Need:

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 the University have not kept pace with other Canadian jurisdictions. Across campus, there is uneven access to scholarship, bursary and stipend funding. In part this is because historically our scholarship fundraising and allocation processes have not been guided by any clear strategies, principles or priorities, but rather have been somewhat reactive and opportunistic. As a result, it is unclear whether our current scholarship and other financial aid practices are aligned with and supportive of the University's Strategic Directions and Integrated Plan.

Ideally, the University's scholarship and financial aid programs and practices should assist in recruiting and retaining students in ways that are driven by and supportive of our enrolment goals. This means that we must have enough scholarships, and the right kinds of scholarships, to attract the most academically qualified students from across the province, nation and the world, and to reward and retain them once they are here. In an increasingly competitive postsecondary environment, we must also become more aware of the scholarship programs offered by our competitors, and allocate our scholarship resources strategically so that we can get the maximum benefit from the financial aid resources at our disposal. To become more competitive with other Universities, we will need to invest significantly more resources in our financial aid programs, but will have to do so strategically so that our new investments will have the greatest possible impact on helping us achieve our enrolment goals. Finally, we must ensure that appropriate forms of financial assistance are allocated to lower the financial barriers that limit access to post-secondary education for academically qualified who believe they cannot pursue university studies for financial reasons.

Stakeholders:

Consultative: students, colleges, SESD, University Advancement, Scholarship and Awards Committee

Influential: provincial government, other Saskatchewan PSE institutions

Stakeholder Requirements:

Strategies to help us achieve our priorities as an institution

Scope:

Financial assistance includes scholarships, bursaries, grants and awards available to entering and continuing students, undergraduates and graduate students, on a basis of either merit, need or a combination thereof

In Scope:

- A comprehensive inventory of all existing sources of financial assistance currently available
- Comparison of the University of Saskatchewan's financial aid program with comparator institutions
- Identification of the philosophy, principles and values that currently guide awards practices across the University
- Ensure consistency between the priorities of the University as outlined in the Strategic Directions, Integrated Plan and other documents and the awarding of financial assistance on campus
- Create a strategy, including philosophy, values and principles, for awarding financial assistance that is consistent with the priorities of the University
- Identify key funding gaps in our current program
- Develop tactics and make a recommendation to PCIP regarding closing the gaps in our funding program
- Communication of the strategy across campus

Not In Scope:

- Implementation of the strategy
- Maintenance of the inventory

Opportunities:

- Engaging the colleges in the development of institutional financial aid approaches and priorities will ensure that college strategies and priorities are appropriately reflected, resulting in alignment of strategies and priorities across campus.
- Engaging the Scholarship and Awards Committee of Council to provide insight and feedback during the development of strategies and priorities, resulting in more robust strategies and priorities.
- Engaging University Advancement in the development of strategies and priorities will assist UA in developing their own goals and strategies in this area and will result in activities that are proactive and aligned with institutional goals and priorities.

Assumptions:

- That the range and role of financial assistance in the student experience is widely understood
- That the role of student awards and financial aid in recruitment and retention of students is understood

Deliverables:

- A strategy reflecting the University's philosophy, principles and values with respect to student awards and financial assistance
- A regularly updated inventory of financial assistance on campus
- A document outlining priority needs for financial aid
- A PCIP request to address gaps in the funding program

Milestones:

- Inventory of all U of S financial aid programs – September 2009
- Statement of new financial philosophy, guiding principles and values – January 2010
- Identification of highest priority financial aid needs – March 2010
- PCIP request for new investment in financial aid programs – May 2010

Expected Impact on Enrolment

- Improve retention
- Increase headcount, both of academically gifted learners and those who need financial assistance to attend university.