

**Report on CURAC 2016 Meeting. University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon,
May 25 – 27 2016. Report by David Holmes and Bob Morrison.**

Wednesday, March 25. Check-in to student residence was very simple. Room had no water. Bathroom down the hall. Opening reception in Hotel Park Town was good, 15 minute walk from residences across the South Saskatchewan River. One free drink. Food was a little slow in arriving, but well done. Few speeches, no music.

Thursday Morning, May 26. Sessions 1 and 2. Changing Post-Secondary Institutions and Panel Discussion. Bryan Harvey, Chair of the local RA organizing committee noted that we are on Treaty 6 territory. He hoped we enjoyed the packet of lentils and flax seed in our kits, noting that Saskatchewan was the world's largest exporter of pulses. In general the campus is very beautiful, at least in spring, and the agriculture and food orientation of the campus is impressive. It seems to be very self-sufficient, with programs in every discipline. One night we were there, the Gryphon Trio played a concert.

A local city councilor and the VP Finance also welcomed us. Ken Craig, President of CURAC, said retirees were a huge benefit to universities who should invest in them (us). They are a visible face to the community, a pathway to history, a source of information for policy. Asit Sarkar, President of the U Sask RA, noted that we could connect to the innovation community right on campus.

Michael Atkinson, Professor of Public Policy, and former Provost and Vice-President Academic, gave a good talk about universities being torn between the market and the mission, and the need to balance the two. This began with the study of "Public Management". The university was seen as being expensive and unresponsive. More of a service mentality was needed. People respond more to incentives than to the mission. The faculty has its own utility function. Universities are complex.

Structurally, there was a rise of semi-autonomous entities within the university, e.g. schools and institutes. Interdisciplinary schools and programs sometimes escaped the requirements of the "centre". They appear and disappear, according to market demand. They are "decomposable", more like Clark Kerr's California

multiversity than Cardinal Newman's colleges. They have outside revenues and stakeholders. Incrementalism was the model. Revenue was central but many decisions were at the margin. Then revenues and expenditures were both decentralized. Units had a responsibility to manage (Responsibility Centre Management, or RCM). Their strengths were transparency and accountability. You could track the money, which tracks demand.

Problems were that this undermined cooperation among units, and also sometimes undermined the overall mission of the university. Also it had no economies of scale. The goal was to reward students, seen as customers. Give them what they want. RCM tends to work against small costly programs and reduces the ability of the "centre" to cross-subsidize such programs in the interests of the whole institution.

Is this decentralization bad? Some don't like to see market forces in the university. But the traditional model didn't work. What is the business model for a non-profit? Professors generally don't worry about costs. Incentives aren't there for student quality across the university. We have to know what students have actually learned for their investment. "*Society has problems, universities have departments.*" Change is difficult. Many decisions are made by people far from the action. We should not give up on the mission. RCM may neglect that.

But we must also pay attention to the market. In Canada we try to balance. Some programs we love but they don't have revenue. Are they central to the mission? We need to know the values of programs, not just the market value but the mission value.

In the Q and A that followed, **Mike Atkinson** said one should always test new ideas for programs against values. Cover the costs, but it's not just about money. You need to recruit people to the senior administration in universities who have good judgement, especially presidents. It's not an easy job, and the pool is not so deep. There have been some widely-publicized problems with university presidents in Canada recently.

There is a gap between rhetoric and reality in interdisciplinary studies. They are often underfunded and understaffed. Linda Kealey said that was typical of Women's Studies. They had no money and no department.

He said better not to create a special unit. They should be the responsibility of the institution, not a department. (*I wasn't sure how this would actually work in practice*). He was asked about technology and demographics. He noted that people access higher education in different ways. There is lifelong learning, on-line courses, etc.

Asked if the university's role in transferring culture inter-generationally was under threat, and whether STEM disciplines have an advantage, he said you have to hire people (to senior administrative posts) who value History and English. Actually the humanities are in fairly good shape in attracting funding.

He thought universities were moving toward corporate models of governance. Boards are moving into the area of values, not just custodial and financial roles. The role of Senates is less clear. The increasingly assertive roles of boards has caused difficulties at a number of Canadian universities. There were a lot of good questions. He didn't have the solutions.

Deborah Meyers talked about Saskatchewan Polytechnic (formerly known as SAIT), of which she is CFO and Vice-President, Administrative Services. Sask Poly brings together the major colleges of Saskatchewan. It also services the smaller regional colleges and maintains their quality assurances.

Sask Poly faculty have real-world experience. They prepare graduates to contribute from day one on the job, and are employer-driven. They focus on minerals and manufacturing but have a variety of programs, 170 in total. They have 27,000 students, of whom 340 are international. They also run programs in other countries, e.g. Vietnam. They have an on-line course in applied math with 2,900 students, and plan to increase their on-line offerings. She showed a video featuring a remarkable range of programs, activities and success stories.

In the Q and A session, ***Deborah Meyers*** noted that many retirees wanted to continue teaching, partly for financial reasons but also out of their love of teaching. Asked about the difficulty of recruiting faculty to teach to maintain foreign programs, she said they tried to rely on local staff. Asked about how to ensure separation of function with universities, she said they did not try to compete. They looked for voids, where industry wanted better training. They worked with the universities to provide many career paths.

Van Isman, President and CEO of Innovation Place (IP) which is a Research and Technology Park, part of the U Sask campus. It leases serviced properties to business and startups. It has an economic impact of \$840 million. This wasn't defined, but gives some idea of the scale. The concept is clustering of businesses. IP provides technical, business, social and physical environment and infrastructure, so that companies can share utilities, equipment, ideas and events. They have 20 buildings, 160 companies, and 2,500 employees, with over a million square feet. There is now a similar but smaller initiative at the University of Regina, and an even smaller one at Prince Albert.

The focus is on Agriculture, life sciences, biotech, information technology, resources, and mining. Of 143 startups since they began in 1977, 108 are still going. This is three times the average survival rate of startups. The goal is financial self-sufficiency. Of the 26 Research and Technology parks in Canada. IP is one of the largest.

In the Q and A session, Van Isman said IP was market-driven, not academic. As to why it was located on the U Sask campus, he said they used many faculty members, and co-op students from the university had placement at IP companies. There is also close cooperation with the Agriculture Canada and NRC research facilities on campus. They make money from the leases, many of which are "flexible" for startups. Innovation Place has now reached the position of full cost recovery.

Thursday Lunch was at the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre . This dramatic new building, designed by Douglas Cardinal along the lines of the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, is the Aboriginal Student Centre. It was named after an elder who worked for cooperation and thought of Treaty relations as two horses working together. We heard from Graeme Joseph, team leader of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit student success. He emphasized the role of the building as a home for aboriginal students and for all students. It was a place of diversity and reconciliation.

Thursday Afternoon, May 26. Session 3. Indigenization of U Sask. Candace Wasacase-Lafferty, Director of Aboriginal Initiatives at U Sask, noted our presence in Treaty 6 Territory and emphasized the desire to be inclusive. She noted

that native peoples were 12% of the enrolment at U Sask, some 2,236 students, as well as around 30 faculty and 150 staff. This is very different from a few decades ago. Native peoples are 15% of the province's population. They represent 45% of primary school entries, which says something about the future. The University of Saskatchewan has one of the highest proportions of Aboriginal students in Canada.

The Red Bear Centre opened in February of this year. But it's not just for aboriginals. They honour all people and all traditions. It should be a welcoming place, with respectful relationships. It is not an island! No more ghettos! They welcome students from all over and want it to be normal to work side-by-side.

Her mother was Ukrainian and she saw the racism her mother experienced at first hand – from native peoples. Her father said being a “half-breed” allowed her to see the world with both eyes.

The theme is to eliminate the education gap. For a variety of reasons, Aboriginals do not graduate at the same rate. 42% drop out. They want to reduce barriers. They have a fund for learning assessment.

They persuaded 24 Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions to work together. They have connections with the native communities, reaching out to Elders. They look at hiring practices, so they can prepare students for the workplace. They try to develop intercultural competency among all groups. Voluntary self-designation as a native person was originally controversial, but is now seen as a value-added.

Bryan Harvey asked what indigenization meant. She said there was no good definition yet. The word helped to initiate a conversation. She didn't like “integration”, as it seemed one-way only. But a shared sense of identity was important.

She said her father would not even have got a job as a sweeper at the university forty years ago. Being Indian helped her get and keep a job. Now her son will compete for any job on campus.

One questioner said the best situation is to have Indians and non-Indians in the same class, with no Indian agenda. They can study together without identifying as a special group. She said native students were in all kinds of classes without special focus. But it was good to have role models. They had a computer lab for

natives, and many non-aboriginal students came to work there. First nations have a sense of pride and they accept others.

Dana Soonias, CEO, Wanuskewin Heritage Park. He is a Cree from Battleford and traces his ancestry back to Big Bear. The park is located just north of Saskatoon, on the banks of the South Saskatchewan. It has been a gathering place for 6,000 years. The goal is to share indigenous knowledge, and to be a centre for education and research, through partnerships with U Sask and others.

They begin with Canadian history. The treaties were ignored. Now they can be a basis for reparation. Some universities recognize the need to put indigenous culture into the curriculum. Regina has mandated 3 credit hours of courses on indigenous content. This is controversial. He cited a number of aboriginals who are professors or administrators in Canadian universities. Shirley Horn, a Cree artist, is the first Chancellor at Algoma University, which is located at the same site where she went to the Shingwauk Indian Residential School. Wab Kinew, author of *The Reason you Walk*, was Associate VP at U of Winnipeg before being elected a Manitoba MLA. The president of Nipissing and the Chancellor at Brock are native people.

At the Park, they want to do research studies. Understanding land rights would help in their negotiations, for example at the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario. Some law courses on land rights begin with, "All land in Canada belongs to the Queen." That should be questioned.

They want to bring back the bison and to make the park the first in Saskatchewan to be a UNESCO Heritage site. They are looking for volunteers. Could CURAC ***help?***

Session 4. Older Adult Initiatives in Saskatoon and U Sask. Murray Scharf talked about the Saskatoon Council on Aging (SCOA). It has 2,000 members and its goal is to enhance the quality of life and care in Saskatoon, at both the micro level (helping people to cope) and the macro level (policy).

Neither the province nor the city has a senior strategy or an office devoted to seniors. Saskatoon is the youngest city in Canada in terms of median age.

Because of greater longevity, the retirement window between age 65 and death has expanded greatly over the last century, and continues to expand. In 1991 average

life expectancy at 65 was only 3 years for men and 8 years for women. In 2016 the numbers are 13 and 17 years respectively and by 2041 it is anticipated that life expectancy at 65 will be 19 and 22 years respectively. Twenty five percent of those born in 2012 will reach age 100. More and more seniors are foreign born and there will be ever-increasing numbers of seniors who are Aboriginal. Many seniors will be single. At the same time the dependency ratio is dropping so that there will be fewer working Canadians supporting a greater number of seniors. Responsibility for care in this period has gone from the family and the community to the self and the state. Many seniors are moving to cities. As a cohort, they are big spenders. This provides opportunities for new institutions, including housing.

Winter in Saskatchewan is awful for seniors. The policy of one symptom, one visit for doctors is hard on seniors who have trouble getting out and about. Slanted driveways and double doors are hell. They have a planning document coming out, with lots of recommendations.

Donna Goodridge, Professor of Nursing in the College of Medicine, U Sask, spoke on Life Re-Booted : How Might Older Adults Benefit from Changes in Technology?

She asked what people liked being called. Seniors was the overwhelming choice, as opposed to Elderly, Older Adult, Boomer or Zoomer. She noted that our technology is designed by 18-year old engineers.

Seniors want self-care and health record tools, wearables, on-line communities of peers, and a health navigator to cope with the health system. Don't think that hospitals have good record systems.

Maintaining cognitive function is a high priority for seniors. By 65, most have several chronic illnesses. Independence is another high priority, and transportation is the key. An interesting point was made about modern cars. As cars become more automated and potentially autonomous, it will become easier for seniors to keep driving, although winter will always restrict mobility for older people.

Service robots are coming, with the internet of things. You can order groceries from Amazon and Walmart. Skype is helpful, as are the Tyze personal and community caregiving networks

Some seniors like living together in communities, others no.

There are aids for chronic illness: senior-enabled pill bottles to manage medication; blood glucose measurements that can be tracked and shared. There are apps that can guide patients and caregivers. They help to reduce readmissions. There is Canada Health Infoway: Digital Health Solutions, and Telehealth. Concern about privacy shouldn't be allowed to destroy a good system.

The speaker reported on a research study where patients with COPD were given tablet computers and were monitored online at home by a nurse-practitioner, without the need for either to visit the other. There was 98% satisfaction with this approach.

Ron Lonsdale of Collette Travel gave a 10-minute talk on guided travel. They focus on small groups and special interests (gardening, jazz, rivers, etc.) and respect seniors. You can check their website. *Note: Collette is a sponsor of CURAC Conferences and has a special arrangement with CURAC (reduced rates, etc.)*. Ron mentioned that many embassies in Ottawa were interested in making presentations on travel to their country, e.g. Germany and Iran.

Thursday Evening, Banquet at the Hotel Bessborough. The hotel is the old railway hotel, its Chateau de la Loire design a tad marred by new elevator shafts on the outside. We had access to a great terrace overlooking the river. But the River Building is even better. The speaker was an archivist from the city, a very irreverent guy who showed pictures of the university, including a lot of student parties and pranks. Good history, and also very enjoyable. The preceding CURAC awards were overly long.

Friday Morning, May 27. Session 5. CURAC News and Views. Jim Boyd of SFU presented their Retirees' Association. They are very active with seminars and walking. They have made a book, Remembering SFU on the Occasion of its 50th Birthday, as a gift to the university. I bought a copy, which I will pass on to Margaret Haines. It's very good.

Maurice Gibbons of SFU, editor of the 50th Birthday book, talked about the book. First they wrote academics asking for stories. They came back very analytical and academic - deadly. Then they put out a general call for stories, with feeling. They

were amazed at what came in. A lot of the stories needed editing, which was sensitive. He sold himself as a silent friend. The most interesting aspect of the book was that the activists from the early years became devoted to serving the public in one way or another.

Randy Barkhouse of Dalhousie spoke on Pension Governance in Canada. His talk dealt with some of the technical aspects of pensions and their governance.

As longevity grows and bond interest rates stay historically low pension funds are in great difficulty. Canadians are living longer than Americans. Defined benefit plans are the gold standard for pensions, but they are increasingly rare. Such is the difficulty of meeting pension obligations that CPPIB will not invest in a company with defined benefit plans. Deficits must be funded by the sponsor or the sponsor + the employees. Almost no university plan in Canada has a surplus and many have large solvency deficits. University pension funds are seen as a drain on budgets. Boards and governments are under pressure. There is talk of an enhanced CPP, which won't have any immediate effect for people retiring in the next few years. Ontario is talking of an OPP, but most university employees will probably be exempted from participating in such a plan. There is also an ongoing effort to merge Ontario university pension plans with government offering the carrot of relief from solvency payments. This is a complex project as all plans are slightly different.

CURAC monitors pensions. George Brandie is the rapporteur for Ontario, Michel Tousignant for Quebec. There is a need for input from the West.

Bev Stefureak of Lakehead presented the results of the CURAC/ARUCC Survey on University/College Sponsored Benefits. This is a very interesting study for Retiree Associations.

Benefits for retirees vary widely from place to place. A very brief summary: About 80% of universities surveyed had extended medical plans. There is a range of lifetime limits, and some are limited to in-province expenses. Most services are covered, but with limits. Vision and dental are less covered, more variable. More than 90% cover psychotherapy, which is encouraging, but again there are limits. The majority also cover repatriation expenses when needed on out-of-country trips.

For non-medical expenses, 53% subsidize parking, 91% give library privileges, 80% support e-mail, 53% subsidize athletic memberships, 84% support continuing intellectual connections (research support, invitation to events), 60% have a tuition waiver, 34% give money to support the retirees association

The AGM was held Friday morning from 10:30 to noon. It will probably be better to wait for the official CURAC report of this. We have the Documents and Reports prepared for the meeting if anyone wants them.

CURAC has 14 Standing Committees and 14 liaisons with other organizations.

Some points of relevance. Mary Johnston from McMaster said we should look at colleges and staff for more members. Each RA should look into the situation in their city.

We should liaise with AROHE, the American equivalent of CURAC.

We should get involved with National Seniors Day and the International Day of Older Persons, which both fall on October 1.

CURAC is not well enough known to individual members. We should be sure to distribute the relevant material. Several associations confessed to being selective, and only sending some of the CURAC material on to individual members.

We should include a progress report on the Ontario University Pension Project in the CURAC 2017 Program. (From our Friday morning session with CURAC Conference Organizing Committees).

Lunch Friday was in the student cafeteria. We rubbed elbows, sort of, with the Saskatchewan Rough Riders who are practicing at U Sask. Rarely has so much food been consumed by so few!

Friday Afternoon, May 27. Session 6. Community Engagement. *Liz Harrison, Associate Dean, Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Sciences, College of Medicine*, spoke on the benefits of continuing engagement. Retirees can engage in a range of activities: listening, simulated patients, judges for research papers, or working in research projects. This is a stage where people may be more joyful, less politically correct. We have great flexibility and capacity. They should use us

more. Many departments continue the connection. Others do not. How should we encourage them?

Andrew Dunlop, Director of Community Engagement and Outreach. He said universities had drifted away from the idea of a people's university. He wanted to restore the linkage. There is goodwill toward the university, based on 30 years ago. Is it still that way? He thought outreach should be part of everyone's job.

Should the university address the broader interests of the public? And use the resources of retirees? It all comes down to relationships. And it takes time and effort. Should we have a formal proposal for involving retirees?

The discussion that followed was a free-for-all about the role of retirees and their associations. I record here some of the more interesting comments, mainly without attribution.

The university loses touch with us. HR should do a better job of asking about future engagement. Make it a responsibility of the Administration.

Some retirees continue in labs, others don't come back at all. Some want a lower level of involvement, but it's hard to involve people part time. There should be a structure.

Senior College at U of T supplies speakers to the community. U of T supports it with \$25 000/yr. Classes are mainly for immigrants. Ryerson is also active. It all requires resources. McMaster said they know every retiree. They have permission to give contact info to them. They try to be proactive and get more people involved.

UBC has a retiree representative in every faculty. Science departments generally don't want to see them again. We have to put ourselves in front of the university. Otherwise they ignore us.

Murray Scharf noted some aspects of the retiree situation. The university is becoming more socio-economic, with shorter-term projects. Poly Tech used to be for Grade 8s, now it grants degrees. It provides cheaper classes, as do the regional colleges. The university has more outside influences, e.g. indigenization. Seniors are living longer, often retired for 25 years.

One delegate said spend more time on benefits for members. This is something we can act on. Pensions are a done deal, spend less time on them. Share more info. Others disagreed. We can advise on pensions. The demographics for more retiree involvement are compelling (more and healthier older people). We are important to the city. We can be watchdogs for the university. We have a role and should put ourselves forward.

Tour of the Canadian Light Source (CLS). We both went on this tour after the conference closed. The CLS, on-campus, is Canada's biggest single research facility. It is a circular particle accelerator. When the particles move in a curve they radiate energy, in the form of electromagnetic (e-m) waves, ranging across the whole e-m spectrum from infrared to X-Rays. Light of different frequencies (colours) can be split off and directed to experimental targets. Mainly they work on analyzing molecules, but there is a tremendous range of applications.

Friday Evening. Dinner Cruise on the Prairie Lily. We both went on this cruise, with ten other CURAC delegates. Very enjoyable. We ate and drank well in good weather while cruising through Saskatoon. Million-dollar houses on the east bluffs above the river are in danger of subsiding. The city doesn't want to pay to help them. We went by a derelict bridge that is being replaced, and discussed Ottawa's difficulty in getting new crossings. A new art gallery on the west bluff, composed of rectangular forms, is controversial but imposing.

Bob Morrison and David Holmes, June 2016