

Room 110, 1 Campus Drive  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
S7N 5A3



Telephone: (306) 966-6960  
Fax: (306) 966-6978  
E-mail: [contactus@ussu.ca](mailto:contactus@ussu.ca)  
Website: [www.ussu.ca](http://www.ussu.ca)

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Thursday January 28th, 2021

On January 11th the University of Saskatchewan welcomed back students far and wide to a mostly virtual learning experience. The Staff and executive at the USSU took the time over the break to relax, recuperate and get ready for the busy months ahead. Over the break we saw success in our advocacy efforts with UCRU with the recent announcements for an increase of funding for undergraduate research as well as a new program for international students with an expired or expiring post-graduate work permit to seek employment opportunities. We are also seeing advocacy wins for students unions all across the country in terms of compassionate grading. The USSU executives are looking forward to conversations with Usask staff, faculty and senior leadership about a compassionate grading model to hopefully be implemented. We have also been meeting with the Indigenous Achievement Week planning committee, planning the Undergraduate Project Symposium and fee consultation events for the USSU. Our center coordinators have continued with their programming and support groups on the USSU Centers Discord Server. We are also seeing a second wave of academic grievances come in and our Academic Governance Assistant and VP Academic are assisting students wherever possible.

We are looking forward to the winter term and working with the university on further events and initiatives to make online learning a more enjoyable and fulfilling experience for students.

With respect,

Autumn LaRose-Smith, President  
Jamie Bell, Vice President, Operations and Finance  
Jory Mckay, Vice President, Student Affairs  
Kiefer Roberts, Vice President, Academic Affairs

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## Compassionate Grading Letter sent to University Leadership:

Hello esteemed leaders of the University of Saskatchewan,

We are writing to you in regards to student issues that have been expressed this term, and to propose a solution that eases some of these concerns. As you know, COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on the lives and successes of students across the world. Alongside coping through a global pandemic, they have had to adjust to new software, ways of learning, constant changes and questionable teaching practices as part of their online university experience. As the USSU Executive, we hear many complaints in regards to quality of education, improper practices and concerning mental health issues that students are facing. After much discussion with our peers from 10 of the U15 Universities, we know that these issues are not unique to the University of Saskatchewan. We are asking for the University of Saskatchewan to be leaders in acknowledging that these unprecedented times require meaningful actions that address students ongoing success. In march, many institutions introduced alternative grading systems to acknowledge the effects that a quick transition had on students' success in their classes. The University of Saskatchewan was among those institutions, though as one of the last universities to do so and after a great number of pressure from students. The Fall 2020 term has introduced new challenges for both students and faculty, challenges that will continue into the winter term as they are only now being addressed. This brings us to our proposal:

We are calling on the university to allow students an opportunity to choose whether or not a grade they receive will be included in the calculations of the students Sessional Weighted Average and Grade Point Average. Modelled after the recently approved grading scheme at the University of Manitoba, students can choose to exclude one grade received in the Fall 2020 term and one grade in the Winter 2021 term, or up to one grade for a six credit course. If a student selects these options, the exclusion of one or two grades will result in a new, adjusted average. This new average will be used for all S.W.A and G.P.A. performance requirements, including program progression, probation, suspension, and requirements to withdraw/discontinue, as well as to determine eligibility for University of Saskatchewan bursaries and scholarships.

Universities across Canada are adopting unique grading systems to acknowledge and address the challenges students are faced with brought on by online courses and COVID-19. As of today, the University of Manitoba and the University of Montreal have already implemented new grading systems and votes to senate are coming to the UOttawa and McGill University in the coming weeks. Of Canada's Top Medical Doctoral Schools 2021, Mclean's has ranked three out of four of these universities higher in their overall ranking and one that has tied with the U of S. We are hoping the university will be proactive and not reactive in its implementation of a compassionate grading system that acknowledges how these unprecedented times have

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affected the success of undergraduate students. As proud Usask Students, we are hoping that the University of Saskatchewan will act as a **leader** this 2020-2021 academic year, *be what students need*. We look forward to speaking with you on this matter at your earliest convenience.

With respect,

Autumn LaRose-Smith, President  
Jamie Bell, Vice President, Operations and Finance  
Jory McKay, Vice President, Student Affairs  
Kiefer Roberts, Vice President, Academic Affairs