

Results of *Phase I* Interviews with Key Internal Stakeholders:

The following is a summary of the feedback we received from 37 interviews in the spring and summer of 2009 with Deans and Associate Dean (Research), CRCs, and Directors of Research Institutes).

Current Profile of Research at the University of Regina

Vision. A consistent finding across interviews was a lack of formal vision for research within numerous academic units. Rather than referencing a research philosophy *per se*, a few respondents referenced their unit's criteria document in addressing expectations for research activity. More commonly, respondents gave an overview of the current research climate in their units, particularly in terms of strengths, areas for concern, and a general indication of the types of research currently being conducted within the unit. Several units did, however, express broad goals in terms of research activity, such as community focus (e.g., FNUC, RESOLVE), the emphases given to applied and basic research, and the decision to either focus on a few speciality areas in which the unit currently excels versus promoting a more diffuse research base. FGSR was particularly clear in articulating a clear philosophy of what constitutes scholarship and how the pursuit of new knowledge may be encouraged, and JSPP provided concrete ideas for how their research vision may be achieved.

Pockets of Excellence. Several respondents identified a few exceptional researchers within their academic units. These researchers have achieved success in attaining funding, publishing, and recruiting high quality graduate students, and their work raises the profile of the university. General observations were that younger researchers are being trained and hired with the expectation that they will be active researchers. There are also some well-established researchers amongst the ranks. However, there appears to be a sizeable proportion of the faculty who are underperforming in terms of research activity. Departments such as Biology and centres such as the Centre on Aging and Health were identified as major assets to the university due to their research achievements. The research cluster "Energy and Environment" was named repeatedly as an example of production and innovation.

Community. Working with, and for the benefit of, the community is a primary goal within several academic units. Research conducted within units such as FNUC, RESOLVE, and Institut Français has a strong community focus. Central to this goal are the needs to establish strong alliances with community organizations and to disseminate results in ways that are accessible (both in terms of availability and in style) to the broader community. Other units in which liaisons with the community have not been such a primary focus recognize the need to facilitate community partnerships and implement research programmes with an eye to community impact. Initiatives such as the Graduate Research Conference have helped to draw attention to community-focused research. However, despite this area of strength, a theme emerged of needing to build upon existing community networks and establish new areas of research with community impact in mind.

Collaboration. Respondents described four major types of collaboration: collaboration with colleagues within one's department, collaboration with colleagues within one's academic discipline at other institutions, interdisciplinary collaboration, and collaborations with those external to the academic setting (e.g., community organizations, industry, government agencies). Collaborations between the university and the public and private sectors were identified as integral to research success in certain areas (e.g., Engineering, PARC), whereas most respondents identified that although collaborations exist within units, between units, and between universities as areas, there is still room for further development in such endeavours.

Evaluating Success. The specificity of the criteria for evaluating researcher success differs greatly across campus. Objective measures include impact factors, number and venues of publications, success in obtaining funding, external and internal awards, and involvement in relevant professional activities (e.g., editorships). The need for accountability in research was addressed, including evaluating the use of funds, establishing both process and outcome measures for gauging research success, reporting to relevant stakeholders (particularly for those involved in community research or who have established partnerships within the public or private sectors), and peer review of publications. With regard to dissemination of researchers' work, there was some concern that creative means of making one's work publicly available (e.g., gallery exhibits, presentations to the community) are not always given the same consideration as modes of knowledge transfer that are more traditionally associated with academic endeavours (e.g., peer reviewed publications, conference proceedings). It was noted that evaluating research success in quantitative terms only does not provide the complete picture of what it means to be a successful researcher. Subjective measures such as applied impact (particularly in the case of community-based research) and the establishment of a positive, encouraging research environment are also indicative of research success.

What Researchers Need to Succeed

Available Funding. Sufficient funding for research endeavours was the most cited resource necessary for research success, as the availability of most other resources was seen to stem from the provision of necessary funds. Respondents identified both internally-allocated funds (e.g., President's Fund, allocations for maintenance of facilities and equipment) and funds available from external sources (e.g., Tri-Council, provincial government, private sector) as key to maintaining an active research environment. A common concern was a lack of sufficient funds to maintain research activities; this was particularly problematic within units such as SPERU where lack of continuity of funding was described as being an issue. Concern was also raised regarding overhead and the need to create a reasonable policy and a consistent application of it;

Infrastructure. Lack of necessary infrastructure was the other major concern of respondents. Frequent complaints included a lack of space for labs and the need for increased resources to acquire and maintain necessary equipment. The lack of an animal facility was seen as a hindrance to the university's ability to compete at the national and international levels. Sufficient infrastructure was deemed essential to growing the research enterprise at this university.

Highly Qualified Personnel. Most respondents identified the need to attract and retain high quality faculty if we wish to raise our research profile. Concerns were raised that the university does not currently have the financial means to be competitive in recruiting top scholars. However, it must be noted that, as identified earlier, the university is currently home to some internationally renowned researchers and there are certain areas (e.g., Biology, Energy and Environment) in which we have achieved international acclaim. There was a lack of consensus in terms of the need for targeted hiring of faculty; many respondents favoured building on the areas of strength that we already have, whereas others preferred a broader assortment of research foci within units.

In addition to attracting exceptional faculty members, respondents noted that high quality graduate students must also be recruited. Graduate students provide invaluable support to faculty members' research and an increase in PhD programmes across campus would strengthen our reputation. It was suggested that the creation of a graduate student recruitment officer position may help with strategic enrolment at the graduate level, as would more seriously pursuing international student recruitment. It was noted that in order to be competitive and to attract the best and brightest students, direct funding of graduate students via grants acquired by faculty needs to be increased. A concern was raised by FGSR that not all of our current graduate students are living up to their research potential and an unacceptable number of students have been applying for extensions as they reach the term limit for their programmes without having completed the requisite thesis or dissertation research.

To a lesser extent, the need to engage senior undergraduate students in research was also discussed. Particularly in Science, where lack of space and equipment availability was noted, it was suggested that improvements to infrastructure would allow researchers to involve senior undergraduate students more directly in their research, with the hopes of encouraging the most promising of those students to pursue graduate studies at this institution.

Administrative Support. Availability of administrative support was discussed as a means of helping researchers to maximize the use of their time. Adequate staffing is necessary to keep research programmes operating effectively. Time constraints were commonly cited as hindering research productivity, with the suggestions of consistent teaching release over time or research semesters as means of increasing research activity; however, a contingent of respondents did not see as great a need for increased course release, favouring an approach of building flexibility into teaching (e.g., Business Administration offers time-compressed courses), and describing a symbiotic relationship between teaching and research. Support from the university administration was also cited as a vital resource for supporting research. Several respondents felt that decreasing the amount of red tape that researchers must deal with would free up time for conducting the actual research; improvements such as streamlining financial reporting procedures, addressing HR and union policies that do not recognize the reality of soft money, and reducing the paperwork that faculty members are required to complete (in one interview, a 48 page fieldtrip form was cited as an example of excessive paperwork) were suggested. One respondent suggested that the creation of a few support positions to specifically deal with some of these administrative issues would go a long way towards freeing up time for faculty members to engage in research, which would yield long-term

benefits. Another respondent noted that paradoxically, although research funds seem to be over-administered, yet there is a lack of feeling supported by administration.

What Researchers Need to DO to Succeed.

Foster a Culture of Research. A recurring theme was one of the need for *all* faculty—not just new faculty, those with well-established research programmes, or those in already research-intensive areas—to engage in research. Fine Arts noted that research may take many forms, citing examples of scholarly innovation within the Faculty. However, it was noted elsewhere that creative works—while reflecting talent and accomplishment—are not *necessarily* scholarly if they do not include a component of gathering and interpreting new information. Several participants mentioned that increased research mentoring and support for grant applications would benefit newer and/or less established researchers, and it was suggested that those who are experiencing obstacles that hinder their research performance should be provided with encouragement. However, it was noted that researchers must take individual responsibility for their engagement, or lack thereof, in research, and that self-motivation is necessary before external aids to research productivity may be beneficial. It was suggested several times that faculty members should always be in pursuit of excellence, exhibiting such characteristics as forward thinking, innovation, and dissatisfaction with maintaining the status quo.

Respondents discussed the importance of rewarding excellence and celebrating success (including smaller grants and accomplishments that do not necessarily fit the mould of academic work, such as those in Fine Arts) in order to further encourage research activity. Some units are already taking measures to publicly recognize members' achievements; for example, Business Administration noted that a weekly newsletter is published celebrating the successes of those within the unit and Campion mentioned that it has hosted book launches for their faculty. The importance of Research Chairs at the University of Regina was noted in three of the interviews. One respondent suggested that research findings, rather than funding, should be celebrated, lest a culture of jealousy be created rather than one of mutual encouragement. However, many other respondents noted that the acquisition of major grants provides tangible benefits to the university, allowing faculty members to hire research assistants, attract and support high quality graduate students, and invest in necessary research capital.

Build on our strengths. Most respondents favoured building on already existing areas of strength in making future hiring decisions. Future hires must be committed to establishing active research programmes. Community-focussed research and collaborations within and between universities were noted as strengths in many areas; however, it was suggested that there is always room for improvement, particularly with regard to fostering international collaborations and increased links with the public and private sectors.

Raise our profile. It is important that the research profile of the University of Regina be raised via dissemination of high quality research in peer reviewed venues and through promotion in the community of researchers' achievements. As noted above, there are pockets of excellence in which this is already being achieved; however, this level of achievement needs to become the norm rather than the exception. Several respondents noted that research should also be disseminated via means that will make faculty

members' work accessible to the community (e.g., community presentations, summaries to community groups, performances or exhibits). An area in which several respondents felt that the University of Regina could improve is in the area of raising our profile on the international stage.