



# Arts & Science

*You Can Get There From Here!*

UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWANCollege of  
Arts and Science

## ASAP Learning Communities

- **Aboriginal Student Achievement Program (ASAP)**
- Aboriginal, First Nations, Metis or Inuit – Saskatchewan, Canada
- ASAP LCs have all the aspects of a regular LC and some features unique to program that focus on Aboriginal student success, we call them Learning Communities +
- <http://artsandscience.usask.ca/students/aboriginal/asap.php>
- Associate Dean of Aboriginal Affairs, Kristina Bidwell, 2 Directors, Advisors and administrative staff – ASAP Team

## ASAP Learning Communities

ASAP was created to enhance student academic success as measured by retention rates, academic performance, graduation rates, student satisfaction.

- a) Represents a major commitment by the College and the University to the success of Aboriginal students.
- b) Is multi-faceted to address the multiple barriers to student success
- c) Before ASAP first-year Aboriginal students retention rates were on average 50%. ASAP first year retention rate 67% (80%) = success story!

## ASAP Learning Communities

- A Learning Community is a group of first year students who take a common set of courses together and meet weekly with upper year university students called Peer Mentors.
  
- ASAP is Learning Communities + (blue sky ideas!)
  - a) Added tutorials for each class once a week
  - b) Added more Aboriginal cultural content into curriculum
  - c) Added financial support - Bursaries
  - d) Added Holistic Academic Advising – dedicated ASAP Advisor
  - e) Added attendance system/early warning system
  - f) Requested small class sizes from Departments
  - g) Two meetings per Term with ASAP Instructors and ASAP Team

## ASAP Learning Communities – Barriers faced by students

- Financial struggles
- Family and childcare issues
- Academic struggles
  - Many are mature and have been away from school for some time. Some cases it is the lack of *education capital*
  - Lack of understanding of University protocols and terminology
  - Lack of a *sense of belonging*, far from home, face uniformed or racist attitudes
  - Lack of confidence



## Events during the ASAP hour with Peer Mentors

- The ASAP students meet once a week in the ASAP hours that are guided by two student peer mentors
  - a) Tours of Campus – highlighting Campus Supports
  - b) Financial Planning – Band Funding Tuition Information Session
  - c) Meet your Professor Session
  - d) Goal Setting and Action Planning Session
  - e) Student Panel on Cross Cultural Awareness
  - f) Stress Management and Mental Health Session
  - g) Exam preparation Sessions
  - h) Second year planning and Advising Session
  - i) Peer-Led Study Sessions for each course each term
  - j) Wind Up Party

## ASAP Student Bursaries \$\$\$

- Bursaries for every student in ASAP in each term
- Bursaries available for Aboriginal students with dependents.
- Emergency funding is also available in times of crisis.
- Now exploring the possibility of financial support for ASAP students interested in an *ASAP Living Learning Community (students enrolled in ASAP and living in student residence)*.
- ASAP offers 4 LCs in Term 1 and 4 LCs in Term 2 –  
ASAP has capacity for 120 Aboriginal students (average number of first year Aboriginal students is 600)

## Aboriginal Student Achievement Office - ASAO

- A gathering place for Aboriginal students;
- Tutor sessions offered at ASAO;
- Relationship building/community building;
- Two Aboriginal student Advisors that can provide assistance with academic programs, course selection and registration;
- Holistic Academic Advising for Aboriginal students
- Partnering with First Nation Post-Secondary Coordinators.



## Quotes from ASAP students:

- “I really enjoyed the small class sizes this helped me to form my own community in ASAP”
  - Jacquelyne Nokusis ASAP 2012-13
  
- “To find your sense of belonging at the University you need to get involved in your first year and the friends you make in your first year classes are so important to your success”
  - Max Fineday, USSU President (our first, First Nation president)

## ASAP In the News

- “ASAP uses a holistic model that addresses the student as a whole person. It comes down to knowing each student and addressing what they need.”

Kristina Bidwell, Associate Dean of Aboriginal Affairs,  
The New York Times, Nov 17, 2013

**Our plans for ASAP are to expand the program to allow more students each year, and to adapt this model for other student groups:**

- all first year students – non-aboriginal & International students
- Transition students ( do not make our admission average)

## First-year Learning Experience FLEX program 15 LCs

- First-year students take a common set of 3 classes together (interest and career focused LCs) and meet once a week in an LC hour led by Peer Mentors.
- <http://artsandscience.usask.ca/students/learningcommunities/>
- Arts and Science Learning Communities are designed to ease the transition into university by providing our first-year students with extra opportunities to make friends, study and explore ideas together, and work together to develop the academic and personal skills to succeed.

## First-year Learning Experience FLEX program 15 LCs

- Learning Communities are what a university education is all about, students and faculty from many different backgrounds come together to explore big ideas and a wide range of perspectives on the world; to be creative and to grow personally as they advance intellectually; and to make lifelong friendships.
- FLEX has the capacity for 525 first-year students our average number of A & S first-year students is 1,900

## Transition Learning Communities UTRAN - 10 LCs

- Another LC program, this one is for the students that do not make our admission standards. These students take 18 credits in what is known as the Transition Program, UTRAN LCs.
- Upon completion of 18cu from the UTRAN LCs (5 in Term 1 and 5 in Term 2) the transition students must meet a certain % before they can move on from the program.
- <http://artsandscience.usask.ca/students/transition/registration.php>
- Their next step is FLEX or ASAP LCs.

## Transition Learning Communities UTRAN - 10 LCs

- The UTRAN student take 3 classes together in cohorts of 40 students, meet twice a week in a UTRAN Hour, once with Peer Mentors and the other UTRAN Hour is with Academic Coaches.
- The UTRAN Hour with Peer Mentors is similar to ASAP and the Hour with the Academic Coaches is for general supports such as: writing skills, math help, exam preparations, community building.
- The UTRAN LCs can support 200 Transition students, admissions sends the names of students that have not met the admission standards, we contact 200 of these students for UTRAN LCs.

# Workshop activity #1

- Partner Stories – 10 min
- With a partner at your table each take 5 min to share:
  - a) Student group you are working with;
  - b) Barriers faced by this group;
  - c) Plans for a program – design/delivery.

If you don't have any plans yet, give some **blue sky ideas**, remember ASAP started with blue sky ideas.

Listen to your partner's story and be ready to share it with the group at your table!

# Workshop activity #2

## ■ Sharing and Summarizing – 20 min

**Sharing:** At your table, each person will share their partner's story (prior to sharing, appoint one person to transcribe the stories on the flip chart paper provided).

Each story should contain:

- a) Student group you are working with;
- b) Barriers faced by this group;
- c) Plans for a program – design/delivery.
- d) Blue sky ideas!

**Summarizing Task:** As a group find some commonalities within the list of student groups, barriers faced. Take a look at the delivery/designs to find some synergies that the group feels will result in student success.



# Workshop activity #3

- Sharing with the large group – 10 min

Each table will appoint a spokesperson and they will present:

Summary of your table's stories:

common student groups

common student barriers

synergies in program planning

At least one, Blue Sky Idea



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