

THE UNIVERSITY OF REGINA STRATEGIC PLAN FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

January 2013

VISION

All faculty at the University of Regina will be well known for offering high quality student instruction. Good teaching will be widely acclaimed, broadly supported, and rewarded. Students' engagement and satisfaction with their learning experience will be a significant priority.

PREAMBLE

Teaching is one of the three pillars of the University of Regina's mission. The University's Strategic Plan, *mâmahowkamâtowin: Our Work, Our People, Our Communities*, makes several broad commitments in the area of teaching and learning. The very first item in the plan calls for the University to "[p]romote and reward the pursuit of excellence in teaching" and to "[m]ake the University widely known for excellence in all its activities." The first item in the mission statement of the Plan is to "[p]rovide high quality, accessible education that prepares learners for productive and creative lives." The Plan also confirms that "[w]e value interaction between faculty members and students as the fundamental activity of the academy[,] ... acknowledge the diversity of learning styles and needs of our students[,] ... [and] aim to be accessible to all who can learn with us." This Strategic Plan for Teaching and Learning is intended to focus the efforts of the University community in realizing these aspects of the University's overall Strategic Plan and to benefit all of our students individually and our society as a whole.

Because teaching and learning are so varied across Faculties, this Plan aims to provide a collegial framework within which Faculties can decide for themselves how best to support, recognize, and reward excellent teaching and learning.

OBJECTIVES

Within each Faculty:

1. To ensure that good teaching, and the time, effort, and resources devoted to achieving good teaching, are given due recognition.
2. To agree upon a definition of good teaching.
3. To agree upon and establish measures for documenting good teaching, so that it can be recognized and appropriately rewarded.
4. To agree upon and establish programs and services that will encourage and support members to enhance the quality of their teaching.

REWARDING GOOD TEACHING

Goal #1: to ensure that good teaching serves as a genuine asset in applications for tenure, promotion, and merit

Corresponding Actions:

- a. Faculties will ensure that their criteria documents are very clear about how good teaching will be defined and how members can use high achievement in this area to build cases for tenure, promotion, and merit
- b. faculty members may negotiate individual agreements with their deans to allocate more time and effort to their teaching, with an explicit understanding of how these activities will be recognized and rewarded in tenure and promotion processes

DEFINING GOOD TEACHING

Goal #1: to ensure that each Faculty agrees upon a definition of what constitutes good teaching

Corresponding Actions:

- a. Faculties will each develop definitions of good teaching and incorporate the resulting definitions into their criteria documents. The following draft may be used as a template.

Draft definition of good teaching

1. Good teaching:

- a. inspires students to be independent learners
- b. motivates students to fully comprehend important issues in their chosen subject(s) of study
- c. prepares students to critically evaluate and, when appropriate, assimilate new information and ideas
- d. visibly engages students in the subject and in the classroom
- e. develops more sophisticated minds in order to generate higher-level thoughts and actions
- f. enables students to build on and transfer learning from previous courses and to move quickly into areas of new related content
- g. enables students to creatively and critically apply problem-solving skills to address unique questions

2. In addition to being knowledgeable about their subject, good teachers:

- a. think critically about and reflect on their teaching practices and work continuously to improve them
- b. are well-prepared for their classes

- c. grade fairly and give prompt, constructive, and substantial feedback
- d. use class time efficiently to guide students to course learning objectives
- e. structure the teaching/learning environment to enhance the learning process
- f. exhibit flexibility, adjusting well to unexpected questions or new and changing circumstances in the classroom

3. Good teachers:

- a. have ambitious but reasonable expectations of their students, and communicate these clearly
- b. are approachable, both in the classroom and other appropriate settings (such as office hours)
- c. treat their students with respect
- d. recognize that students have differing strengths and weaknesses. When students are having difficulty grasping new ideas, good teachers adjust their teaching to accommodate and overcome these difficulties
- e. encourage interaction and cooperation among students

DOCUMENTING GOOD TEACHING

Goal #1: to agree upon and establish a protocol for faculty members to use in demonstrating their teaching efforts and abilities to heads, peer-review committees, and deans

Corresponding Actions:

- a. Faculties will agree upon and set out multiple methods for their members to document the quality of their teaching in ways that will carry conviction with their heads, peers and deans. Such methods may include:
 - formal course evaluation reports, in which other faculty members, chosen for their objectivity (and at least one of them for knowledge of the field), consult course syllabi (including past versions where available), review grading practices, read a sample of assigned readings and assignments, observe at least two classes (the choice of classroom lectures will be at the member's discretion), and interview students and the faculty member, as appropriate
 - written assessments provided by undergraduate students recognized within the Faculty for their academic accomplishments
 - statistical measures such as results of class-level student surveys designed to indicate the degree of student engagement with the course material
- b. Faculties will agree upon and set out multiple methods for their faculty members to demonstrate their commitment to becoming better teachers. Such methods may include:

- standardized forms for reporting the work that went into preparing a course, the kinds of student assessment used, and the opportunities provided for interaction between instructor and students
- publishing reports in journals related to higher education of novel or interesting strategies for enhancing student learning outcomes
- presenting formal papers at conferences on the scholarship of teaching and learning
- developing formal student learning outcomes for specific courses and building mechanisms for reliably assessing the extent to which these outcomes have been achieved

SUPPORTING GOOD TEACHING

Goal #1: to assist faculty members to enhance their teaching skills

Corresponding Actions:

- a. Faculties, in collaboration with the Centre for Teaching and Learning, will design and implement effective assessment practices
- b. Faculties, in collaboration with the Centre for Teaching and Learning, will:
 - develop and operate teaching programs for new instructors and any others who want to participate
 - help interested faculty to establish teaching-development plans

Goal #2: to assist faculty members to develop new, or refresh existing, courses

Corresponding Actions:

- a. the Centre for Teaching and Learning will acquaint interested faculty members with pedagogical approaches and supporting technologies that can help them structure a more engaging learning experience for their students
- b. the Centre for Teaching and Learning will provide support for faculty members interested in improving their course designs

Goal #3: to create a University-wide culture of commitment to and high respect for good teaching

Corresponding Actions:

- a. senior administrators will regularly declare and tangibly demonstrate that they place a very high value on good teaching
- b. the Provost will ensure that teaching successes are celebrated and showcased within the University community

- c. the Centre for Teaching and Learning will develop a mechanism for profiling good teaching to the community
- d. the Centre for Teaching and Learning will develop a comprehensive slate of teaching awards, along with clear eligibility and adjudication criteria
- e. the Awards Facilitator will assist University of Regina teaching-award winners in applying for external teaching awards

Goal #4: to collect and regularly discuss information about which classroom-level strategies are particularly successful in enhancing student learning outcomes

Corresponding Actions:

- a. in collaboration with the Office of Resource Planning and Faculties, the Centre for Teaching and Learning will administer tools designed to assess the extent to which students are developing skills like critical thinking and analytical reasoning (for example, the Collegiate Learning Assessment or the Classroom Survey of Student Engagement)
- b. the Centre for Teaching and Learning will discuss the anonymized results of these surveys with the University community to establish any identifying characteristics of teaching strategies that contribute to or detract from desired student learning outcomes

Goal #5: to regularly assess and report the extent to which the University community generally is engaging its students in the classroom

Corresponding Actions:

- a. in collaboration with the Office of Resource Planning, the Centre for Teaching and Learning will ensure that the University participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and will share the results with the University community
- b. the Centre for Teaching and Learning will annually assemble randomly-chosen student focus groups to discuss their learning experiences during the fall semester and identify any areas either of excellence or of concern; the anonymized results will be made available to the University community
- c. the Teaching and Learning Advisory Group will review the resulting reports and recommend appropriate actions to Deans' Council

Goal #6: to ensure that effective programs for the support of teaching receive core-budget funding

Corresponding Action:

- a. every year the Provost, in consultation with deans and directors, will develop a proposal for funding teaching-related programs and present the proposal to the University budget committee