

University of Regina  
Supplement to 2019-20 Operations Forecast  
Funding for a University of Regina International Office in Mexico  
and a Centre for Mexican, Central and South American Studies

**Summary**

In order to maintain and build upon recent successes and exploit new opportunities the University of Regina is proposing supplemental funding of \$120,000 annually, beginning in the 2019-20 provincial budget, to enable the creation of a University of Regina International Office in Mexico and an additional \$130,000 annually for a Centre on Mexican, Central and South American Studies. Total: \$250,000 annually.

**International Office in Mexico**

**Background**

Collaboration on higher education, innovation and research is a key factor to build a competitive and prosperous North American region that in turn will contribute to a prosperous Saskatchewan. In 2014, Mexico and Canada created a bilateral forum to encourage academic cooperation through student mobility, joint research and innovation.

The results of these efforts have been outstanding. By 2017, academic cooperation between Mexico and Canada had increased significantly (16.4% for student visas issued by the Canadian Embassy in Mexico). This outcome was influenced by the elimination of visa requirements for short term programs and student preferences to go to Canada rather than the United States.

Moreover, the Mexican and Canadian institutions found a common ground for cooperation in areas such as energy, agricultural sciences, and aerospace. These actions were aligned with the interests of the Mexican government to develop the human capital and knowledge required to modernize key strategic economic sectors; they were accompanied by important structural reforms, such as in the energy sector.

A new president will take office in Mexico on December 1, 2018. This constitutes a unique opportunity for the U of R to consolidate and expand existing links for student and faculty mobility and international education programs funded by the Mexican Government. Furthermore, a new administration is also a fantastic opportunity for finding new and innovative cooperation schemes. For example, the current administration created a new brand for academic cooperation and pursued a strategic vision with *Proyecto 10,000*. While this program will be closing by the end of 2018, the potential gains from engaging the new administration in the early months of government are substantial. Mexico needs 135,000 high level experts and technicians to cope with the demand produced by reforms in the energy sector alone.

The Mexican government has an annual expected investment of MXP \$1.2 billion (CAD \$113 million) per year until 2020 in R&D funds for the energy sector. The future in the Mexico-Canada relations is bright, and U of R can and should be part of it.

### **Analysis and strategy**

***Peyak aski kikawinaw***, “Together we are stronger”, is the theme of University of Regina’s 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. It is not a coincidence that, since 2014, the Government of Mexico, through the initiative *Proyecta 10,000*, has been working to increase academic mobility to Canada. For 2017 Mexico reported that more than 13,000 Mexicans were engaged in higher education experiences in Canada, compared to 4,809 in 2016. This means the mobility of Mexicans towards Canada tripled in just one year.

Out of these 13,000 mobile academics, only an estimated 163 were at U of R, less than 2% of the total exchange with Canada. This rate can certainly be improved. One example that demonstrates the benefits of a local office in Mexico is the experience of Lakehead University. After the opening of its International Office in Mexico in 2016, Lakehead went from 33 students enrolled in short term programs to 531 in 2017, an increase of more than 1600%.

The opportunities for the expansion of the U of R presence in Mexico are large and diverse. Intercultural education is becoming more relevant. Research in energy, education, healthcare, telecomm and the environment funded by the Government of Mexico and the private sector is growing. Mexican institutions are looking for linkages with Canada and for ways to internationalize themselves; the U of R would be an excellent source of good practice models and relevant experience. Together, Mexico and Regina will be stronger.

**General Objective:** To promote and facilitate the University of Regina’s engagement in Mexico by supporting recruitment, cultivating local relationships, both academic and governmental, and facilitating academic activities.

### **Specific Objectives:**

**Objective 1:** Increase the U of R presence in Mexico and support the recruitment of students.

#### Activities:

1. Strengthen relations with key Mexican Federal Government actors, including:
  - Ministry of Public Education (public higher education subsystems and agencies)
  - Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation
  - National Council of Science and Technology
  - Fund for the Training of Human Resources - Central Bank (Banco de México)
  - Ministry of Energy
  - Ministry of Culture

- Ministry of Health
2. Strengthen relations with Mexican State and Local Governments, particularly those with funds for mobility and scholarship programs (states of Mexico, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Queretaro)
  3. Participate in academic recruitment fairs and events all over the country, promoting the U of R as a leading education and research institution with a strong ESL program.
  4. Follow up on Mexican scholarship calls launched by governmental entities or NGO's
  5. Strengthen relations with the Public Affairs, Trade and Education officers at the Canadian Embassy in Mexico and its consulates within the country (Monterrey and Guadalajara)

**Objective 2:** Access Mexican governmental funds for research, development and workforce training in Energy (Energy Sustainability Fund, Energy R&D Fund, and Hydrocarbons Fund) and in other fields of knowledge (CONACYT-SRE, CONACYT-SSALUD, CONACYT-FONCA/INBA, etc.).

Activities:

1. Arrange high level meetings of U of R authorities with the new administration authorities in order to present the U of R and its academic programs of potential interest (Energy/Engineering, Arts, Nursing, Education, and Health Studies) and its Research Office.
2. Follow up on the launching of RFP's from CONACYT-SENER and other sponsors
3. Identify potential partners, both from the public education system and the private sector, especially for the Energy Funds.
4. Coordinate the drafting and submission of proposals
5. Arrange regular meetings with Mexican governmental fund stakeholders to identify new opportunities of collaboration for U of R

**Objective 3:** Foster and promote academic mobility – long and short term – with Mexican private higher education institutions.

Activities:

1. Arrange high level meetings of U of R authorities with authorities of the largest private higher education systems, such as ITESM, Universidad Iberoamericana, and Universidad LaSalle, to promote the U of R, its academic programs and Research Office.
2. Identify potential new partners in the sector and arrange regular meetings with their leading faculty, administrative staff and international offices.
3. Prioritize institutions located within the country.
4. Propose, negotiate and sign cooperation agreements with new partners

**Objective 4:** Improve and renew U of R existing relationships with Mexican partners

Activities:

1. Strengthen the relationship with the National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions and members who already collaborate with U of R
2. Contact and arrange meetings with all the international/linkage/institutional offices from the current partners of the U of R to introduce its International Office and the new strategy

3. Organize faculty-led groups, both Mexican and Canadian, making the most of the existing collaboration agreements.
4. Explore new schemes of collaboration, prioritizing those areas of mutual interest.

### **Funding Required**

Anticipated costs of \$120,000 are for the following:

- Salary and benefits of the UR Mexico representative
- Office rent
- Administrative costs (phone, computers, printer, cell phone, office supplies, brochures, social media, etc.)
- Travel to and from, and within, Mexico
- Hosting of Mexican officials
- Accommodation of visiting U of R officials

## **Centre for Mexican, Central and South American Studies**

The creation of a Centre for Mexican, Central and South American Studies at the University of Regina will complement and contribute to the success of the Office in Mexico initiative while building on the U of R's existing strengths in academic matters (teaching, research and community service) in Mexico, Central and South America.

U of R researchers have collaborated with Central and South American colleagues, in addition to those in Mexico. For example, VACEA - Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Extremes in the Americas - was a five-year project that looked at how rural communities in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and the Canadian prairies are affected by extreme weather. Researchers on the team from the U of R were from Geography, Environmental Studies, Sociology and Social Studies, and Justice Studies.

Potential collaborators include Dr Jose Condor, a PhD and MPA graduate of the U of R, who is a professor at Universidad Central del Ecuador where he is currently leading enhanced oil recovery projects and is working to establish a research institute at his university.

Recently, UR International received a request from the Ministry of Energy of Mexico. The Ministry was interested in promoting and creating a network among national and international carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS) institutions for capacity building and knowledge and experience transfer as well as supporting Mexican partners to contact their counterparts abroad. The Mexican network is integrated with 17 Mexican institutions related to CCUS. During the past years, they have been working on different activities pursuing the integration of CCUS in many industrial, governmental and research projects. The Ministry was aware of the importance of establishing linkages with the international CCUS experts and asked U of R researchers active in areas such as capture, transport, storage, monitoring, among others, to identify themselves.

The U of R's involvement with Mexico, Central and South America is not limited to research. Our academics teach courses and publish about this part of the world in many disciplines: International Languages, Geography, Biology, Anthropology, Sociology and Social Studies, Fine Arts, International Studies, Business, and other disciplines.

As an example, Carlos Londono Sulkin, a professor in the department of Anthropology, is an expert on Indigenous Amazonia, conducting fieldwork in the region and teaching undergraduate and graduate courses based on this knowledge. He is currently the president of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America.

Historically, the U of R has entered international agreements of co-operation with Mexican academic institutions. For example, while the 2016 agreement between MAP and the School of Arts and Culture of Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana largely focused on student and faculty teaching exchanges, the agreement also supported faculty mobility for research.

Students in the Hill School of Business and in Education, International Studies and Arts have participated in study tours and study abroad experiences in Mexico in locations such as Mexico City and Guadalajara. Students in International Studies have experienced field trips to Guatemala. Study abroad opportunities (student mobility) have been arranged for students in many locations in Mexico and Central and South America. Faculty mobility opportunities also abound.

The Government of Canada is keen on enhancing academic, research, student mobility and professor mobility with the Americas. The U of R has already been very successful in attracting students from this region through the scholarship program Emerging Leaders of America (ELAP).

In summary, a U of R Centre on Mexican, Central and South American Studies would add coherence and connections to these manifold activities and encourage more agreements and collaborations internally at the U of R and with academic institutions and government authorities throughout the region. These linkages will bring students and faculty to Saskatchewan, promoting future trade in goods and services, immigration, and knowledge transfer.

### **Funding Required**

Annual funding of \$130,000 is required for the following potential costs:

- Stipend for Centre director
- Administrative assistant (salary and benefits)
- Administrative costs (phone, computers, printer, cell phone, office supplies, brochures, social media, etc.)
- Student support – study abroad financial assistance, teaching assistants, research assistants
- Travel to and from, and within, Mexico and South America
- Hosting of Mexican and South American officials