Chapter 34
University of Regina—Protecting Interests in Research

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The University of Regina has improved processes to protect its interests (e.g., financial, reputational, ownership) as it fosters research and commercialization of research. By early March 2017, the University had implemented ten of thirteen outstanding recommendations.

The University is actively working on the remaining three outstanding recommendations. These outstanding recommendations include defining specialized resources, consistently using and applying the definition of specialized resources, and completing a review of operations and classification of research institutes.

Fostering and commercialization of research is one of the core functions of the University. Research plays a pivotal role in the University's ability to carry out its other core function of education. A strong research program helps attract qualified professors, which in turn attracts students.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes our follow-up of management's actions on thirteen outstanding recommendations that we first made in our *2013 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 15. In 2013, we concluded that while the University had many structures and processes in place for protecting its interests (e.g., financial, reputational, ownership) as it fostered research and commercialization of research, these structures and processes could be improved.

By March 2015, as reported in our first follow-up,[1] the University had implemented half of our recommendations. We originally made 26 recommendations.

To conduct this review engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance*. To evaluate the University's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. We reviewed and assessed the information provided, discussed actions with key individuals, and tested certain processes where necessary. The University's management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

We found that the University had implemented ten recommendations, and was actively working on the remaining three recommendations. This section sets out:

❯ Each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation

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[1] Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan, *2015 Report – Volume 1*, (2015), Chapter 32.

❭ The status of the recommendation at March 2, 2017

❭ The University's actions up to that date

3.1 Clarified Research Direction

We recommended that the University of Regina prepare action plans for review of the Board of Governors to support the University's strategic research direction. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 186); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)

Status – Implemented

The Board of Governors (Board) approved its guidelines for reporting research in May 2015. The guidelines require reporting on the status of action plans used to achieve the University's Strategic Research Plan.

We found that the Board received research reports at every meeting between May 2015 and December 2016. For the four research reports tested, the reports contained information about the status of action plans used to achieve the Strategic Research Plan.

In addition, the University completed an action plan to support its strategic research direction for providing services to researchers, and presented this to the Board for information in July 2016.

The University updated its strategic research direction in its Strategic Research Plan 2016-2021 (Research Plan), which the Board received in December 2016. As of March 2, 2017, the University had not completed action plans for all initiatives supporting the University's strategic research direction. The Board plans to continue receiving reports on the status of action plans at each meeting, consistent with its guidelines for reporting research.

We recommended that the University of Regina prepare more detailed performance measures and targets for approval by the Board of Governors to support measurement of progress towards the University's research goals. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 186); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)

Status – Implemented

As part of the adoption of the University's new 2015-2020 Strategic Plan, the University developed new guidelines for evaluating success, including targets. The Board approved the guidelines in May 2015.

The new guidelines include measures to assess performance in several areas of University operations and define how to quantify each measure. Four of the measures relate to the impact of the University's research.

The Board approved the University's 2016-17 performance measurement targets in September 2016.

We recommended that the University of Regina reassess its risks related to research and develop further mitigation strategies. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 186); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)

Status – Implemented

The University developed a research-specific risk assessment and management plan. This plan includes identification of the top-10 research risks facing the University (e.g., financial mismanagement, stakeholder relations). It also developed steps to reduce each risk.

3.2   Updated Research Policies

We recommended that the University of Regina regularly review and update its research policies, educate staff about the policies, and have senior staff sign off on an annual basis that they have read and understand the policies. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 187); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)

Status – Implemented

The University followed its governance policy and updated most of its research policies (e.g., Research Institutes and Centres Policy). The governance policy requires an update to all University policies at least every five years.

It is actively working to update the one policy related to research that has not been updated within the last five years (i.e., Intellectual Property Policy).

The University educates new staff on research policies during orientation. It makes the policies readily accessible on the University's website.[2]

Senior research staff must sign-off annually that they have read and understand research policies. The University tracks completion of the sign-offs.

For 10 senior research staff we tested, each had signed off that they read and understand the University's research policies.

We recommended that the University of Regina ensure that intellectual property disclosures are completed in accordance with policy and communicate this requirement to staff. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 187); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)

Status – Implemented

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[2] www.uregina.ca/research/policies-forms-top/index.html (15 March 2017).

To ensure intellectual property disclosures comply with University policy, the University developed a disclosure of intellectual property form for researchers making disclosures to complete. It makes the form and the Intellectual Property Policy available on the University's website.[3]

The University educates staff about intellectual property disclosures in workshops. The University also informs researchers interested in making an intellectual property disclosure of the process.

> We recommended that the Board of Governors of the University of Regina update its Policy on University of Regina Centres/Institutes to define the creation, classification, monitoring, and reporting requirements for institutes/centres. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 190); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)
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> **Status** – Implemented

The Board approved the University's Research Institutes and Centres Policy in July 2015. The policy includes the requirements for the creation, classification, monitoring, and reporting of research institutes and centres.

3.3 Defined and Approved Specialized Resources, Except for One Instance

> We recommended that the University of Regina define and the Board of Governors approve what constitutes specialized resources for the purposes of the University's Intellectual Property Policy in order to protect the University's rights to intellectual property. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 188); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)
>
> **Status** – Partially Implemented

> We recommended that once the University of Regina defines and the Board of Governors approves what constitutes specialized resources, the University ensure that the definition is consistently used and applied. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 188); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)
>
> **Status** – Partially Implemented

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[3] Ibid.

As of March 2, 2017, one University academic unit did not have a definition of specialized resources.[4] The University makes the definitions of specialized resources for the other academic units available on its website.[5] At March 2017, the University had 15 academic units.

In December 2015, the University informed its Board about the specialized resources definitions for most academic units. As of March 2, 2017, the University has not updated its Board about the academic unit without an approved definition.

The University's process for intellectual property disclosures includes identifying whether the development of intellectual property used specialized resources. As of March 2, 2017, no University researchers had completed an intellectual property disclosure since the approval of the definitions.

As described in **Section 3.2**, we found that the University educates staff about its research policies and senior research staff signed-off annually that they had read and understand research policies.

Since the University has not defined specialized resources for all academic units, it cannot ensure the consistent use and application of the definitions in the development of intellectual property.

3.4   Took Prompt Action on Board Decisions

We recommended that the University of Regina take prompt action on Board of Governors' decisions regarding institutes/centres. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 190); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)

Status – Implemented

The University has improved the timeliness of actions in response to Board decisions about institutes or centres.

Since our last follow-up in March 2015, the University Board made four decisions for establishing or reclassifying research institutes. The University took prompt action for each of these four decisions.

Also, since our last follow-up, the University has taken action on the Board's December 2011 decision to transition the Clean Energy Technologies Research Institute (CETRi) into a University-based institute. As of March 2, 2017, even though CETRi was not fully established, it was reporting as a University-based institute. The University has also hired an external consultant to evaluate the Energy Systems and Security Hub, of which CETRi is a key stakeholder.

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[4] The dean of each academic unit is responsible for approving the definition of specialized resources per the University's collective bargaining agreement with academic staff.
[5] www.uregina.ca/research/policies-forms-top/university-specialized-resources.html (15 March 2017).

3.5   Institute Reviews Not Complete

> We recommended that the University of Regina review the classification and operations of all of its research institutes, assess their contribution to the University's strategic research goals, and take any necessary actions identified by the reviews. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 193); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)
>
> **Status** – Partially Implemented

As of March 2, 2017, the University had not assessed the research institutes' contributions to the University's strategic research goals. The University plans to assess the research institutes' contributions as part of its future review of research institutes.

Since our last follow-up in March 2015, the University has developed processes to facilitate this assessment.

In February 2017, the University developed a schedule and guidelines for reviewing research institutes. As described in **Section 3.4**, the University engaged an external consultant to review CETRi. The University has a process to assess the appropriate classification of new institutes and reassess institutes when senior research staff identify the need to update their classification.

The University evaluated all research institutes to determine how they fit into the research clusters identified in the University's Research Plan.

3.6   Followed Processes for Conflicts of Interest

> We recommended that the University of Regina ensure that all staff follow its policy requiring declaration, at least annually, of any conflicts of interest or conflicts of external commitment. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 192); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)
>
> **Status** – Implemented

> We recommended that the University of Regina take action when it identifies conflicts of interest or conflicts of external commitment. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 193); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)
>
> **Status** – Implemented

The University's Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment Policy requires staff to report annually any conflicts to their supervisors, who are responsible for reducing the conflict. The University tracks conflict of interest and conflict of commitment declarations

received. University tracking indicates over 95% of University staff returned the declarations.

For all University staff we tested, the University had received the staff declarations. As well, for those staff in our testing who declared conflicts, the University had taken action to reduce the conflict.

We recommended that the University of Regina regularly evaluate external directorships held by staff. (2013 Report – Volume 1 (p. 193); Public Accounts Committee agreement December 9, 2014)

Status – Implemented

The University tracks external directorships held by the University Leadership Team.[6]

For all staff we tested, the information provided on their conflict of interest and conflict of commitment declarations was consistent with the University's tracking of external directorships.

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[6] The University Leadership Team consists of the President, Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, Executive Directors, Deans, and certain Directors.