



## PotashCorp and U of S a positive partnership

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There may be no better example of a positive relationship between a post-secondary institution and the corporate community than that which exists between PotashCorp and the University of Saskatchewan.

The most visible sign of that relationship will be seen with this weekend's re-dedication of Griffiths Stadium that will incorporate PotashCorp into the mix. But there is much more to this relationship story than a football field.

Eight years ago, as part of a multimillion-dollar donation to the college of commerce that was targeted primarily to the construction of a new wing in the building, PotashCorp also funded the establishment of an ongoing research chair.

The Chuck and Norma Childers Chair program was designed to "support research into Saskatchewan business and to broaden the links between students and industry." Serving as the chair for two-year terms have been John Brennan, former dean of the college of commerce, followed by Glenn Feltham and Grant Isaac.

Isaac was recently appointed dean of the college. Taking over now as PotashCorp Enhancement Chair for Saskatchewan Enterprise is Brooke Dobni.

In speaking with Dobni about the role of this research position, it becomes patently clear that any doubt about the relevance of this type of research to the mainstream of the province's business community can be set aside. Dobni's area of expertise is corporate strategy and innovation. In today's demanding global environment, nothing could be more relevant, particularly when it comes to Saskatchewan companies competing with a growing number of low-cost producers in our traditional export markets.

This focus on innovation may seem at first pass to be a bit of a fad, as evidenced by its inclusion in virtually every document emanating from government and economic development circles.

That's not the case by any stretch. The approach that Dobni is taking on this project focuses on developing a 12-point grid that will measure and evaluate a company's culture of innovation. Through this process, businesses can get an accurate handle on their capacity to develop the next competitive product, process or service.

Dobni is sensitive to the perception that such research is often considered esoteric or irrelevant to business in general, and particularly, to small companies.

A quick review of his consulting client list reveals he has extensive experience with a range of Saskatchewan companies and organizations. Moreover, he notes, this innovation development strategy, where much of the focus is at the operational and employee level, is actually most easily adapted by the small business sector. As a paper that will be published through the university, all of this information, when complete, will be in the public domain. That is, it will be available to anyone that takes the time to

read it.

This example debunks a couple of common myths.

The first is that companies such as PotashCorp, when donating money to a university, will insidiously direct what the research will be, how it is done and/or ensure the benefits flow only back to the company. Nothing could be further from the truth. With Dobni's project, for example, the primary beneficiary should be small to medium firms that don't have access to such cuttingedge tools otherwise.

A second misperception is that when companies such as PotashCorp donate to a university, for example, it is in exchange for a form of exposure and that it is, in essence, advertising. That argument doesn't hold any water whatsoever. Advertising only occurs when you communicate where your customers are. Griffiths Stadium, on the other hand, is filled with football fans, including university students, Saskatoon residents and local business people.

This example represents, quite simply, a commitment to the community on the part of global companies such as PotashCorp when they support local institutions such as the university, programs such as Huskie football or projects such as the research chair in the college of commerce. And our community and its important organizations, such as our university, are the better for the active support of these companies.

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