

## INTRODUCTION

Based on consultation with the University Executive Team, I developed the following presidential objectives for 2025-2026, and they were approved by the Board of Governors at its July 2025 meeting. These overall objectives and attendant deliverables reflect the University's current strategic plan, Performance Measurement Framework, principal areas identified on the 2025 University Risk Registry, and, more generally, goals that speak to the University's long-term success. They will inform much of my work over the next year, and will form the basis for the Board's annual evaluation of my performance as President and Vice-Chancellor.

### OBJECTIVE 1: ENSURING THE UNIVERSITY OF REGINA'S LONG-TERM FUTURE

#### Context and rationale:

As outlined in the Performance Measurement Framework, the 10-year Capital Plan, and the Facilities Condition Index, the University faces numerous longer-term challenges, many of which we report on annually. Two more specific and immediate ones relate to the 2025 expiry of our current five-year Strategic Plan, entitled *All Our Relations: kahkiyaw kiwâhkômâkaninawak*.

The University Executive Team, in partnership with Higher Education Strategy Associates, undertook a scan of recent post-secondary strategic plans, not only in Canada, but also in Europe, Australia, and the United States. Based upon their increasing temporal variety, it was decided to aim for completion of a decade-long University of Regina Strategic Plan guided by the mantra of "what we want to be" rather than "what we want to do."

While the forthcoming plan will specify goals and benchmarks, it will place emphasis on aspirational aims (namely, what we seek to be known for both nationally and internationally), and will explore future-focused opportunities and challenges relating to things like artificial intelligence, the use of virtual reality, the potential of digitization, and responding to emerging needs and expectations of students, professors, staff, alumni, and external stakeholders.

To that end, Dr. Aziz Douai, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, was appointed to head the Steering Committee to produce the new plan. He will build a committee, map out a robust consultation process, and establish a website to provide updates as the plan is developed, considered, and ultimately approved by the appropriate bodies.

The second goal in this category relates to the need to relocate Nursing faculty and staff as well as Social Work faculty, staff, and students in Saskatoon. As it pursues the Saskatchewan Polytechnic consolidation project, the Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement will not renew the University's lease at Innovation Place, which is set to expire on May 31, 2026. The provincial government has indicated that the Nursing and Social Work programs will eventually share space with Saskatchewan Polytechnic in its proposed Health and Human Resources Building. That building is projected for completion in ten years, thus requiring the University to lease a new location for the interim period.

Planning for this move was undertaken throughout 2024, and involved numerous consultation sessions with the affected Faculties to understand their space and program requirements. Working with a commercial property management firm, the University identified approximately 10 potential sites. Following on-site visits by senior University executives and consultation with the two Deans as well as representative from the Faculties and Facilities Management, the selection was ultimately narrowed to one site.

Working with the building owner, the University specified necessary renovations, and determined estimated costs as well as a schedule that would ensure that the move could be undertaken without program disruption. Work will continue throughout the year to facilitate the move.

#### Deliverables

1. Completion of a new institutional Strategic Plan, including its approval by the Board of Governors.
2. Final preparations completed for the move of the Social Work programs and Nursing Faculty and staff situated in Saskatoon, including being well advanced on needed renovations and logistics, and having clear plans on financing within the confines of a balanced University budget.

### **OBJECTIVE 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SATISFACTION**

#### Context and rationale:

Recent years have brought modest improvements in student satisfaction surveys. This has been helped by re-inventing our food services model, opening a Starbucks branch on the ground floor of the Archer Library, enhancing Wellness Services, fully implementing the Centre for Experiential and Service Learning, and undertaking a complete renovation of the badly dilapidated Ad-Hum Pit (which includes making it accessible to those with mobility issues and incorporating gender-neutral washrooms). These measures are related to what were known to be primary sources of student dissatisfaction.

We must continue pursuing other key areas for improvement. For example, we need to develop a more effective strategy, and implement changes, related to student advising. The current structure comprises both centralized advising housed in Student Affairs, which typically deals with those in their first or second year, as well as Faculty-based advisors who usually – but not exclusively – interact with more senior students who have declared their major. In many cases, students do not receive consistent messaging, or levels of support and prompt access, often leading to confusion and frustration.

In addition, in terms of scholarships, compared to its relevant institutional peers the University of Regina offers slightly higher scholarship support as a percentage of its tuition revenue. However, the way that money is distributed may not bring desired levels of return as measured in student registration.

As well, the University of Regina promotes as one of its key strengths and marketing pillars its commitment to and leadership in experiential learning. We were the second university in Canada, and the first in Western Canada, to adopt Cooperative Education, which currently places more than 1,000 students annually, who collectively earn salaries totalling approximately \$9 million each year. A 2024 survey indicates that some 72% of students who graduate from the University of Regina with a certificate, diploma, or degree will have had some form of experiential learning during their program – including Co-op, work placements, internships, service learning, practica, or volunteerism. In 2022 the University created the Centre for Experiential and Service Learning that brought together these areas

and expanded opportunities, including through the provision of digital badges demonstrating skills in the following areas: Campus Employment; Career Basics; Career Readiness; Community Service; Cultural Awareness; Student Engagement; Leadership; and Mentorship.

At the graduate level, in 2022 the University established the GATE (Graduate Advanced Training and Entrepreneurship) Centre that partners with external organizations to bring real-world professional expertise and training to students to build bridges between the University and the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Saskatchewan. However, we have yet to incorporate a significant experiential learning component for PhD students. This is an important gap to fill because currently, most doctoral level graduates will not work in academe as there are fewer tenure-track positions when measured against the number of graduates. These students should be better prepared to appreciate, and practise, the range of options and opportunities reflecting their advanced education.

Another pillar the University of Regina emphasizes is being “Partners in Reconciliation.” We have a strong and longstanding partnership with First Nations University of Canada that was renewed in 2025. Currently, of the University’s nearly 17,000 students, some 2,300 are Indigenous. However, we must improve, not only in recruiting, but also by better supporting these students, so that a higher proportion graduate in their chosen field. Many factors contribute to success here, such as those specified in the 34 actions identified in our 2023 Indigenous Engagement Action Plan. Among them is our need to better support the transition of Indigenous students into university life, especially for those who may struggle academically.

The *nitôncipâmin omâ* Student Success Program that operates out of the ta-tawâw Student Centre offers support to Indigenous students in the Faculties of Arts, Science, Business Administration, and Media, Art, and Performance. Depending on the Faculty, this support is provided in areas that include course content clarification, supplementary learning, note taking and reading, time management, exam preparation, resume writing, library research skills, and academic writing. The program is well-subscribed given the available supports, with 32 students enrolled this year – two over capacity. However, administrative capacity and faculty-specific supports remain modest. A re-envisioned University-wide Indigenous Access Program – which could include enhancing the capacity of the *nitôncipâmin omâ* program – would bring much benefit. Students would apply directly from high school or seek access as adult learners. This admission pathway could also be accessed by Indigenous students who may not fully meet university admission requirements by enabling upgrading, and by having access into all Faculties.

Finally, over the past year, the rapidly increasing student use of Artificial Intelligence and Chat GPT has brought significant challenges, including additional cases of academic misconduct, that in turn have had some impact on persistence and retention. It is crucial that more comprehensive preparation be provided to students, better guidance be given to professors, greater consistency and clarity be established on what constitutes both proper improper use of these technologies, and that the consequences for improper use be clearly developed and broadly disseminated.

#### Deliverables:

1. Complete an evidence-informed review containing recommendations concerning institutional advising processes and structures.
2. Review domestic and international scholarship programs and develop a strategy to increase enrolment, improve retention, support under-represented groups, enhance academic excellence, and optimize financial resources.

3. Identify current PhD programs that incorporate experiential learning, as well as programs where such pedagogy is absent, and develop appropriate options to enhance both as appropriate.
4. Produce a report on the feasibility (academic, as well as financial) of a comprehensive University-wide Indigenous Access Program.
5. Develop and disseminate to students, professors and staff a comprehensive strategy, including a web-based hub, on the use of Artificial Intelligence. The strategy will include guidance on Artificial Intelligence's appropriate use, misuse, means of avoidance, and potential penalties in a University of Regina-specific context.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: PURSUING LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

#### Context and rationale:

Consistently over many years, the top-rated risk for the University of Regina, as for other post-secondary institutions across Canada, has been financial sustainability. This became more extreme during and immediately following COVID-19, with declining enrolment and an associated drop in tuition revenue. Over the past year, federal government cuts to the admission of international students have once again made the University's financial situation more acute. Combined with this has been, over several years, fixed provincial government funding which – when considered in the context of factors such as inflation, rising labour and utilities costs, increasing deferred maintenance needs, demands for more student support programs, and limits on increasing both domestic and international tuition – has made the University's financial situation more challenging. In such a context, it will be critically important to respond with an effective strategy to ensure fiscal sustainability over the long term.

Ever since the construction of Kīšik Towers was completed in 2013, the University has had several hundred vacant rooms on campus. The towers were financed, and have not generated the levels of revenue that were anticipated in the original business case. This was projected to be offset budgetarily, in part, by profits from other ancillaries, but has not turned out to be the case for several reasons: changing patterns have seen the bookstore underperform, even under a new agreement signed in 2021 with Follett; a food services model under Chartwells required large subsidies, and, in offering limited choice, produced widespread dissatisfaction (hence the adoption of a new, more popular, but still subsidized local vendor-centred operation); and now, with international enrolment dropping sharply because of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's restrictions and delays in processing students for study visas, room occupancy is at 60% and, as a result, an annual loss on dormitories stands at more than \$5 million.

It will be necessary to look more critically at and consider widening current incentive programs for students to select campus housing. This may generate less up-front revenue, but that could be offset by increased numbers in campus housing which would bring more spending on other ancillary services, and contribute to a more vibrant campus life that would further increase student satisfaction and generate more registrations.

It has also become increasingly important to critically examine and measure the success of current recruitment strategies to obtain a clear understanding of our return on investment, or cost per student recruited, from various places, both locally and internationally. It will also be necessary to assess the message carried to different schools, especially if they specialize in certain areas, and, on that basis, look at who we are bringing into high schools to best promote the University of Regina as an institution of choice for prospective students.

With traditional sources of university revenue struggling to cover costs, it will also be essential to explore not just means of achieving increased efficiencies, but also opportunities for revenue generation. There have been very positive responses and results from Faculties and departments, such as: creating new and popular programs; streamlining certain credentials; creating microcredentials; increasing cross listing to limit low-enrolment classes; growing online, hybrid, hyflex and other innovative course deliveries; increasing articulation agreements; and improving transfer credit efficiency and predictability. There may also be an opportunity for the University of Regina, as numerous other institutions have done, to monetize some of its unused land holdings, with the priority to better serve students, but also with a clear commitment to respect and improve its surrounding communities and demonstrate environmental stewardship.

Efficiency and effectiveness in planning, especially to better forecast budgetarily, require trustworthy and comprehensive data with respect to things such as current and projected enrolments, credit hours taught, number of graduates (international versus domestic, and undergraduate versus graduate), and registrations in certificate, diploma, or degree programs. Currently, the collection of key data is decentralized between the Office of Institutional Research, UR International, the Registrar's Office, and Financial Services. The result is that inconsistent information is delivered at different times. Effective financial stewardship requires that data collection be more centrally directed, understood as coming from a defined source, and comprehensive so it can inform every major unit – such as through online dashboards – on how they are standing, budgetarily.

#### Deliverables:

1. Complete a report – including with cost analysis, revenue projections, and assessment of indirect benefits – and initiate actions, as deemed appropriate, to enhance campus housing occupancy rates.
2. Complete a report on domestic and international recruitment that includes assessments of the cost per student recruited, and outlines strategy on improving that figure and attracting a sustainable number of students through such things as more effective focus, marketing, and bringing the most appropriate personnel to different venues.
3. Develop more centralized, effective, timely, and trusted data to better project budgetarily. This data will be delivered through easy-to-understand online dashboards divided for each major academic and administrative unit. As part of this process, the University will hire an Executive Director to properly organize, oversee, and ensure the revitalization of a data office that will generate and disseminate essential data.
4. Produce recommendations on more effective use of vacant University land in accordance with our current 10-year Capital Plan – use that prioritizes better serving students, while also respecting community concerns and needs as well as our responsibility to demonstrate environmental stewardship.

### **OBJECTIVE 4: BUILDING REPUTATION AND RECOGNITION**

#### Context and rationale:

The University of Regina has achieved remarkable progress in a wide array of areas. A thumbnail sketch includes: record enrolment that topped 17,000 in Fall 2024; hosting students from more than 100 countries; professors currently attracting some \$50 million in external research funding; and alumni who soon will exceed 100,000 in number. Despite such milestones, and despite more active promotion

including a new institutional marketing campaign and a revitalized website, the University's successes are still not as widely known as they should be, especially on a national and global scale. In part, this is due to our location, especially when compared to post-secondary institutions with a long history and situated in larger metropolitan centres. Our decentralized collection of data also compromises our ability to best advance our accomplishments.

During the past two years, the University has achieved modest gains in rankings (such as in *Maclean's*, moving up two spots from 15<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> in the Comprehensive category, after many years of being on the bottom). We must continue working to improve results, most particularly on the Times Higher Education and QS scales. Rankings and reputation are intertwined and are key factors in how students select which universities to attend, often despite cost. This is most evident among international students, as well as those at foreign universities when deciding where to pursue exchanges and research partnerships. Work to improve rankings has started, and involves a Provost's working group, the Research Office, and the Chief Governance Officer. The University also had representation at the 2025 Times Higher Education conference in Manchester, England.

In addition, for many years the University of Regina has run the largest annual fundraising campaign in the city. This past year, University Advancement well exceeded its annual target, raising nearly \$8 million. It is essential that we expand upon this success, which is intertwined with the University's reputation.

To that end, the University has been working with a fundraising consultant to develop the case for support and the planning stages for a multi-year comprehensive campaign. The goal of the campaign is to strengthen the institution's reputation among internal and external stakeholders, increase community awareness of the societal impact of research carried out at the University, and demonstrate the benefit of investing in the University through responsive programming strategically designed to support our mission of addressing society's pressing challenges.

University Advancement and University Communications and Marketing are working together to take an integrated approach on key strategies, communications, community engagement, and promotions. This will involve creating a campaign team comprised of key internal players, community leaders, and prominent, well-connected alumni. From collaboration with the consultant, significant consultation with a broad cross-section of University leadership, and the triaging of submissions based upon established and emerging University strengths, marketing pillars, need, and likelihood of success, the campaign target is estimated at this point to be \$50 million.

#### Deliverables:

1. Develop, implement, and report on an institutional plan to strategically elevate the University's reach to provincial and national audiences. Quarterly reports will evaluate the success of marketing campaigns, media coverage, top-performing social media content, and website analytics as outlined in the plan.
2. Produce a report, with operational strategies, to improve the University's results in premier national and international ranking lists, namely *Maclean's*, QS, Times Higher Education list of best universities, and the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (measuring progress toward fulfilling the United Nations' 17 Social Development Goals).
3. Establish a road map for securing approximately \$50 million in philanthropic support aligned with the University's strategic priorities. This process will include engaging key internal and external stakeholders to foster broad buy-in, and developing a foundational framework for integrated messaging, strategic alignment, and campaign execution.

## OBJECTIVE 5: BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY AND IMPACT

### Context and rationale:

The University of Regina has rapidly advanced its research capacity. This has been encouraged by recent incentives such as eliminating the international fee differential for PhD students, better enabling professors to attract highly qualified personnel who improve their chances for successful Tri-Agency grant applications, and providing up to \$10,000 in institutional support to professors who receive major external peer-reviewed funding. New offices supporting sustainability (including research in this area) as well as technology transfer and commercialization were opened, and capacity was increased to help guide Indigenous Research. As budgets permit, the University is looking to introduce seed funding for Tri-Agency grant applicants who were recommended for but did not receive research funding because of governmental monetary restraints.

The University has developed a national and even international reputation for excellence in several areas – such as energy transition, nuclear energy, and mental health – that have brought major investments. These investments include \$16 million from the federal government in 2023 to support the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment (a national consortium of universities, headquartered at the University of Regina, and which focuses on reducing the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress among first responders – namely police, firefighters, paramedics, and correctional personnel). As well, the University of Regina, along with the University of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Polytechnic, recently incorporated the Global Institute for Energy, Minerals and Society (GIEMS). One of GIEMS's priorities, based in part on expertise at the University of Regina, is to establish innovation capacity and contribute new research infrastructure to support the provincial government's priority of developing the nuclear energy sector, and more specifically, small modular reactors. The University's research – often tied to community need and the provincial government's *Growth Plan*, but always dedicated to advancing knowledge – will continue building the University's reputation, and thus must be further developed and supported.

### Deliverables:

1. Undertake construction of the Small Modular Reactor-Safety, Licensing, and Testing Centre (SMR-SLT). The SMR-SLT will be a test loop facility with capabilities for research, quality assurance testing, training, and public outreach that supports the development of the nuclear energy sector. The SMR-SLT will provide critical research infrastructure at both a provincial and national level. 2025-2026 will see completion of construction of Test Loop 1, and the design phase of Test Loop 2.
2. Advance commercialization of clean technologies in energy and environment. For example: supporting our spin-off company EcoLoop and its work on PFAS remediation with the Regina Airport Authority and Buffalo Pound Water Treatment Plant; and engaging in collaboration with PTRC and the Energy Innovation Hub to develop University of Regina technology in methane abatement technologies in the energy sector.
3. Implement a long-term strategic planning approach to develop competitive institutional research grants for national programs such as the Canada Excellence Research Chairs and Canada First Research Excellence Fund.
4. In collaboration with the Southeast Tech Hub and Southeast College under the terms of the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding, advance the establishment of the Innovation Centre of Energy Development (ICED) in Estevan, with work throughout southern Saskatchewan to drive economic diversification, energy security, and technological advancement.

5. Assess, and as appropriate, revise internal support programming to maximize effectiveness, research activity, and long-term research grant application success in the social sciences and humanities.