

Chapter 5: Saskatchewan Polytechnic—Supporting Success of Indigenous Students

Why It Matters

Making Indigenous education a priority can reduce differences in educational outcomes in Saskatchewan between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and support more equitable outcomes.

Why We Did This Audit

Obtaining higher education leads to better outcomes in the labour market. Sask Polytech estimates its average graduate will earn \$505,000 more over their lifetime than someone who only holds a high school diploma.

Key Facts and Figures

- Sask Polytech has four campuses with total student enrolment in 2021–22 of nearly 15,000, of which, 15% self-declared as Indigenous
- In 2022–23, Sask Polytech's Indigenous Strategy department had an approved budget of \$1.9 million and 16 staff of whom 81% self-declared as Indigenous
- Indigenous student enrolments fell by almost 30% from 3,203 in 2019 to 2,286 in 2021
- Declining graduates:
 - 2018: 827 Indigenous graduates;
 - 2021: 648 Indigenous graduates
- Average income for Saskatchewan's Indigenous people was \$40,720 compared to \$55,050 for non-Indigenous people (2021 national census)

What We Found

Indigenous Student Success Strategy lacks certain Indigenous student-specific key performance measures and targets to increase student enrolment, retention and graduation rates.

Sask Polytech implemented several initiatives (e.g., Indigenous Student Centre programming, application subsidies) aimed at improving Indigenous student success, but has further areas to improve.

Our Recommendations

Sask Polytech needs to:

- Expand performance measures' targets to evaluate whether its strategies support Indigenous student success. We found there are no targets around Indigenous student enrolment and program retention rates and both declined since 2019.
- Conduct ongoing Indigenous community engagement and consultation to encourage enrolment and to report results on its Indigenous student successes
- Verify Indigenous identity of staff in Indigenous-designated positions beyond using only self-identification

