



March 6, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing with an overview of the activities of the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board (SHEQAB) in 2017, the Board's fifth year of operation.

The SHEQAB typically meets three times each year, in the winter, spring and fall. In 2017, our winter meeting was held on February 14th at the University of Saskatchewan and our spring meeting was held on June 14th at the Ministry of Advanced Education in Regina. It was necessary to postpone our fall meeting from November 2017 to January 2018 as our activities and initiatives were delayed because of several changes in the Ministry during the summer. Our work resumed in October and has continued at a busy pace since then.

At our June 2017 meeting, the Board was pleased to welcome its newest member, Dr. Ryan Walker, a Professor in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Saskatchewan, who filled the position vacated by Mr. Bill McLaughlin in fall 2016 at the end of his second term. Dr. Walker joins Dr. Karen Barnes (Vice-Chair), Dr. Marie Battiste, Dr. Thomas Chase, Dr. Robin Fisher, Dr. Fay Myers, Dr. Asit Sarkar, and me.

Board members' terms are staggered to allow for continual membership renewal. Some of you may recall that in March 2017, I wrote to the Saskatchewan post-secondary sector inviting nominations to fill the vacancies that would be created by the departures of three founding members, Dr. Barnes, Dr. Battiste, and Dr. Fisher upon completion of their second and final terms in January 2018. The Call for Nominations resulted in the Board considering several distinguished nominees and, subsequently, recommending a number of excellent candidates to the Minister of Advanced Education. The appointment process is ongoing, and we anticipate government's decision in the near future.

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In conjunction with our June 2017 meeting, the Board held its first retreat, a day-long event that included presentations on credit transfer and Indigenization, discussions with the Co-Chairs of the newly created Saskatchewan Transfer Credit and Learner Pathways Council, and a session with students from Saskatchewan Polytechnic and Briercrest College and Seminary, who shared their perspectives on quality assurance in post-secondary education. Board members found this professional development opportunity very worthwhile and plan to make the retreat a biennial event.

Each year, the Vice-Chair and I welcome the opportunity to meet with the Minister of Advanced Education to talk about the work of the Board. In October, Vice-Chair Karen Barnes and I had the pleasure of meeting with then Minister Kevin Doherty and Mark McLoughlin, the Deputy Minister of Advanced Education who was appointed on September 7, 2017, succeeding Dr. Louise Greenberg. We had an engaging conversation on a range of topics. In the coming months, I look forward to meeting the new Minister of Advanced Education, the Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor, who was appointed on February 2, 2018.

In November, SHEQAB commissioned an expert panel to conduct a program review of a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology/Psychology (Honours) program proposed by Briercrest College and Seminary. The three-person team conducted a two-day site visit on Briercrest's campus, during which time they met with the senior leadership team, faculty, staff and students. The panel's report, along with a response from Briercrest College and Seminary, was considered by the Board at its January 2018 meeting, at which time the Board made its recommendation regarding authorization to the Minister of Advanced Education.

Each fall, as part of its monitoring function, the Board reviews reports submitted by institutions offering authorized degrees. Because of the postponement of the fall 2017 meeting, the Board undertook this activity at its January 2018 meeting, reviewing reports for the 2016-17 academic year submitted by Saskatchewan Polytechnic (for the fourth year of delivery of its Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing) and Briercrest [for the fourth year of delivery of its Bachelor of Arts in Humanities and the second year of delivery of its BA in English/English (Honours)]. For fall 2018, the Board has asked both institutions to submit reports of a more comprehensive nature for their degrees with authorizations due to expire in 2020 (for Saskatchewan Polytechnic, the Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing, and for Briercrest, the BA in Humanities). The Board's evaluation will help inform the re-authorization process that these two degrees will undergo beginning in 2019.

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In December, I had the pleasure of delivering a keynote address at a forum on quality assurance audit processes that was sponsored by the Degree Quality Assessment Board in British Columbia. The forum allowed for the exchange of ideas and experiences regarding the use of audits to assess the internal quality review processes implemented at public post-secondary institutions. I was asked to present on Canadian and international trends in quality assurance and how these trends are impinging on the work of quality assurance agencies here in Canada and globally.

The SHEQAB is supported in all aspects of its work by a highly professional and dedicated Secretariat, led by Mr. Darcy Cherney, Acting Director, Quality Assurance and Private Vocational Schools Branch, Ministry of Advanced Education. The Secretariat provides policy and procedural advice, organizes Board meetings, prepares correspondence and briefings, orients new Board members, maintains the SHEQAB website, and coordinates external panel reviews. Through monthly teleconferences, the Secretariat liaises with its counterparts in other jurisdictions, including the Degree Quality Assessment Board in British Columbia, Campus Alberta Quality Council, the Ontario Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, the Council of Ontario Universities' Quality Council, the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service, and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. Inter-agency discussions focus on new developments in quality assurance across the country and the sharing of best practices in quality assurance in higher education. This year, formal external reviews of two of these agencies occurred and we anticipate learning more about the outcomes of those reviews in the coming months. The Secretariat is currently exploring membership in the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, a world-wide association of quality assurance organizations that promotes standards of professional practice.

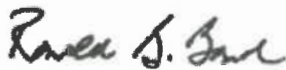
For more information about the SHEQAB, please visit our website (www.quality-assurance-sk.ca). There you will find the minutes of Board meetings, the quality assurance standards that form the basis for organizational and program reviews, Board members' biographies, and other information regarding Saskatchewan's degree authorization and quality assurance review processes.

If you have any questions, or would like to provide input regarding SHEQAB's activities, please feel free to contact me through the Secretariat by e-mailing info@quality-assurance-sk.ca. And please don't hesitate to forward this letter to others who may be interested in the work of the Board.

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My colleagues on the Board and I value the opportunity we have been given to contribute to the quality assurance of new degree programs in Saskatchewan and, together with the Secretariat, look forward to an engaging and productive 2018. We are currently exploring how we may be able to support, through our standards, the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. We will also welcome some involvement in the government's forthcoming review of *The Degree Authorization Act* and its regulations.

Warm regards,



Dr. Ronald Bond
Chair, SHEQAB

cc: Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor, Minister of Advanced Education
Mark McLoughlin, Deputy Minister of Advanced Education

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