



Robert Schultz
Director of
Institutional Research

U. OF SASKATCHEWAN MAKES SMARTER DECISIONS – FASTER

The University of Saskatchewan in Canada uses SAS® to quickly and easily access data from across the campus to provide leaders with the insights they need to make decisions regarding enrollment, finance, human resources and operations. Here's how:

Business Issue

Access and organize internal research data across departments or by degree in order to provide comprehensive reports quickly and easily.

Solution

SAS® provides a point-and-click interface that allows users to access and analyze data from across the university to create consistent, accurate information for reporting.

Benefits

Dramatic decreases in the time it takes to deliver up-to-date data and reports that are reliable, consistent and accurate. In addition, SAS® provides trusted analytics for greater insight into recent and future patterns or trends.

The University of Saskatchewan is a pioneer in the field of institutional analysis. Instrumental in this undertaking is the Office of Institutional Analysis (formerly the University Studies Group), founded in 1974 to provide comprehensive data reports to the school's Board of Governors and other regulatory bodies, government and the university community.

The Office of Institutional Analysis (IA) monitors student enrollment and credit hours, faculty and staff instructional hours, and finances for the colleges and departments. After collecting the raw data from these sources, the group maps it out and publishes the finished product to assist leaders throughout the campus in making the right decisions to meet their goals.

IA's work is valuable in ways beyond school governance. Its reports inform students' academic progress and are featured in publications like *Maclean's*, the *Globe and Mail* and others. The group's data output also helps the University of Saskatchewan to gain a clearer picture of its inner workings, making it indispensable to the school's operation.

The challenges

Before implementing SAS, IA used what Robert Schultz, Director of Institutional Analysis, calls "a traditional cut and paste method." Processing data involved extensive clerical work: creating tables, typing and – yes – physically cutting and pasting. These manual processes protracted production time of the IA's statistics books. IA also had to work with inconsis-

tent data formats from the business units on and off campus, further prolonging the wait for the critical information.

"Traditionally, our reporting was done under a financial or budget perspective of each of the units," explains Schultz, who joined the group in 1988. Financial data was organized by college and then broken down into departments. Human resources data was mapped in a similar but not necessarily identical manner. Student data followed an academic hierarchy. IA's "job" is to bring these varying hierarchies together in a consistent and coherent manner.

Trouble brewed when IA began to support systematic reviews of the school's more than 150 academic programs. The review organized programs by degree – PhD and master's or bachelor's within a discipline – instead of by department. "Our data system was not structured to handle that kind of mapping," Schultz says. "That left our researchers bogged down in clerical work, manually changing the data's organization to fit the new format. That extra work ate away at the ease and rapidity of our ability to provide comprehensive information for the institution."

The benefits of SAS®

Using SAS® Data Integration, IA has eased its effort and cut production times dramatically. "For example, historically, once the data was available, it required 60 to 80 person-days of effort to roll out all of the student demographic information," Schultz says. "With SAS, we can do it in five days or less."

“Because we use SAS, I’ve been able to maintain a small staff developing the analytical data warehouse and perform the work they were hired to do – i.e., institutional research. The amount of work we have been able to do with the available resources is astounding.”

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SAS also offers flexibility by letting the group shape the programs to its methods of organization and by smoothing the transition between reporting styles. “SAS adapts to whatever style of reporting we require,” Schultz says. “If we want to look at [data] from a budgetary perspective, we can write the code very quickly and simply and pull that information together. It’s equally simple if we want to look at the data from a program perspective, which used to be a killer for us.”

Given the dramatic decrease in production time, IA now has more time to analyze data. “We can now examine recent trends and get a glimpse into the future,” Schultz says. “The result is that our administration gains strategic information to give the university an advantage when it comes to meeting our enrollment goals, managing our human resources and maintaining our financial security.”



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SAS Institute Inc. World Headquarters +1 919 677 8000

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