

Campus Saskatchewan

Possible Organizational Models

Researched and written by

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October 2001

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Introduction

What is Campus Saskatchewan?

Campus Saskatchewan is a consortium of Saskatchewan's post-secondary educational institutions to promote coordination and collaboration in technology enhanced learning. Campus Saskatchewan provides a forum for post-secondary institutions to:

- Coordinate and collaborate in developing technology enhanced learning (TEL) courses and programs.
- Develop and implement system-wide policies to address issues related to technology enhanced learning, such as common quality assurance standards for online courses, use of common software, credit transfer, and tuition fees.
- Collaborate around inter-institutional faculty development.
- Coordinate learner services in areas such as access to technology, career/academic counselling, tutoring, library and bookstore services.
- Develop a Web site that provides:
 - ▶ access to an online catalogue of provincial courses delivered in alternate format (such as online, SCN televised, off-campus classroom, and independent study programs and courses);
 - ▶ information about credit transfer arrangements; information and links to help streamline admissions and registration processes; and
 - ▶ links to related online services such as student financial aid.
- Cooperate with virtual campuses in other jurisdictions.

Why Now?

Campus Saskatchewan has been in the planning stages for some time and much of the groundwork has been laid. The time has come for action. An organizational model for Campus Saskatchewan will provide the framework for partner institutions to develop systems and procedures for working together.

Purpose of the Report

An important decision to be made about Campus Saskatchewan relates to its organizational structure. What form will Campus Saskatchewan take? How will it be governed? How will roles and responsibilities of the various partners and stakeholders be determined? How will decisions be made? The research report identifies some of the issues relating to organizational structure, describes possible options, and identifies the pros and cons of the various options.

Research for the Report

Research for the report included three activities:

- **Researching other virtual campuses.** A list of other virtual campuses researched appears in the Appendix to this report. In most cases, this research consisted of a thorough review of the virtual campus's Web site and one or more telephone interviews with administrative staff of the virtual campus. In some cases, the people interviewed sent additional information by post or e-mail or gave the URL for a private Web site containing more information.

The information collected about other virtual campuses focused on organizational structure, governance and decision making. There was limited emphasis on specific program or course offerings and on technology. The virtual campuses researched are those that have functions similar to the functions envisioned for Campus Saskatchewan. The virtual campuses researched represent only a very small percentage of the virtual campuses in North America. For listings of international and American regional and statewide virtual networks, refer to Dalziel (2001), Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (n.d.), and Hirst (2001).

- **Review of previous work done relating to Campus Saskatchewan.** Several planning documents and reports relating to Campus Saskatchewan have already been prepared. These were reviewed in detail. In addition, information about work done to date was collected through a series of meetings with the staff of the Technology Enhanced Learning Branch of Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training (PSEST).
- **Literature review.** The online and printed literature on virtual campuses was reviewed. The literature review showed that a great deal has been written on distance education programming and on topics like, "how to develop an online course", "how to choose an online program or course". It also showed that very little has been written about the organizational and governance structure of virtual campuses.

Organization of the Report

The report is divided into three parts.

- **Part 1: A Framework for Campus Saskatchewan** describes why establishment of Campus Saskatchewan is appropriate at this time and outlines some of the decisions that have already been made.
- **Part 2: Possible Organizational Models for Campus Saskatchewan** describes four possible organizational models and identifies the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- **Part 3: Considerations Relating to Campus Saskatchewan** addresses three topics: items that are often included in a written agreement among the partners of a virtual campus, financial issues, and best advice provided by representatives of the virtual campuses researched.

The report concludes with a list of references and an appendix that lists the virtual campuses researched.

Part 1 – A Framework for Campus Saskatchewan

Part 1 of the research report describes the advantages of Campus Saskatchewan, the framework that has already been established for Campus Saskatchewan and the context within which Campus Saskatchewan will operate.

Part 1 includes three sections:

- **Why Campus Saskatchewan?**
- **Campus Saskatchewan – Work Done to Date**
- **Campus Saskatchewan – Decisions Made to Date**

Why Campus Saskatchewan?

Presently, Saskatchewan's two universities, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), and the regional colleges all deliver some courses and services using technology. Why then Campus Saskatchewan? Why the emphasis on a consortium to promote collaboration and cooperation in technology enhanced learning?

Implementation of Campus Saskatchewan is appropriate at this time because Campus Saskatchewan has the potential to:

- **Encourage coordination and collaboration** to develop online courses and programs.
- **Expand student choice** by allowing students to integrate the courses and programs offered by the partner institutions.
- **Increase flexibility** for students to take courses leading to a credential.
- **Make it easier for students to access services** that support learning, such as career and academic counselling, tutoring, online bookstore, and online library service.
- **Provide students with “one-stop” access** to common services such as a central help desk and a common approach to registration.
- **Create greater public awareness** of programs and courses available in alternate formats.
- **Provide Saskatchewan with a vehicle and a presence that facilitates interaction with other virtual campuses** throughout North America and globally.
- **Make it easier for academic counsellors to organize programs** for their students – a centralized online catalogue of all programs available in alternate formats will mean that counsellors do not have to check multiple Web sites and calendars to design an appropriate program or advise students.
- **Support and extend the skills of faculty** relating to technology enhanced learning – these skills include developing and teaching technology-based courses and working within a technological environment.
- **Facilitate joint research and sharing of information and “best practices”** about effective use of technology in education.
- **Create greater awareness among employers** of the potential for delivering work-related and/or on-the-job training using technology.
- **Facilitate efficient use of public resources** by promoting coordination of alternate program and course offerings.

Campus Saskatchewan – Work Done to Date

The research report is one part of a complex series of actions that have been taken to plan and implement Campus Saskatchewan. Work done to date includes:

- **Phase 1 – 1997-98** – Phase 1 included a provincial planning session on technologies in learning and a discussion paper. The discussion paper, produced by a working group with members from several different institutions and agencies, led to further discussion among senior managers – discussions about organizations’ interest in and commitment to technology enhanced learning in order to collaborate and achieve shared goals.
- **Phase 2 – Late 1999 to early 2000** – Phase 2 involved the preparation of a policy framework for collaborative action. The policy framework included the context and rationale for improving Saskatchewan’s capacity for technology enhanced learning, a vision and goals to guide development, and strategies to achieve the goals. Actions to implement the plan are described in broad terms and resource implications are considered. The policy framework is described in *Technology Enhanced Learning: An Action Plan for Post-Secondary Education and Training in Saskatchewan* (June 30, 2000).

Phase 3 – Late 2000 to mid 2001 – Phase 3 includes developing plans for specific priority actions to be taken to establish Campus Saskatchewan. The terms of reference for Campus Saskatchewan appear in *Saskatchewan Virtual Campus: Terms of Reference for Developing an Implementation Plan* (November 9, 2000). The research report on possible organizational models is part of Phase 3 of the development of Campus Saskatchewan.

Campus Saskatchewan – Decisions Made to Date

A number of important decisions have already been made about Campus Saskatchewan. Some of these decisions are described in the two planning documents that have been published to date.

- *Technology Enhanced Learning: An Action Plan for Post-Secondary Education and Training in Saskatchewan* (June 30, 2000)
- *Saskatchewan Virtual Campus: Terms of Reference for Developing an Implementation Plan* (November 9, 2000).

Other decisions have been made through discussions among the partners in Campus Saskatchewan. Each of these decisions is discussed in more detail below.

Campus Saskatchewan Will Be a Coordinating Agency, Not a Credit-Granting Institution

Dozens of post-secondary education online consortia exist in Canada and the U.S. These consortia are organized in different ways and serve different functions. The taxonomy in Figure 1 (Johnstone, 1999) describes the four most common types of virtual campuses. These descriptions are provided to facilitate discussion; they are not rigid. Some virtual campuses fall between two of the categories identified.

Figure 1: Taxonomy of Virtual Campuses

Type of Virtual Campus	Services Provided	Examples
Virtual University/ College	Degree granting, no physical campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Technological University • Western Governors University • Jones International University
Virtual University Consortium	No degree granted but accredited academic institutions linked online and supplies centralized or coordinated services to students, with mutual articulation among consortium members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Community College Online • OntarioLearn.com • Washington Online
Academic Services Consortium	No degree granted, but accredited academic institutions linked online and supplies centralized or coordinated services to students, with no articulation among consortium members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illinois Virtual Campus • Massachusetts Distance Learning Consortium
University Information Consortium	No degree; no coordinated services to students; accredited academic institutions linked electronically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Virtual University • Southern Regional Electronic Campus • Canadian Virtual University

Functions of Campus Saskatchewan

The vision of Campus Saskatchewan resembles a virtual university consortium.

Campus Saskatchewan will not:

- offer credits, degrees, diplomas or certificates; these acknowledgements of achievement will continue to be awarded by the partner institutions
- develop or offer its own courses; all course development will continue to be the responsibility of the partner institutions
- have a physical campus; Campus Saskatchewan will likely have a small administrative office
- provide the server and other electronic equipment needed to deliver courses; the technical aspects of course delivery will remain the responsibility of the institution offering the course.

Students Will Register With a Home Institution

Once Campus Saskatchewan is operational, all students will register with one of the partner post-secondary institutions. They will be students of the University of Regina or SIAST, etc., not students of Campus Saskatchewan. The institution where the student is registered will be the student's home institution and the degree, certificate or diploma the student earns will be awarded by the home institution. Initially, the Campus Saskatchewan Web site will be set up so that students can link to the registration pages of the partner post-secondary institutions' Web sites. The eventual goal is to organize the Campus Saskatchewan Web site so students can register with their home institution through the Campus Saskatchewan Web site. See the Web site of the Canadian Virtual University for an example of how a centralized virtual campus Web site facilitates registration with individual academic institutions.

Credit Transfer Will Be Negotiated by Partner Institutions

Credit transfer will be negotiated by the partner academic institutions, not by Campus Saskatchewan or some other external body. This will help ensure that the partner institutions retain control over the content and quality of their programs.

Campus Saskatchewan Will Be Owned by Saskatchewan's Post-Secondary Institutions

Campus Saskatchewan will only be successful if the partner organizations feel that they own it, control it, and drive its activities. In addition, the partner institutions must feel that Campus Saskatchewan benefits their students and their institution as a whole. Many of the individuals interviewed for this project made this point strongly, and repeatedly stressed the importance of ownership by the academic partners. They emphasized that all significant decisions should be made by the academic partners. Therefore, the governance and organizational structure of Campus Saskatchewan must be structured to facilitate ownership and control by Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions.

All Partners Will Be Equal

Decisions about Campus Saskatchewan's future direction, role and activities will be made by the partner organizations. Either voting or consensus can be used to make decisions, although it is likely that most decisions will be made through consensus, so that all partners feel committed to decisions. Regardless of which method of decision making is used, all academic partners will be equal and will have an equal voice. Institution A will not be entitled to two votes or two members on the management board because it is bigger. Institution B will not be entitled to two voices because it is located in a remote area.

Will Not Be Located in PSEST

Campus Saskatchewan will not be located either physically or organizationally within Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training (PSEST). It is essential that Campus Saskatchewan be owned and driven by the partner post-secondary institutions. Locating it within PSEST would be an impediment to partner ownership.

Resources Will Be Required

Campus Saskatchewan will require financial and human resources in order to operate efficiently and effectively.

Part 2 – Possible Organizational Models for Campus Saskatchewan

Several different governance and organizational models are possible for Campus Saskatchewan. Part 2 of the report describes these models in detail and identifies the advantages and disadvantages of each. The evaluation criteria that were used to identify the advantages and disadvantages of each model are given.

Part 2 has six sections:

- **Background to Potential Models**
- **Evaluation Criteria**
- **Independent Legislated Agency**
- **Partnership**
- **Non-Profit Corporation**
- **Existing Agency**

Background to Potential Models

Comparing Saskatchewan to Other Jurisdictions

The virtual campuses that were researched for this project (see Appendix A) have a variety of governance and organizational structures. Although components of these differing organizational structures have relevance for Saskatchewan, no existing model can simply be transplanted to Saskatchewan and accepted “as is” for the following reasons:

- **Most American states have a Board of Regents or State Board that oversees post-secondary education.** The members of these boards are usually political appointments, but some Boards of Regents or State Boards include senior managers of post-secondary educational institutions. This board makes policy and program decisions which affect the entire post-secondary system and backs up its policy decisions with financial allocations. In some states, the Board of Regents directed that a virtual campus be established. The Board’s decision and direction had enough weight and authority to ensure that the virtual campus became a reality. In some states, the virtual campus is wholly or partially responsible to the Board of Regents or State Board.

In Manitoba, the Council on Post-Secondary Education (COPSE) oversees post-secondary education. This body’s function is similar to that of Boards of Regents or State Boards in American states. The mandate of the Council on Post-Secondary Education, as stipulated in the Council on Post-Secondary Education Act, is:

... to plan and co-ordinate the development of a post-secondary education system in the province that promotes excellence in and accessibility to education, supports the co-ordination and integration of services and facilities, and promotes fiscal responsibility.

(Manitoba, COPSE, 2001)

Campus Manitoba reports to the Council on Post-Secondary Education.

In Saskatchewan, there is no similar body that oversees post-secondary education and plays a decision-making, planning and coordinating role.

- **Some provinces and most American states have many more post-secondary institutions than Saskatchewan.** For example, Ontario has 22 English and 3 French community colleges. All 22 English colleges are partners in OntarioLearn.com. The state of Washington has 34 community and technical colleges, all of which participate in Washington Online.

Saskatchewan’s small number of post-secondary institutions means that models that work well in jurisdictions like Ontario and Washington State may have limited

relevance here.

- **The members of some virtual campuses are highly homogeneous.** For example, the members of Colorado Community College Online and OntarioLearn.com are all community or technical colleges of roughly the same size. Their interests are likely to be quite similar. In contrast, the academic partners in Campus Saskatchewan are of different types and sizes. In this regard, Campus Saskatchewan will be similar to the Illinois Virtual Campus, whose 62 members include two- and four-year colleges and universities of various sizes, types and mandates.
- **The population of potential students is much larger in some provinces and states.** In these jurisdictions, there is the potential for greater enrollment in courses and programs and for a greater number of programs and courses. This leads to economies of scale and may produce adequate enrollment for even highly specialized courses or programs.

Necessary Functions

Regardless of which governance and organizational model is developed for Campus Saskatchewan, the model will need to provide for certain functions. These necessary functions are described below in four categories:

- Governance
- Operations
- Programs
- Technical

Governance

- **Management board** – There must be a management board that provides overall direction for Campus Saskatchewan and sets policy. The research shows that this management board will be most effective if it is composed of people who have direct decision-making responsibility in the partner post-secondary institutions and the authority to ensure that decisions are implemented in their institutions, for example, Vice-Presidents, Academic and CEOs.
- **Written agreement** – There probably will be a written document that sets out the terms of reference for Campus Saskatchewan and describes its governance and organizational structure. Several options are possible:
 - memorandum of understanding among the partners – Campus Manitoba and Michigan Virtual Learning Collaborative have taken this approach.
 - bylaws – Florida Virtual Campus (FVC) has established a set of bylaws of the governing board. Topics covered in the bylaws include duty and purpose of the FVC, composition and appointment of the governing board, voting procedures, and

frequency and format of meetings.

- policies – OntarioLearn.com does not have any type of formal partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding among the partners, but it does have academic and procedural policies that members are expected to observe. The 13 academic policies cover topics like grading, transfer of academic credit and examinations. The five procedural policies cover topics like financial obligations and the role of the OntarioLearn.com administrator.
- act of the legislature – Colorado Community Colleges Online exists through an act of the Colorado Legislature, which established a funding mechanism for CCCOnline.

Examples of written agreements are provided in Appendix B.

Operations

- **Mechanism to accept funding** – There must be some structure or mechanism that enables Campus Saskatchewan to receive funding from the provincial and federal governments and from a variety of other agencies, including businesses, other educational institutions and non-profit organizations.
- **Staff** – Campus Saskatchewan will need an administrative staff. Most virtual campuses have a small staff, usually an executive director, a secretary and, occasionally, a technical person. For example, OntarioLearn.com has a part-time manager (who also works part-time for one of the colleges) and a full-time administrator. The administrator ensures that the Web site is up-to-date, sends information to the company that manages the database, etc. Some of the larger virtual campuses have more staff. The Illinois Virtual Campus has five staff: a director, associate director, assistant director, research programmer, and secretary.
- **Operating advice** – The management board will provide general direction and set board policy, but there is need for another mechanism to provide advice on operational matters like technical issues and implementation of board decisions. The Canadian Virtual University has provided for this by establishing an advisory committee in addition to the board of directors. The Canadian Virtual University's advisory committee meets regularly and assists the executive director with operational decisions. The advisory committee consists of one member from each consortium shareholder and anyone else the board thinks would provide valuable advice.

The need for operating advice seems to be particularly acute during the first 18-24 months of a virtual campus' existence. Some virtual campuses respond to this need by setting up committees on specific topics. Such committees may address technical issues, student library services, in-service for faculty, academic counselling for students. These committees provide advice to the executive director and management board. Their responsibilities become less urgent as the virtual campus becomes more established.

- **Physical location** – The administrative office of Campus Saskatchewan must have a physical location. This physical location will provide office space as well as services like phone, fax, e-mail, and photocopying. In most of the virtual campuses researched, the administrative office is located in one of the participating academic institutions. For example, Campus Manitoba’s administrative office is located at Brandon University, Florida Virtual Campus’ administrative office is located at the University of South Florida.
- **Accounting and purchasing** – There must be a system to pay staff salaries, issue cheques to suppliers, issue purchase orders and keep accurate records of all income and expenditures.

Programs

- **Coordinating function** – Campus Saskatchewan will play a coordinating role, helping member institutions coordinate their course and program offerings and conducting research into programming and technological issues of interest to member institutions. The governance and organizational model chosen must facilitate this coordinating role.
- **Student services** – There is a whole range of student services that might be provided or coordinated. The ones mentioned most often by the individuals interviewed were academic counselling, online bookstore and online library services.

Another type of student support that may be important is help with online learning skills. Learning via the Web requires different skills than learning in the classroom. In some cases, this type of student support is provided largely online. In other cases, there are on-the-ground student support centres where students can go for assistance. For example, the Illinois Virtual Campus has 40 student support centres that provide general advising, access to computers, learning services, technical assistance and test proctoring. The student support centres are located in community colleges throughout the state.

- **Faculty in-service** – Developing and teaching online courses is quite different from developing and teaching face-to-face courses and many faculty will need to expand their skills. In all the virtual campuses researched, the individual member institutions play a major role in training their own faculty. In some cases, the virtual campus is also involved in training, usually by organizing train-the-trainer workshops, and in publishing guides and handbooks.

Technical

- **Web site development and maintenance** – In some cases, staff of the virtual campus maintains the Web site; in other cases, it is contracted out to a consultant or external company.

- **Database management** – Behind the Web site that appears on potential students' computer screens will be a large database capable of accepting student registrations, routing registrations to the appropriate home institution, maintaining files of courses and programs, and generating statistics. Database management requires both a computer with appropriate capacity, and staff to program the computer and handle data. Virtual campuses usually handle this in one of three ways:
 - The academic institution that houses the administrative offices of the virtual campus assumes this responsibility. They may or may not charge the virtual campus for their services.
 - Responsibility for database management is assigned without competition to one of the participating academic institutions, a government agency or a private company that offers to take on this responsibility for a fee.
 - The virtual campus outlines its requirements in a request for proposals. This RFP is circulated to member institutions, government agencies and private companies. A supplier is chosen on the basis of quality of service and price.
- **Help desk** – Most virtual campuses have a help desk that students can contact if they are having technical problems. The same institution that manages the database usually manages the help desk.

Evaluation Criteria

The next four sections of this report describe four different governance and organizational models that might be used for Campus Saskatchewan. The advantages and disadvantages of each potential organizational model are outlined.

The following evaluation criteria were used when identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each model.

Figure 2: Evaluation Criteria Used to Identify Advantages and Disadvantages of Potential Models

- **Saskatchewan’s post-secondary institutions own, control and drive the system.** This means that the board will be comprised of senior managers from the partner post-secondary institutions, such as CEOs, academic vice-presidents and associate deputy ministers who can speak authoritatively for their own institutions and have the power to implement board decisions in their own institutions.
- **There is financial accountability.** Financial accountability has two dimensions: ensuring that accurate records are kept of all income and expenditures and that good value is received for the money spent.
- **There is academic accountability.** This means courses and programs have quality and substance comparable to classroom courses and satisfactory levels of student achievement.
- **The system facilitates coordination** of courses, programs and services.
- **The system builds on existing capacity and strengths.** It uses the courses, programs, services and structures that already exist to maximum advantage.
- **All the post-secondary institutions are equal** with an equal voice, regardless of location, enrollment, budget or type of institution.
- **The organizational and administrative structure is simple** and clear. It is clear who reports to whom.
- **The system is flexible.** It is structured to facilitate evolution and change as the virtual campus grows. The system allows for flexibility of partnerships in program development and projects. All partners do not have to participate in all projects. For example, institutions A and B might cooperate in the development of a program relevant to them. Institution C might cooperate with a private sector partner to develop a course (e.g., a mining company might contribute money and expertise to establish a program relating to the mining industry).

Models Reviewed

In the next four sections of this report, four potential governance and organizational models are reviewed. They are:

- Independent Legislated Agency
- Partnership
- Non-profit Corporation
- Existing Agency

Two possible models that are not discussed in the sections that follow are:

- Partnership model without government participation, similar to that of OntarioLearn.com. This model is unrealistic since Campus Saskatchewan will, for the foreseeable future, require government funding to pay for administrative staff and technical infrastructure, and to support the creation of programs and courses that may presently be lacking.
- Making Campus Saskatchewan a branch of Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training. This model would inhibit ownership and control of Campus Saskatchewan by the partner institutions and thus is not appropriate.

Independent Legislated Agency

Description of the Independent Legislated Agency Model

Overview

With the independent legislated agency model, Campus Saskatchewan would be created as an independent agency through an Act of the Saskatchewan legislature. Campus Saskatchewan would report to a minister of the provincial government.

Governance

- **Management board** – The Act would probably prescribe the composition of the management board and so could specifically state that it is to be composed of senior managers/decision-makers representing the partner institutions. The way this condition is implemented would depend on the terms of the Act. The government could ask each member institution to name its representative on the board or the government could name the members of the board directly.
- **Written agreement** – The Act would define the general terms of reference for Campus Saskatchewan, but Saskatchewan legislation tends to be quite general. A memorandum of understanding among the partners may also be needed for clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities of partner institutions, procedures for decision-making, and issues relating to meetings such as quorum. The memorandum of understanding could also address issues relating to the board chair. Does the chair rotate among the member institutions or its members? How long does a chair serve? Can the chair serve two or more consecutive terms? In addition, policies would probably be needed to address academic issues like faculty in-service, credit transfer and operational matters like statistical reports to be submitted by partner institutions.

Examples from Other Virtual Campuses

Among the virtual campuses researched, none were directly established by an Act of the provincial or state legislature.

Colorado Community College Online (CCCOline) was indirectly created by an Act of the General Assembly of Colorado (House Bill 95-1196). This Act is very complex and specifies that state funds may be provided for several different types of initiatives including initiatives relating to the development and use of technology in K-12 and post-secondary education.

Funding for CCCOnline was provided under the terms of this Act.

Operations

- **Mechanism to accept funding** – As a legislated agency of the provincial government, Campus Saskatchewan would be an ongoing item in the provincial budget and so could receive funds directly. It could also receive federal funds for specific projects or initiatives.

- **Staff** – Probably the management board would hire the executive director, who would in turn, hire other staff.
- **Operating advice** – Several options possible – The regulations to the Act establishing Campus Saskatchewan could formally prescribe an advisory committee. Alternatively the management board could establish one long-term advisory committee or a series of short-term advisory committees to provide advice on specific topics, or the executive director could set up informal advisory groups when the need arises.
- **Physical location** – Several options possible – Space could be rented in a commercial building or a partner post-secondary institution, or a partner post-secondary institution could provide space and office services as an in-kind contribution.
- **Accounting and purchasing** – Several options possible – Campus Saskatchewan could hire its own staff for these tasks, or contract these tasks out to a private company or a partner institution, or a partner institution might provide these services as an in-kind contribution.

Programs

- **Coordinating function** – The legislated agency model would facilitate a coordinating role for Campus Saskatchewan.
- **Student services** – Many options possible – Some student services could be provided online or a network of on-the-ground student support centres could be established in partner post-secondary institutions. Decisions about the student services to be provided and the manner in which they are offered could be made by an advisory committee or defined through a resolution of the management board.
- **Faculty in-service** – This probably would not be part of the Act or its regulations. Plans for faculty in-service could be spelled out in a memorandum of understanding, defined by a resolution of the board, or could simply be agreed upon by the management board or an advisory body.

Technical

- **Web site development and maintenance** – Could be done by staff of Campus Saskatchewan or by a contracted consultant or company.
- **Database management and help desk** – Three options are possible:
 - If a post-secondary institution houses the administrative offices of Campus Saskatchewan, it could assume this responsibility. The post-secondary institution may or may not charge Campus Saskatchewan for their services.

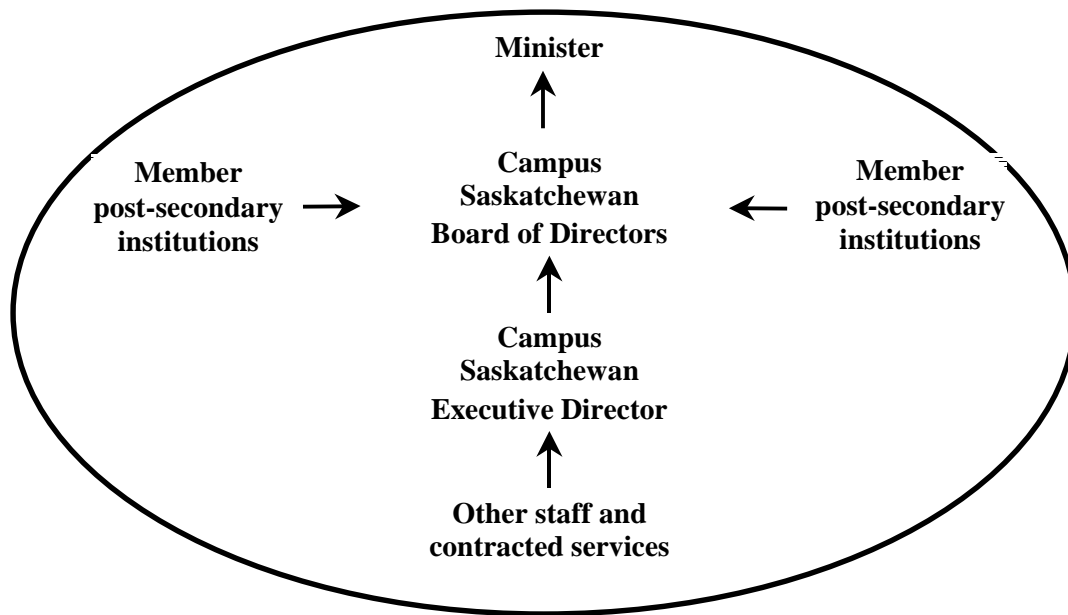
- Responsibility for database management is assigned without competition to one of the participating post-secondary institutions, a government agency or a private company that offers to take on this responsibility for a fee.
- Campus Saskatchewan outlines its requirements in a request for proposals. This RFP is circulated to member post-secondary institutions, government agencies and private companies. A supplier is chosen on the basis of quality of service and price.

Evaluation of the Independent Legislated Agency Model

Advantages

- Campus Saskatchewan will be owned and driven by post-secondary institutions if the Act establishing Campus Saskatchewan specifies that the management board is to be composed of senior managers/decision-makers of the member post-secondary institutions.
- There would be good financial accountability, since Campus Saskatchewan would be required to conform to guidelines set out by the Provincial Auditor and financial records would be reviewed by the Provincial Auditor. The Provincial Auditor or the management board of Campus Saskatchewan could request a value for money audit, if they wish.
- The organizational and administrative structure would be simple as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Independent Legislated Agency Model – Organizational Structure



Disadvantages

- There is a possibility that the public at large and the faculty of member post-secondary institutions would see Campus Saskatchewan as a separate, independent body that competes with existing institutions, rather than as a facilitative body that serves the member institutions. This concern was so great for Campus Manitoba that they decided to remain as a partnership, rather than becoming an independent legislated agency.
- Might not be well received by the public which could view Campus Saskatchewan as yet another government agency.
- Might be less flexible than some other governance models.
- Would take 18-24 months to become established, as the legislative process is slow.
- Businesses who are partnering in development of industry-specific training programs might be reluctant to give money to a provincial government agency.

Situational

- The level of academic accountability would depend on the guidelines for course development and delivery established by the partner post-secondary institutions, the extent to which partner institutions follow these guidelines, the quality control measures implemented by Campus Saskatchewan, and the type and quality of faculty in-service offered.
- The extent to which the system fosters collaboration and cooperation regarding programs, courses and services depends on the type of agreements struck among the partner post-secondary institutions and the guidelines created for program/course/service development.
- The extent to which the system builds on existing capacity and strengths depends on whether existing strengths are recognized and the type of agreements struck among the partners.
- Whether all academic partners have an equal voice would depend on the terms of the Act establishing Campus Saskatchewan.

Partnership

Description of the Partnership Model

Overview

With the partnership model, the members of Campus Saskatchewan would agree:

- to work together
- to accept certain roles and responsibilities
- to follow certain operational guidelines

The terms of the partnership would be set out in a memorandum of understanding.

The highest level of decision-maker in each of the partner institutions, for example, the President or CEO, would sign the memorandum of understanding.

With the partnership model, Campus Saskatchewan **would not be a recognized legal entity, so it could not:**

- directly receive government funding
- own property such as computer hardware and software
- directly hire or pay staff

Examples from Other Virtual Campuses

Campus Manitoba is an example of the partnership model. It was established under the auspices of the Council on Post-Secondary Education (COPSE) and reports to this body. COPSE oversees, plans and coordinates post-secondary education in Manitoba. The seven partners' agreement is formalized in a Memorandum of Agreement.

The Post-Secondary Education Committee on Learning Technology (PSECLT) was established by the Province of Manitoba to provide Campus Manitoba with strategic direction and guidance concerning operations, emerging trends in educational technology and specific programming. The president of each publicly funded post-secondary institution appoints two representatives to PSECLT and the executive director of the Council on Post-Secondary Education appoints two representatives. As well, there are three ex-officio members including the executive director of Campus Manitoba.

Because Campus Manitoba is not a legal entity, it cannot receive government money, hire and pay staff or own property. It is nominally a part of Brandon University. Brandon University houses its administrative offices, and the staff members of Campus Manitoba are nominally employees of the university.

Provincial government funding for Campus Manitoba is in the form of flow-through grants to Brandon University.

In order to address this problem, most of the virtual campuses researched locate the offices of the virtual campus at one of the partner post-secondary institutions and put virtual campus staff on the payroll of this post-secondary institution. With the partnership model, the virtual campus is usually funded by a flow-through government grant to the post-secondary institution that houses the virtual campus. Government provides funds to the post-secondary institution, which, in turn, pays agreed-upon expenses for the virtual campus. With this model, the virtual campus is, on paper, part of the post-secondary institution that houses it and administers its funding.

Under this model, any property acquired by Campus Saskatchewan (computer hardware and software, for example) would officially be the property of the post-secondary institution that houses it and administers its funding. Campus Saskatchewan staff would officially be staff of the post-secondary institution that houses it.

Governance

- **Management board** – The memorandum of understanding could describe the composition of the management board and specifically state that the board is to be composed of senior managers/decision-makers of the partner institutions. If desired, the MOU could be highly specific and give the job titles of the representatives from the various partners.
- **Written agreement** – The MOU could describe the roles and responsibilities of partner institutions, procedures for decision-making and guidelines for meetings. Additional policies might be needed to address academic issues related to technology enhanced learning, such as common quality assurance standards for online courses, and operational issues like the role of the executive director. The memorandum of understanding could also address issues relating to the board chair. Does the chair rotate among the member institutions or its members? How long does a chair serve? Can the chair serve two or more consecutive terms?

Operations

- **Mechanism to accept funding** – With the partnership model, Campus Saskatchewan could receive both provincial and federal government funding in the form of flow-through grants to the post-secondary institution of which it is a part. Campus Saskatchewan could have reasonable certainty of ongoing operational funding, since the institution of which it is nominally a part would be a regular item in the provincial budget, and Campus Saskatchewan would be provided for in its parent organization's annual budget submission to the province. Funds from businesses and other potential partners could also be provided in the form of flow-through payments.

- **Staff** – The reporting structure for the executive director would have to be clarified in the memorandum of understanding. Other staff and contracted services would probably report to the executive director.
- **Operating advice** – Several options possible – The management board could establish one long-term advisory committee or a series of short-term advisory committees to provide advice on specific topics. The executive director could set up informal advisory committees as the need arises.
- **Physical location** – Campus Saskatchewan’s administrative offices would be located in the post-secondary institution of which it is nominally a part. This institution would provide office services like phone, fax, e-mail and photocopying.
- **Accounting and purchasing** – These services would be provided by the post-secondary institution of which Campus Saskatchewan is nominally a part.

Programs

- **Coordinating function** – The partnership model would facilitate a coordinating role for Campus Saskatchewan.
- **Student services** – Many options possible – Some student services could be provided online or a network of on-the-ground student support centres could be established in partner institutions. Decisions about the student services to be provided and the manner in which they are offered could be made by an advisory committee, or defined in a policy or a resolution of the management board.
- **Faculty in-service** – Several options possible – Plans for faculty in-service could be agreed upon by the management board or an advisory body, or specified in a policy or board resolution.

Technical

- **Web site development and maintenance** – Could be done by staff of Campus Saskatchewan, by the staff of the post-secondary institution of which Campus Saskatchewan is nominally a part, or by a contracted consultant or company.
- **Database management and help desk** – Three options are possible:
 - The academic institution of which Campus Saskatchewan is nominally a part could assume this responsibility. They may or may not charge Campus Saskatchewan for their services.
 - Responsibility for database management is assigned without competition to one of the participating post-secondary institutions, a government agency or a private company that offers to take on this responsibility for a fee.
 - Campus Saskatchewan outlines its requirements in a request for proposals. This

RFP is circulated to member institutions, government agencies and private companies. A supplier is chosen on the basis of quality of service and price.

Evaluation of the Partnership Model

Advantages

- Campus Saskatchewan will be owned and driven by post-secondary institutions if the memorandum of understanding among the partners specifies that the management board is to be composed of senior managers/decision-makers of the member post-secondary institutions.
- Would have more flexibility than an independent legislated agency.
- Could be established fairly quickly.
- There would be good financial accountability since a post-secondary institution with established accounting and financial reporting structures would be handling all finances.

Disadvantages

- With the partnership model, there is a potential for ambiguities regarding the reporting structure. It would have to be specified that the executive director of Campus Saskatchewan reports to the management board of Campus Saskatchewan, not to a manager in the post-secondary institution of which Campus Saskatchewan is nominally a part. No organizational chart is provided for the partnership model, as clarification of roles is needed.
- There may be a perception that funds designated for Campus Saskatchewan could be used for another purpose by the institution of which Campus Saskatchewan is nominally a part. Measures would have to be implemented to ensure that this does not occur.
- The partnership model will only work if all partners commit to Campus Saskatchewan, stay committed, and continue to participate. The success of Campus Saskatchewan would depend on the member institutions to sustain momentum and share responsibilities.

Situational

- The level of academic accountability would depend on the guidelines for course development and delivery established by the partner post-secondary institutions, the extent to which partner institutions follow these guidelines, the quality control measures implemented by the member institutions, and the type and quality of faculty in-service offered.
- The extent to which the system fosters collaboration and cooperation regarding

programs, courses and services depends on the type of agreements struck among the academic partners and the guidelines created for program/course/service development.

- The extent to which the system builds on existing capacity and strengths depends on whether existing strengths are recognized and the type of agreements struck among the partners.
- Whether all academic partners have an equal voice depends on the terms of the memorandum of understanding that defines how the partners will work together.

Non-Profit Corporation

Description of the Non-Profit Corporation Model

Overview

With the non-profit corporation model, Campus Saskatchewan would be an independent body incorporated as a non-profit charitable corporation under *The Non-Profit Corporations Act, 1995*. The Corporations Branch of Saskatchewan Justice administers non-profit corporations. A non-profit corporation can hold title to land, qualifies for government grants and funding and may pay salaries to employees (Saskatchewan Justice, 2001). A non-profit corporation is required to file an annual return verifying its continued existence and to submit annual financial statements to the Corporations Branch. A non-profit charitable corporation must have at least three directors.

Examples from Other Virtual Campuses

Among the virtual campuses researched for the project, none are incorporated as non-profit corporations.

The Canadian Virtual University is incorporated as a for-profit corporation under the Canada Business Act. A shareholders' agreement specifies the purpose of the organization and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the member universities (shareholders). The board of directors has representatives from each shareholder. These representatives are senior managers like academic vice-presidents of the member universities.

In order to become incorporated, Campus Saskatchewan would be required to complete Articles of Incorporation. These Articles would specify (among other things):

- the classes of members (for example, voting and non-voting members, or members with two votes and members with one vote)
- the maximum and minimum number of directors
- restrictions (if any) on the activities the corporation may carry on.

As part of incorporation, Campus Saskatchewan would also be required to file a Notice of Registered Office that gives the street and mailing addresses of the administrative offices, and a Notice of Directors that gives the names and addresses of the directors.

The Act permits the writing of bylaws that give more detailed information about how the non-profit corporation operates.

Governance

- **Management board** – *The Non-Profit Corporations Act, 1995* specifies that a non-profit corporation must have a board of directors. The Act does not specify how the board of directors is to be appointed or the term of individual directors, it just requires that the names and addresses of board members be given. Therefore, the procedure for appointing the board of directors would have to be defined in the bylaws. *The Act* specifies some of the powers, liabilities and responsibilities of directors, for example, it specifies the procedure for removing directors. However, these provisions of the *Act* are usually made more specific in bylaws.
- **Written agreement** – Bylaws could be quite specific and could define roles and responsibilities of the members of Campus Saskatchewan, and set out procedures for financial accountability, meetings, fiscal year and the like. The bylaws could also address issues relating to the board chair. Does the chair rotate among the member institutions or does the board elect a chair from amongst its members? How long does a chair serve? Can the chair serve two or more consecutive terms?

Operations

- **Mechanism to accept funding** – As a non-profit charitable corporation, Campus Saskatchewan could accept provincial and federal government funding. However, provincial government funding would probably be in the form of one- or two-year grants, since the provincial government does not include non-profit corporations in its annual budget. Thus, there might be some uncertainty about ongoing operational funding. Non-profit corporations can accept grants from businesses and other non-profit corporations.
- **Staff** – Section 108 of *The Non-Profit Corporations Act, 1995* says that directors have the ability to designate the offices and appoint the officers of the corporation. Thus, the board of directors would hire an executive director who would, in turn, hire other staff.
- **Operating advice** – Several options possible – The bylaws could specify the number and type of advisory committees, these could be set up by a resolution of the board, or the executive director could set them up on an ad hoc basis.
- **Physical location** – Several options possible – Space could be rented in a commercial building or a partner post-secondary institution, or a partner post-secondary institution could provide space and office services as an in-kind contribution.
- **Accounting and purchasing** – Several options possible. Campus Saskatchewan could hire its own staff for these tasks, or contract them out to a private company or a partner institution. Or, a partner institution might provide these services as an in-kind contribution.

Programs

- **Coordinating function** – The non-profit corporation model would facilitate a coordinating role for Campus Saskatchewan.
- **Student services** – Many options possible. Some student services could be provided online or a network of on-the-ground student support centres could be established in partner post-secondary institutions. Decisions about the student services to be provided and the manner in which they are offered could be made by an advisory committee, or by the board of directors.
- **Faculty in-service** – Several options possible – Plans for faculty in-service could be spelled out in the bylaws, or could be agreed upon by the board of directors or an advisory body. Plans for in-service could also be the subject of a policy or the focus of a board resolution.

Technical

- **Web site development and maintenance** – Could be done by staff of Campus Saskatchewan, or by a contracted consultant or company.
- **Database management and help desk** – Three options are possible:
 - If a post-secondary institution houses the administrative offices of Campus Saskatchewan, this post-secondary institution could assume this responsibility. They may or may not charge Campus Saskatchewan for their services.
 - Responsibility for database management is assigned without competition to one of the participating post-secondary institutions, a government agency or a private company that offers to take on this responsibility for a fee.
 - Campus Saskatchewan outlines its requirements in a request for proposals. This RFP is circulated to member post-secondary institutions, government agencies and private companies. A supplier is chosen on the basis of quality of service and price.

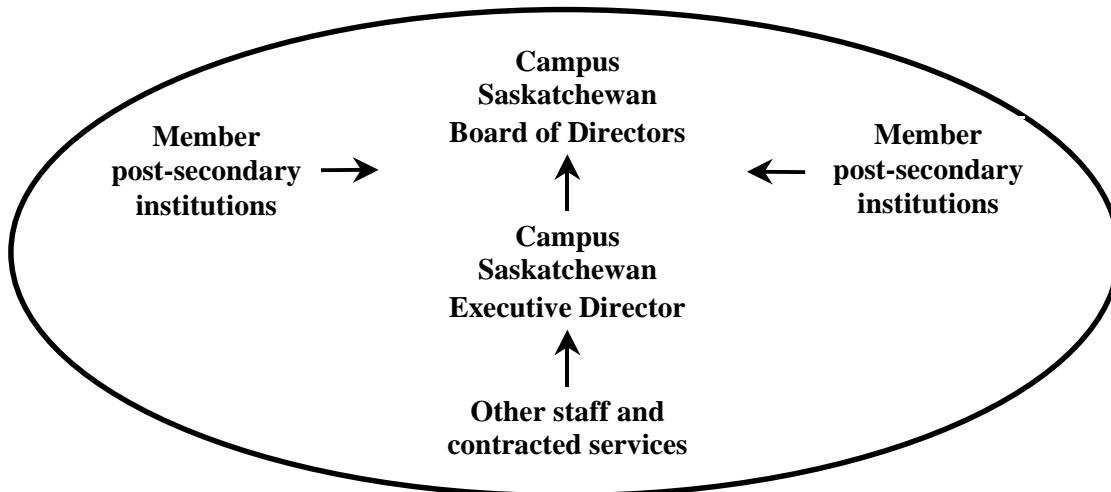
Evaluation of the Non-Profit Corporation Model

Advantages

- Campus Saskatchewan would be owned and driven by post-secondary institutions if the bylaws of the non-profit corporation specify that the management board is to be composed of senior managers/decision-makers of the member post-secondary institutions.

- The organizational structure would be simple, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Non-Profit Corporation Model – Organizational Structure



- Would probably be more flexible and adaptable than an independent legislated agency.
- Could be established quickly.
- Businesses participating in the development of industry-specific programs would probably be more willing to give money to a non-profit corporation than to a government agency.

Disadvantages

- Financial accountability could be problematic. Non-profit corporations are required to submit annual financial statements to the Corporations Branch of Saskatchewan Justice every year, but beyond this requirement there are few controls. Regardless of whether Campus Saskatchewan does its own accounting or contracts it out, the board would need to ensure that appropriate financial accountability measures are in place.
- Funding could be problematic. As a charitable non-profit corporation, Campus Saskatchewan could receive provincial and federal government grants. However, government grants to non-profit corporations tend to be short-term (one to three years) and are often for specific projects rather than for infrastructure or ongoing operations.
- Under this model Campus Saskatchewan could not be an ongoing item in the provincial government budget and so there would always be uncertainty about long-term operational funding.

Situational

- The level of academic accountability would depend on the guidelines for course development and delivery established by the partner post-secondary institutions, the extent to which partner institutions follow these guidelines, the quality control measures implemented by Campus Saskatchewan, and the type and quality of faculty inservice offered.
- The extent to which the system fosters collaboration and cooperation regarding programs, courses and services, and depends on the type of agreements struck among the academic partners and the guidelines created for program/course/service development.
- The extent to which the system builds on existing capacity and strengths depends on whether existing strengths are recognized and the type of agreements struck among the partners.
- Whether all academic partners have an equal voice depends on the way membership is defined in the bylaws. The bylaws could create different categories of members or specify one class of members with the same voting rights.

Existing Government Agency

Description of the Existing Government Agency Model

Overview

With the existing government agency model, Campus Saskatchewan would become a branch or department of an existing government agency. Three agencies that have been suggested for this role are Saskatchewan Communications Network (SCN), Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation (SPMC) and Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan (ISC). All three of these bodies:

Examples from Other Virtual Campuses

Among the virtual campuses researched for this project, none were established as a branch or department of an existing government agency.

- have a board of directors appointed by the provincial government
- have a physical location and provide office services to their employees
- have some computer capacity, but whether this capacity would be adequate for Campus Saskatchewan's needs still has to be determined
- have a business infrastructure that provides accounting, purchasing, payroll and similar services
- are required to follow financial rules and guidelines established by the Provincial Auditor

Governance

- **Management board** – The board of directors of the parent agency would provide direction for Campus Saskatchewan.
- **Written agreement** – A memorandum of understanding could be used to describe the roles and responsibilities of the partners.

Operations

- **Mechanism to accept funding** – With the existing agency model, Campus Saskatchewan would receive both provincial and federal government funding in the form of flow-through grants to the parent agency. Campus Saskatchewan would have reasonable certainty of ongoing operational funding, since its parent agency would be a line item in the provincial budget.

- **Staff** – The executive director of Campus Saskatchewan would be hired under the terms of the staffing procedures used by its parent agency. The executive director would report to the CEO of the parent agency who, in turn, would report to the board of directors. Other staff would be acquired through the staffing procedures used by the parent agency.
- **Operating advice** – Several options possible – The board of directors of the parent agency could create one or more advisory committees to advise Campus Saskatchewan. The partner post-secondary institutions or the executive director could set up ad hoc committees as needed.
- **Physical location** – The administrative offices of Campus Saskatchewan would be located in space managed by the parent agency and office services such as phone, fax, e-mail would also be provided by the parent agency.
- **Accounting and purchasing** – These services would be provided by the parent agency.

Programs

- **Coordinating function** – The existing agency model would facilitate a coordinating role for Campus Saskatchewan.
- **Student services** – Many options possible – Some student services could be provided online or a network of on-the-ground student support centres could be established in partner post-secondary institutions. An advisory committee could make decisions about the student services to be provided and the manner in which they are offered.
- **Faculty in-service** – Plans for faculty in-service could be spelled out in a memorandum of understanding, could be agreed upon by an advisory committee, or could be the subject of a policy. The executive director could also set up informal advisory committees as needed.

Technical

- **Web site development and maintenance** – Could be done by staff of the parent agency, staff of Campus Saskatchewan or by a contracted consultant or company.
- **Database management and help desk** – Three options are possible:
 - The parent agency assumes this responsibility. They may or may not charge Campus Saskatchewan for their services.
 - Responsibility for database management is assigned without competition to one of the participating post-secondary institutions, a government agency or a private company that offers to take on this responsibility for a fee.

- Campus Saskatchewan outlines its requirements in a request for proposals. This RFP is circulated to member institutions, government agencies and private companies. A supplier is chosen on the basis of quality of service and price.

Evaluation of the Existing Government Agency Model

Advantages

- There would be financial accountability, since the parent agency would be required to follow financial and accounting guidelines prescribed by the Provincial Auditor.
- Would be fairly quick to set up.
- Could be partially supported by existing government resources and by investments already made in human and technological infrastructure.

Disadvantages

- Campus Saskatchewan would not be owned and driven by Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions, since the members of the board of directors of existing government agencies are not senior managers/decision-makers from post-secondary institutions. Under the existing government agency model, the post-secondary institutions would have opportunity to give informal advice, but would have no real decision-making power and no actual control over Campus Saskatchewan.
- The voices of the post-secondary partners would likely be equal, but these voices would be largely unheard, since key decision-makers from post-secondary institutions would not be on the board of directors.
- Might lack flexibility, because Campus Saskatchewan would be operating within the structure of another agency.
- Businesses who partner in industry-related training programs might be reluctant to give money to a government agency.
- The government agency of which Campus Saskatchewan is a branch could be reorganized, downsized or amalgamated, as organizational changes are common in government.

- The organizational structure would be simple, as shown in the diagram below, but would not provide for significant input by Saskatchewan’s post-secondary institutions.

Figure 5: Existing Agency Model – Organizational Structure



Situational

- The level of academic accountability would depend on the guidelines for course development and delivery established by the partner post-secondary institutions, the extent to which partner institutions follow these guidelines, the quality control measures implemented by Campus Saskatchewan, and the type and quality of faculty inservice offered.
- The extent to which the system fosters collaboration and cooperation regarding programs, courses and services, and depends on the type of agreements struck among the academic partners and the guidelines created for program/course/service development.
- The extent to which the system builds on existing capacity and strengths would depend on whether existing strengths are recognized and the type of agreements struck among the partners.

Part 3 – Considerations Relating to Campus Saskatchewan

Part 3 of this research report identifies significant issues that will need to be addressed while Campus Saskatchewan is being established. These issues are grouped into three categories:

- **Terms of a Written Agreement** – Probably the institutions that participate in Campus Saskatchewan will enter into a written agreement that defines the governance and organizational structure of the organization. Items that are common in such an agreement are listed.
- **Financial Issues** – Key financial issues to be addressed early in Campus Saskatchewan’s existence are listed.
- **Best Advice** – The people interviewed as part of this research project were asked to give their advice to a province that is in the process of establishing a virtual campus. Considering this advice is a good way to learn from the experience of others.

Terms of a Written Agreement

Campus Saskatchewan, its governance and organizational structures, and the roles and responsibilities of the partners will probably be shaped through a written agreement among the partners.

If Campus Saskatchewan is an independent legislated agency, a partnership, or part of an existing government agency, the written agreement will probably be a memorandum of understanding among the partners.

If Campus Saskatchewan is incorporated as a non-profit charitable corporation, the written agreement will be a set of bylaws. *The Non-Profit Corporations Act, 1995* sets out requirements for non-profit corporations and prescribes some of the powers and responsibilities of members and directors. Any bylaws created for Campus Saskatchewan would have to be consistent with the provisions of *The Act*.

The agreements undertaken by various virtual campuses have some similarities, but they have differences as well. The following agreements and statements of principle were reviewed when compiling this information about written agreements.

- Campus Manitoba – Memorandum of Agreement on Campus Manitoba
- Electronic University Consortium (EUC) of South Dakota – Mission and Goals Statement; South Dakota Board of Regents, Electronic University Consortium Policy
- Florida Virtual Campus – Bylaws of the Governing Board
- Illinois Virtual Campus – Mission and Vision of the IVC
- Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative – Memorandum of Understanding
- Minnesota Virtual University – Joint Powers Agreement for the Operation of ISEEK Solutions, Bylaws of ISEEK Solutions
- Washington Online – Six Guiding Principles

Examples of written agreements are provided in Appendix B.

A written agreement among the members of Campus Saskatchewan could include any or all of the following items:

Preamble

A preamble typically sets out the rationale for the agreement.

The preamble is often stated as a series of statements, sometimes beginning with “whereas” and concluding with “therefore”. For example, the preamble to Campus Manitoba’s Memorandum of Agreement states:

Preamble

Whereas Manitoba is a province with a geographically dispersed population and there are many barriers of time, place and personal learning style that limit student access to post-secondary education, and

Whereas there is a significant benefit to both students and institutions if Manitoba’s Colleges and Universities coordinate the delivery of technology mediated programs and courses, both within Manitoba and beyond, and

Whereas the Province of Manitoba has established the Post-Secondary Education Committee on Learning Technology (PSECLT) to provide Campus Manitoba with strategic direction and guidance concerning: operations; emerging trends in educational technology; and specific programming, and

Whereas the Parties have formed Campus Manitoba – a consortium that coordinates the delivery of a number of programs and services,

the Parties hereto agree as follows:

Sometimes the preamble is a narrative statement. The first paragraph in the Michigan Virtual Learning Collaborative, Memorandum of Understanding states:

The well-being of our society and the foundation of our economy is a well-educated citizenry, and as technology is incorporated into every aspect of our lives, post-secondary education becomes increasingly vital to Michigan and its residents. Extending convenient, affordable access to higher education opportunities has been a long-standing mission of Michigan Community Colleges. This collaborative project will leverage the unique advantages afforded by technology to offer learning opportunities to Michigan residents any time and any place.

Contextual Information

The type of contextual information often found in a written agreement includes:

- Mission statement
- Vision statement
- List of goals
- List of guiding principles

Purpose

Two types of purpose statements appear in written agreements from other virtual campuses:

- **Purpose of the agreement** – For example, the Memorandum of Understanding from Michigan Virtual Learning Collaborative includes the following statement:

The purpose of this memorandum of understanding is to establish a general framework for collaboration among Michigan Community Colleges in support of technology-mediated courses....

- **Purpose of the virtual campus** – This statement typically describes the purpose for which the virtual campus was established. A statement of purpose for Campus Saskatchewan might emphasize that Campus Saskatchewan links and coordinates the alternate education offerings of its member post-secondary institutions and that does not offer credits, courses or degrees, functions that remain with the post-secondary institutions.

Governance

The section on governance might specify that Campus Saskatchewan is governed by a management board. The following additional information could be included:

- **Number of board members** – Maximum and minimum number of board members could be specified.
- **Composition of the board** – This section could state the number of representatives each partner appoints. It could also specify that representatives must be senior managers/decision-makers.
- **Officers of the board** – Will the management board have a new chairperson each year, or will this function rotate from meeting to meeting? If the management board has a new chairperson each year, will the management board appoint a chair from among its members or will the chair position rotate among the member institutions? Can an

individual serve more than one term as chair?

- **Duties of the board** – These typically include:
 - approving plans and budgets for the virtual campus
 - selecting and appointing staff
 - making policy decisions concerning the operation of the virtual campus
- **Term** – Length of time that each member of the management board can serve and whether members can be reappointed is usually specified.
- **Meetings** – This section could include information about frequency of meetings, notice of meetings, decision-making procedures at meetings, quorum, minutes of meetings.
- **Committees** – Most agreements give the management board the authority to appoint standing committees and ad hoc working groups.
- **Conflict of interest provisions** – Some written agreements include a clause specifying that members of the management board must declare any potential conflict of interest. For example, a board member who works for a post-secondary institution might also be a partner in the software company being considered for a contract. This would be a potential conflict of interest and would have to be declared.

Membership

This section usually defines which institutions can be members of the virtual campus, describes procedures for entry of new institutions to the agreement, and describes procedures that institutions wishing to withdraw from the agreement must follow.

Secretariat

Some agreements specify that the board has the authority to hire staff or create a secretariat to handle the day-to-day operations of the virtual campus and that an executive director will head this secretariat. Some agreements state that the virtual campus will be an equal opportunity employer.

Services

Most agreements include a very general section on services. This section includes statements like:

The virtual campus will:

- facilitate course development
- link the online course and program offerings of all partners in a single Web site
- provide online registration for courses and programs offered by partner post-secondary institutions
- offer a range of student services

None of the agreements reviewed included a detailed description of services.

Amendments to the Agreement

Most agreements include a clause specifying the procedures to be followed if the agreement is amended.

Other Provisions

The items listed above are typical of the written agreements reviewed. A few agreements contain highly specific information about funding of the virtual campus, articulation of courses and programs, common tuition structure and tuition revenue sharing. More frequently, however, these matters are negotiated among the partners and expressed as policies or as resolutions of the management board.

Although it seems logical that a written agreement would define the roles and responsibilities of the member institutions, none of those reviewed do so, except in the most general way.

Financial Issues

Most of the virtual campuses researched are funded through three sources:

- **Provincial/state government** – The provincial or state government usually provides funds for ongoing operation and may also contribute additional funds for specific projects.
- **Federal government** – In both Canada and the U.S., the federal government may provide funds for specific projects but does not provide ongoing operational funding.
- **Contributions from partner post-secondary institutions** – The nature of these contributions vary. In one case, post-secondary institutions pay a small administrative fee to the virtual campus for every online course. In other cases, members pay a membership fee or a yearly fee. Some members contribute in-kind services or resources.

OntarioLearn.com and the Canadian Virtual University were established without government leadership and operate without government funding. These virtual campuses are funded entirely by their member post-secondary institutions, but they are the exception rather than the norm.

Several of the people interviewed as part of this research project emphasized the importance of getting financial issues sorted out early.

Some of the most important financial issues that Campus Saskatchewan will have to address are:

- **Who pays for what?** What does Campus Saskatchewan pay for? What do the member post-secondary institutions pay for?
- **Which institutions will get student tuition?** Student tuition may be problematic because all students will register with a home institution, but may take courses from other institutions. In this case, which institution gets the tuition – the home institution, the institution that provides the course, or is the tuition split between them? If the tuition is split, what percentage does each receive?
- **If Campus Saskatchewan generates income, what becomes of the income?** There is the potential to generate income through the sale of software programs, in-service guides, learning guides and similar materials. Does this money go into Campus Saskatchewan's operating revenues, is it designated for specific projects, is it split among member post-secondary institutions?

- **What about tuition for out-of-province students?** Will the post-secondary institutions charge out-of-province students taking online courses the same tuition as in-province students? Campus Saskatchewan will attract students from all over the world – students Saskatchewan wouldn't have attracted otherwise, but at the same time, to what extent should provincial funds be used to subsidize students from other jurisdictions?
- **What about common tuition fees?** If the partner post-secondary institutions charge different tuition fees, will this influence students' choice of programs and courses?

Best Advice

All of the individuals interviewed (see the Appendix for names and contact information) were asked for their best advice about planning and implementing a virtual campus. What advice can they give to Campus Saskatchewan about actions to take and things to avoid? If they were doing it again, what would they do the same, what would they do differently? In addition, the literature review for this project produced one document that provides advice to provinces, states or regions establishing virtual universities (Carbajal, Hacker, & Johnstone, 1999). This best advice is summarized below in Figure 6 under four headings:

- Governance
- Operations
- Program
- Technical

Figure 6: Best Advice

Governance

- The board of directors/management board must consist of people who have direct decision-making responsibility in their institutions and the authority to ensure that decisions are implemented. For example, the Vice-President, Academic in educational institutions, the Associate Deputy Minister in government departments, the Vice-President of Policy and Planning in Crown corporations. These individuals must be at the decision-making table all the time. If they delegate this responsibility to middle managers who have no real authority within their organizations, it becomes impossible to make and implement decisions (Campus Manitoba).
- Strong leadership at the Governor, legislature, governing board level has been/is important for the success of the Electronic University Consortium (EUC of South Dakota).
- Get agreement on vision and goals (Carbajal, Hacker, & Johnstone, 1999).

Operations

- Tuition rates may cause two types of problems:
 - You can expect to get a large proportion of out-of-province and out-of-country students. Do these students pay the same rate as in-province students? The Web site will draw students Saskatchewan would never otherwise have attracted, but at the same time, Saskatchewan taxpayers cannot afford to subsidize students from other provinces or countries.
 - If the partner academic institutions charge different tuition rates for comparable courses, problems will arise (Utah Electronic College).
- There are differences in culture between universities and colleges that must be accommodated. The colleges tend to be more entrepreneurial. When universities become involved, the colleges are afraid of losing their voice (Utah Electronic College).
- Be prepared to operate with some level of ambiguity, particularly at the beginning. Ambiguity and exploring options helps you discover how you need to evolve (Campus Manitoba).
- Establish basic guidelines for operation, but begin implementation even as you are working on guidelines. Some guidelines will evolve with time and there are many things you can't foresee in advance. Some of the questions that can be addressed throughout implementation include:
 - Do we want to design the system so students can take a full degree/certificate online? If so, what degree/certificate should be the first priority?
 - What courses do we have now? What courses are missing?
 - Who will develop the missing courses? (Illinois Virtual Campus)
- Ongoing attention is required to achieve "buy-in" from the universities. The universities do not necessarily want/see the value of working together. There are concerns that the EUC is too centralized, government has too much control (EUC of South Dakota).

Having a development plan, use of representative committees, stated objectives and outcomes to guide the work, and clear deadlines for accomplishment have helped provide a working framework for collaboration.

Communication is very important! Communicate, communicate, and communicate – e-mails, newsletter, and frequent scheduled meetings. Report progress to the governing board, at public meetings. Maintain a transparent process (EUC of South Dakota).

It is important to recognize accomplishments small and large along the way (EUC of South Dakota).

- Progress is slow because collaboration takes time. A great deal of upfront time has to be spent on organizational relationships. The technical aspects are do-able, but the relationships within the organizations are critical for success.

Learn from work of others. Lots of virtual universities already exist. Don't start from scratch. Pick a model and modify it as you go

Start building and add as you go. Things will fall into place as you progress (Minnesota Virtual University).

Operations (Continued)

- In a consortium, get used to repeating yourself. People don't remember information until it has direct relevance to their situation. You will need to repeat the same information over and over to different audiences (EUC of South Dakota, Washington Online).

In order to get the academic partners working together, figure out what the partners need from each other. Every time you make a change ask, "Is this something the partners really want?" You can't make people like each other, but you can organize the virtual campus so that there's something in it for all the partners (Washington Online).

- Get faculty reward and incentive structures in place.

Address complicated financial aid issues early.

Sort out student support systems early.

Develop revenue sharing among campuses early (Carbajal, Hacker, & Johnstone, 1999).

Program

- It is important that all partners make all of their online offerings available through Campus Saskatchewan. If one or more partners list only some of their offerings with Campus Saskatchewan and the rest on their institutional Web site, the purpose of having a centralized virtual campus is lost.

Residency may be an issue that needs to be addressed. Some institutions require students to be in residence full-time for a semester or for one or two years in order to get a degree.

This makes it impossible for students to complete an entire program via distance and puts students in rural and northern areas and students with heavy work and family responsibilities at a disadvantage (Campus Manitoba).

- Focus on rationalization of resources, try to reduce duplication of online course offerings and ensure that new online courses developed do not duplicate what other partners are developing or offering.

Credit transfer may be an issue that needs to be addressed. There may be barriers that make transfer of credits difficult from one institution to another (OntarioLearn.com).

- Don't skimp on providing support services (like library services) to students. These services must be equitable so students get comparable service, no matter which partner institution they are registered with (Florida Virtual Campus).
- What we are most proud of is that we put our focus on instruction – on training and supporting faculty so courses have substance. What we most regret is that we didn't focus on services and support to students early enough. Students need support choosing appropriate courses, getting their books, etc. We need to consider the quality of the entire experience for students, not just the quality of instruction (Washington Online).

Program (Continued)

- Use coherent degrees and programs, not random courses.

Standardize whenever possible among campuses.

Clearly define quality, outcomes and the learning community you are serving.

Multiple academic calendars may be an issue. Courses may have different start and end times, different number of credit hours.

Institutions may have different grading systems and practices.

There may be faculty issues that need to be addressed, for example, faculty may vary in their willingness to accept practices of other institutions; faculty may belong to different unions and have different agreements (Carbajal, Hacker, & Johnstone, 1999).

Technical

- Multiple delivery platforms may be an issue. WebCT and Blackboard are the most common platforms but there are dozens more. When a virtual campus starts, the partner institutions may be using different delivery platforms. There may be problems with technical compatibility and getting the system up and running may take longer. As well, it may be more costly to purchase licenses for other computer software when you are using multiple platforms (Florida Virtual University, EUC of South Dakota).
- Don't overbuild your Web site. Having too many data fields will only confuse users. To test usability, bring in some students who are unfamiliar with the Web site and have them work through the Web site without any preparation. If they can't make their way through the Web site, simplify.

Registrations will be slow at first, but will grow exponentially after the first 18-24 months. Be sure that the Web site has the capacity to handle a rapidly increasing number of registrations (Minnesota Virtual University).

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Appendix A – Virtual Campuses Researched

Canadian Virtual Campuses

- **Campus Alberta** (www.aecd.gov.ab.ca/campusalberta)

A preliminary version of Campus Alberta's distance education catalogue is available at www.athabascau.ca/campus.

A media release is available at www.learning.gov.ab.ca/news/2000/october/nr-campusalberta.asp.

Interview – July 6 Susan Savage, Senior Policy Advisor,
Alberta Learning
Phone: (780) 422-2873
E-mail: susan.savage@gov.ab.ca

Campus Alberta is still in the planning stage. Two rounds of consultations with stakeholders have been held in 1998 and one in October 2000. Results of the October 2000 consultations are published in a paper called, *What We Heard: Campus Alberta Symposium – Results Through Collaboration*. This publication is available at www.edc.gov.ab.ca/college/WWHeardCampAB.pdf.

A proposal for Campus Alberta has been prepared and has gone to Cabinet. It is confidential until it is reviewed by Cabinet. There probably will be an announcement about the structure of Campus Alberta in fall 2001 and there may also be another round at that time.

- **Campus Manitoba** (www.campusmanitoba.com)

Interview – August 9 Kathleen Mateous – Formerly Executive Director of Campus
Manitoba. Now with the University of Saskatchewan, Department of
Extension
Phone: (306) 966-5297

Campus Manitoba is collaboration among the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, Brandon University and the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface. Campus Manitoba also provides logistical support for students in Red River College, Assiniboine Community College and Keewatin Community College.

- **Canadian Virtual University** (www.cvu-uvc.ca)

Interview – July 9 Vicki Busch, Executive Director
Phone: (780) 675-6791
E-mail: vickyb@cvu-uvc.ca

Indexes the distance education courses of nine Canadian universities and provides links to those universities.

- **OntarioLearn.com** (www.ontariolearn.com) – Formerly called Contact South.

A case study description of OntarioLearn.com is available at www.embanet.com/company-profile/MS.htm and at www.microsoft.com/canada/casestudies/ontariolearn.asp?top=1

Interview – July 20 Don Holland, Manager (Works at Loyalist College)
 Phone: (613) 969-1913 ext. 2328
 E-mail: Holland@loyalistic.on.ca

Interview – July 30 Jeffrey Feldberg, President, Embanet
 (Embanet is a computer company that provides services to OntarioLearn.com and Washington Online)

OntarioLearn is a consortium of Ontario's 22 English language colleges. The consortium has a high degree of integration. Partners agree not to duplicate each other's online courses and the consortium has worked out a system to ensure that courses needed for full programs are developed. Students must register with a home college but can take courses from any of the partner colleges.

American Virtual Campuses

- **Colorado Community Colleges Online** (www.ccon-line.org)

Interview – July 23 Bob Norden, Dean/Interim Director
 Phone: (303) 365-8833
 E-mail: bob.norden@heat.ccooes.edu

A consortium of 15 Colorado community colleges. Most courses and programs are offered centrally. Students must register with one of the 15 partner colleges. They are then cohorted with students who are taking the same course from other colleges. A very integrated system.

- **Electronic University Consortium (EUC) of South Dakota**
 (www.worldclasseducation.org)

Interview (conducted by Kathy Stedwell in Spring 2001) Dr. Janet K. Lewis, Chief Operating Officer
 Phone: (306) 773-3455
 E-mail: lewisj@ris.sdbor.edu

A consortium of the six publicly-funded universities in the state of South Dakota. It indexes and provides access to all of the distance education courses offered by the partner universities.

- **Florida Virtual Campus** (www.floridavirtualcampus.org)

Interview – July 20 Dr. Barbara Emil
Phone: (813) 974-7984
E-mail: Bemil@admin.usf.edu

Indexes and links to the distance education offerings of Florida's 10 publicly-funded universities and 28 publicly-funded community colleges.

- **Illinois Virtual Campus** (www.ivc.illinois.edu)

[Not to be confused with eLearning Illinois (<http://elearning.illinois.net>) which is a large portal that offers access to 11 different online educational consortia including the Illinois Virtual Campus.]

Interview – July 18 Dr. Cathy Gunn, Executive Director
Phone: (217) 244-9531
E-mail: cgunn@uillinois.edu

A directory to distance education courses and programs offered by about 40 Illinois colleges and universities. One of the most well established and widely known consortiums.

- **Massachusetts Distance Learning Consortium**
(www.dl.mass.edu/dl/mdlc/index.html)

Interview (conducted by Candy Center, Chairperson
Mary Fuller in Phone: (508) 678-2811
May 2001) E-mail: ccenter@bristol.mass.edu

Lists distance education offerings from 19 Massachusetts colleges and universities.

- **Michigan Virtual Learning Collaborative** (www.mccvic.org)

[Not to be confused with Michigan Virtual University (www.mivu.org) which is one of the partners in the Michigan Virtual Learning Collaborative.]

Data collected by staff of Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training.

Michigan Virtual Learning Collaborative is a partnership between Michigan Community College Association and the Michigan Virtual University. Twenty-eight of Michigan's community colleges are members. MVLC is organized so that students register with a home college and get their certification from their home college, but can take courses from all other colleges in the collaborative.

- **Minnesota Virtual University** (www.mnvu.org)

Interviews

- July 23 Sue Engelmann, Provost's Office
Phone: (651) 626-9186
- July 31 Gary Langer, Executive Director
(Note: this was a conference call in which Paul Wasko also participated)
Phone: (651) 649-5772
E-mail: Gary.Langer@so.mnscu.edu
- Spring 2001 (interview conducted by Brian Campbell) Paul Wasko, Associate Director
ISEEK Solutions
Phone: (651) 649-5956

Minnesota Virtual University (MnVu) provides access to the online courses of Minnesota's state colleges and universities. It is part of ISEEK Solutions, a large portal which offers three services: MnVU, ISEEK Solutions (the Internet System for Education and Employment Knowledge) and the Career Resource System.

- **Utah Electronic College** (www.utah-ecc.org)

- Interview – August 1 Cynthia (Cyd) Grua, Executive Director
Phone: (801) 755-4463 (cell)
(877) 533-9235 (office)
E-mail: cgrua@utahsbr.edu

Utah Electronic College brings together the distance education courses of five colleges in Utah. (Staff are currently working to involve all nine state colleges in the consortium.)

- **Washington Online** (www.waol.org)

Additional information available at www.sbctc.ctc.edu and www.waol.org/info.

Not to be confused with Virtual Washington (www.wsu.edu/NIS/VirtualWashington.html) a listing of useful Web sites in Washington State including universities, media and cities.

- Interview – August 7 Connie Broughton, Managing Director
Phone: (509) 533-3346
E-mail: Connieb@sfcc.spokane.cc.wa.us

A consortium of the 34 community and technical colleges in Washington State.

Appendix B – Examples of Written Agreements

The following examples of written agreements show some of the common elements, as well as variations in how institutions organize to collaborate in using technology to develop and delivery education and training:

- Memorandum of Agreement on Campus Manitoba (second draft)
- Memorandum of Understanding, Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative
- Bylaws of the Electronic Campus of Virginia Co-operative
- Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education, Principles of Good Practice for the Georgia Virtual Technical Institute