Thursday March 18th, 2021

The month of February began on a positive note, with February 1st-5th being Indigenous Achievement Week. The USSU had been a part of the planning committee and our President enjoyed emceeing the Indigenous Achievements Award Ceremony, along with Candace Wasacase-Lafferty. During that week we saw many events, including the 2 day conference hosted by the Indigenous Business Students Society in partnership with the university. We also welcomed our new Provost, Dr. Airini, who made a point to meet with the executive on the first day in the new position, emphasizing the importance of students at this institution. We have also been working with the planning committee for the Internal Truth and Reconciliation Forum which takes place on March 26th and the Indigenous Spend a Day committee to explore renaming the event! The USSU met with other stakeholders and students unions in the province for the Scholarships, Bursaries, and Loans committee hosted by the Ministry of Advanced Education.

The reading week break was welcomed by many students, however, there were a number of students who shared concerns before and after that they had assignments and class time that took place over the break. Thankfully, the Friday before the break Vice Provost McDougall was able to resolve issues that were brought to our attention, but the executive is still learning that some students did not receive a break due to improper scheduling.

Since the break we have hosted a number of week long events including Mental Health week hosted by the USSU Help Centre, the USSU Undergraduate Project Symposium, our Provincial Asks Campaign (shared below), Women In Leadership hosted by the USSU Women’s Centre, Sex Week hosted by the USSU Pride Centre, and a two week Town Hall Series with our colleges and constituencies. We have had an opportunity to meet with 9 different colleges and learn about their experiences this year, most of which has been negative.

The unknown effects of “COVID University” has started to become apparent for students who have been taking classes online throughout the year. Many students express that they are unable to get summer internships/ employment due to not having the hands-on experience that their labs should have provided. Almost all students from every college we met with expressed that if they were asked to demonstrate in person what they have been taught in online labs this year that they would not even know where to begin. The overall sentiment is that students do not feel like they are actually learning what they are being taught, regardless of what their grades show. Almost every college we spoke to expressed that students feel that there is not a proper method to give feedback to the professor, the SLEQ survey is ineffective in regards to raising complaints about specific professors. A quote from one student, which was the sentiment of the students we talked to shared that “we can tell the difference between professors who have to teach, and professors who want to teach”. Covid has made it clear that there needs to be a better way for students to provide feedback, criticism, and raise complaints.
about the poor teaching practice of some professors. The concerns around quality of education which have been raised since the beginning of Fall 2020 are now paired with anger, frustration, and confusion with regards to increasing tuition. Tuition consultation among most colleges has not been effective, there is not clear messaging and students do not feel like they are being heard.

Throughout this time, our Senior managers continue to distribute the UPASS to undergraduate and graduate students and we are currently in the process of developing the 2021-2022 Budget. We remain active in the numerous university committees that our executive takes part in and have met with the Association of Constituency President's committee to discuss future advocacy efforts and plans. Our Students council had a long and fruitful discussion with Vice Provost Dr. McDougall and our council welcomed our new Provost, Dr. Airini.

We are currently in the process of election season for the new USSU executive and undergraduate senate members and are excited for the next generation of student leaders.

Provincial asks:

The University of Saskatchewan Students' Union is calling on the Provincial Government to:
- Implement a 1 year interest-free grace period on provincial student loans starting the last day of study.
- Build on the Graduate Retention Program by implementing a 2 year student loan grace period from the last day of study for students who stay and work in Saskatchewan.
- Develop, in consultation with students and post-secondary institutions, a funding model for post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan.
- Create and increase scholarships, bursaries, and grants for Indigenous and International students

By supporting post-secondary students, we are investing in our province.
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