

**Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Roundtable
May 24, 2007**

Summary of Aboriginal Initiatives at the University of Regina

STUDENT ENROLMENT

The University of Regina has had a long history of engagement with Aboriginal communities in Saskatchewan and elsewhere. Through our partnership with First Nations University of Canada and our affiliation with the Gabriel Dumont Institute, as well as our programs offered through Aurora College in the NWT and Yukon College in Whitehorse, we continue this involvement. Approximately 12% of the University's population are Aboriginal students and a host of programs and services are available to these students.

The University recognizes there is much more it needs to do to effectively engage Aboriginal students, both prospective and current, and a number of the initiatives outlined below are meant to allow us to move forward in a proactive and responsive manner to the needs of our Aboriginal students and their communities. Our approach is one of partnership and an openness to learning from our Aboriginal partners.

ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

For the purposes of this summary, it is not our intent to detail Aboriginal student participation in every program. Rather, in the spirit of the "best practices" we wish to highlight a few of the major initiatives.

The Faculty of Education has several programs related to Aboriginal education. These include the Southern Urban Teacher Education program (SUNTEP), offered in affiliation with the Gabriel Dumont Institute. As well, the Faculty offers the Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) in La Ronge, SK. Finally, the Faculty offers the Indian Education degree in partnership with First Nations University of Canada and the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program (YNTEP) in Whitehorse. Finally, the Faculty is launching a new Teacher Education program in Nunavut starting in the fall of 2007.

The Faculty of Social Work offers a number of programs as well including the Indian Social Work program in partnership with First Nations University of Canada. In addition, Social Work offers a BSW in Whitehorse through its affiliation with Yukon College and a Diploma of Social Work program through its affiliation with Aurora College in the NWT.

An Intercultural Leadership program, in partnership with the Crown Investments Corporation, First Nations University of Canada, and the University of Regina, was launched in January 2007. This program aims to prepare leaders for Saskatchewan's future and is already generating a great deal of interest.

The Law Foundation Chair in Police Studies has, as a central thrust to its research, a focus on the inter-relationship of Aboriginal cultures, policing and justice policy. As well, our Police Studies degree has a stated Aboriginal focus as part of its mandate.

Research is being conducted on a regular basis, including a partnership with the University of Saskatchewan which focuses on providing more Aboriginal doctors and nurses in Saskatchewan communities. This research is being funded by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR).

Other research initiatives include, but is certainly not limited to, Political Science research in to Aboriginal women and the impact of the Treaties on this particular population; research in to the role of Aboriginal grandmothers in helping to sustain the social fabric of Aboriginal communities and their impact on overall health of these communities.

Certainly, the above reflect just a small sample of the ways in which the University of Regina is attempting to meet the burgeoning needs of our First Nations and Aboriginal communities. Many other examples of academic and research engagement could be listed but, for the sake of brevity, we have chosen to limit it to the above. The other part of engaging students and welcoming them to our community is the presence of dedicated services and supports. The next section addresses this aspect of Aboriginal and First Nations involvement in our academic community.

SERVICE INITIATIVES

There has been an increased focus on establishing key services and supports for students at the University of Regina over the past several years. These include:

- The establishment of a permanent Aboriginal recruitment position as part of the overall recruitment strategy. This position has a mandate to work with Aboriginal and First Nations communities and to learn from them regarding how we can best meet the needs of prospective and current students. In moving the position to base funding, rather than temporary, we have demonstrated a commitment to the importance of Aboriginal recruitment to our community. As a result, our contact with Aboriginal, prospective, students has increased by approximately 35% and our attendance at special events geared towards Aboriginal students has increased significantly. We maintain it is extremely important for the U of R to be engaged in a wide range of community activities. The establishment of this position has greatly helped in this regard.
- In September 2006 the Aboriginal Student Centre (with support from the Crown Investments Corporation) was established. The Centre's primary function is to support a successful transition to University life while aiding retention. It will act as an important cross-cultural bridge, on-campus, between students of all traditions. It will also assist Aboriginal and Métis students by providing a dedicated home for centralized services of an academic, personal, and spiritual nature. Thematically speaking, the Centre will focus on Awareness

- programming, Mentorship programming, Student Success programming, and an Elders in Residence program. Initiatives in all these areas have been forthcoming.
- The Aboriginal Student Centre, with sponsorship from CIBC, has established the Kâspohtamatâtân Mentorship program. This program aims to provide mentor and mentee relationships between Aboriginal high school students and Aboriginal University students and forms an outreach program to the high schools. We currently have 22 mentors and 30 mentees enrolled in the program. It is providing a vital link of support to these high school students while also providing a unique opportunity for the University students to give back to their respective communities. At the moment, the program is based exclusively in Regina but, as the program develops, consideration will be given to expanding the program to engage communities outside the Regina area.
 - An Elders' program has been established which provides an important avenue for our Aboriginal students to access the wisdom and knowledge of the Elders as the students seek their way, both through the University and through the other issues which arise in their lives. Both a male and female Elder are available to our students and to other members of our community who wish to learn more about Aboriginal culture.
 - The Aboriginal Student Centre provides support to the University's Aboriginal Awareness Training program for faculty and staff. This program is aimed at providing non-Aboriginal faculty and staff with increased knowledge about Aboriginal traditions and to raise awareness of how our community can do a better job of welcoming and celebrating Aboriginal and First Nations students and staff.
 - An Aboriginal Career Centre has been established to provide support to, and work beside, students so they can gain career-related work experience and to provide career-related transitioning when these students graduate. The Centre has been instrumental in engaging Aboriginal students in Summer Employment and works with both employers and students to ensure a successful employment experience.
 - Our Aboriginal Co-op program is in its third year of operation and serves students from both First Nations University of Canada and the University of Regina. This program works with, and beside, the non-Aboriginal co-op program and is designed to facilitate Aboriginal participation.
 - The Centre for Continuing Education, in partnership with Student Affairs and First Nations University of Canada, is delivering a credit course in Indigenous Studies which is specifically designed to provide students with the skills required for university success. The course is taught from an Aboriginal perspective.
 - As part of its expanded outreach programming, the University has been a significant partner in, or sponsor of, a number of Aboriginal focused events. We are major sponsors and partners in the delivery of the annual "Stepping Stones" youth rally and career fair in which more than 1500 students participate. In addition, the University of Regina lent strong support to the "Dreamcatching" Conference which focused on educators of Aboriginal students in the math and sciences disciplines. Finally, we have partnered with Aboriginal communities in co-hosting and sponsoring the Aboriginal Winter games in Regina.

- Our CIC Aboriginal Bursary program is another important initiative in helping to recruit and retain Aboriginal and First Nations students. The bursary is awarded to an undergraduate students who are Status, non-Status, Métis, or Inuit and who have been Saskatchewan residents for at least 12 months. Over the past 3 years, 125 students have received bursaries and the total amount awarded has been approximately \$687k.
- In addition to the Aboriginal Bursary program, the University has expanded its overall scholarship and bursary program by establishing and/or continuing scholarships specifically targeted at Aboriginal and First Nations students. This includes the establishment by our Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research of bursaries aimed at providing encouragement and support to our Aboriginal and First Nations graduate students.

CONCLUSION

As noted in the opening paragraphs of this summary, the University of Regina has had a long history of engagement with First Nations and Aboriginal communities. This being said, we do recognize more needs to be done and we are actively engaged in the delivery of academic programs; targeted research; and an expansion of the services available to students in order to create a community in which these important communities see themselves reflected and welcomed.