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It has once again been an active and constructive month at the USSU. Back-to-School season has been full of business and excitement for many students. We have already created several campaign weeks to engage students in our advocacy efforts.

### **Welcome Week**

Our Welcome Week events took place during September 2nd-3rd in the Bowl, with a large of students dropping by. A huge thank you to Sasktel, our main sponsor for this event. We had live DJs playing music all day on the stage, complete with fog machines and dazzling lights that caught the attention of folks all the way to the other end of the Bowl. We also had additional performances from Association Jeunesse Fransaskoise. The bowl was full of initiatives from bubble machines to free cotton candy. In the middle of the Bowl, we set up a huge tent where we had our USSU table, and other USask departments came to promote their resources, including Huskie Athletics, USask Rec etc. At our table, our execs and coordinators gave away free USSU water bottles, USSU lanyards, and Survival Calendars to all students who came to visit.

We also featured two giveaways: a social media contest in which students could enter to win a Louis' gift card by uploading a photo of themselves with our USSU Welcome Week Frame on their Instagram accounts and a draw for a Samsung Galaxy S20 5G phone. Other booths from different companies and organizations were around our tent with various interactive activities set up. We made sure to communicate with the Saskatchewan Health Authority in providing pop-up vaccine clinics in front of Marquis Hall. To top it off, we had a car-less drive-in, and the movie we played was *Mean Girls*. Students who attended the movie received free blankets (from Sasktel), and it was indeed very fetch. We were thrilled to see such a large number of students attend these events. The joy of returning to campus was all around the Bowl.

### **Campus Groups Week**

We held Campus Groups Week from September 7th to the 10th. Many groups set up tables with goods, merch, and information throughout the week in the Arts Tunnel. Music was playing, and people were conversing, filming and photographing in groups, and more. Involved were more than 20 ratified groups. Any student who came by and connected with campus groups were given a draw ticket for a chance to win Louis' gift cards. We also had contests running online to promote and spread the news about the week among students.

We hosted a Campus Groups Hangout event for the week's closing event, when we invited all executives from our ratified campus groups to Louis'. During the "Get to Know You" bingo and ratification trivia, everyone in attendance enjoyed complementary snacks and a chance to win gift cards, with the goal of raising student knowledge of USSUHub, ratification perks, grants,

and insurance. We received great feedback from students who want to do more events like this in the future.

### **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Week**

From September 13th to 17th, we had our first-ever Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Week. Students were able to pick up brochures and information at a kiosk set up in North Concourse. Students were also given the following questions through an interactive activity at the booth: What is Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility? Students were then given the opportunity to write answers to the questions on post-its and hang it up on our display.

There were also numerous accessibility challenges to raise awareness about people with disabilities' lived experiences. We brought in wheelchairs, a disability simulator and a bias test for students to try out. At Louis', there was also a Talent Show where students could showcase their skills and talk about their experiences.

Additionally, our executives planned an accessibility tour and invited Dr. Airini, Provost and Vice President of Academics, and Troy Linsley, Director of Facilities. During the tour, they were required to use wheelchairs for mobility. We visited a vast area on campus surrounding the bowl, both inside and outside of buildings, addressing various accessibility concerns and needs. One of the most important points we brought up during this was the need for an accessibility assessment at USask, with a full review of physical barriers to mobility on campus. The Bus Rapid Transit system was another major topic addressed throughout the tour. We had a lengthy conversation regarding the Bus Rapid Transit system, ensuring that changes would not impede students' ability to utilise buses, as well as ensuring that we were supporting a greener campus so a high number of students continued to use public transportation.

### **Elections**

It was essential for us to make sure USask students recognized the importance of student representation at the polls. During the Federal election period, we kept encouraging eligible students to go out and vote. We provided information to students on the election process through our social media and on-campus promotions and continued to provide information regarding voting through our active UVOTE campaign. On election night, we also had a socially distanced election watch party at Louis'.

We noticed the considerable barriers in this election for students due to the lack of the Vote on Campus initiative. We will continue to communicate and urge Elections Canada to bring this essential service back for future elections.

### **University Students' Council**

The University Students' Council (USC) has had a packed schedule. This month, we had the opportunity to introduce ourselves and become acquainted with all of our amazing councillors.

We've been inviting councillors to contribute ideas and inquiries from their constituencies each week to provide resources and information to them. Our USC chair started a new approach to give MSCs gender equity speaking privileges so that all members may participate in balanced discussions. We also created a new segment on social media called USC Spotlights to highlight the various student members on our council and let students get to know them.

This year, we're also trying to make all USC Committees active. Students' opinions matter and these committees provide students with a more substantial say in the work of the USSU leadership. The Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Committee, the Student and City of Saskatoon Connection Committee, and the First-Year Students' Committee are among the three ad-hoc committees struck this year, to go along with our ten official committees. Our councillors have been nominated to the committees.

Students-at-Large (SAL) have seats on USC committees. With 290 applications, we set a new record for the number of students who applied for SAL positions on our committees. We were delighted to see so many enthusiastic and engaged students apply to be a part of our initiatives. All applications were reviewed by the USC Appointments Committee, which met to nominate SALs to their respective committees. We're also working with the Presidents of the Indigenous Students' Union and the International Students' Association to form the Indigenous Student Advisory Committee and the International Student Association Committee, respectively.

For guest speakers to council, we have had Dr. Patti McDougall and Wade Epp from the Pandemic Response Team, and Dr. Jay Willson speak to our members about establishing a safe campus for students returning to in-person classes during this ongoing pandemic and also to enhance student experience after a year and a half away from campus. Following that, Maxine Kinakin from Access and Equity Services talked to our council regarding methods of accommodated learning for students. Lastly, Tracy Spencer, Manager of Student Affairs and Outreach, came to present a variety of resources and services provided by their office available to survivors of sexual violence.

### **Association of Constituency Presidents**

This month, the student presidents from each of our constituencies gathered to address a range of subjects related to the reopening of campus and preparations for this term. The first edition of Semester 1 USSU Town Halls was one of the main topics we discussed. Each President has been asked to arrange for us to attend their council meetings in order to get to know their constituents, acquaint themselves with USSU services, and provide an opportunity for our executives to get feedback from students. Another major topic for the Presidents was COVID-19 and student safety in general, ensuring that students felt secure upon returning to school.

### **National Day of Truth and Reconciliation**

In the week of September 30th, we encouraged all students to actively engage with on and off campus initiatives in honour of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. We also encouraged students to use this time to reflect, listen, learn and educate themselves on Indigenous history, knowledge, and perspectives. Throughout the week, we collaborated on projects with the Aboriginal Students' Centre, Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement, and others to promote awareness on campus.

For the Orange Ribbons initiative, we collected ribbons from SUNTEP and handed out the ribbons at our USSU Office in Place Riel. Also, USSU Centre volunteers set up tables in the Arts Tunnel to also hand out the orange ribbons and post cards with information regarding the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We made sure our staff and volunteers informed students of the respectfulness and importance of the Week of Reflection.

Additionally, our Pride Centre created a Two-Spirit smudge in partnership with OutSaskatoon to create a welcoming environment for Two-Spirit students on campus. The centre also launched a Truth and Reconciliation Online Campaign.

### **Provincial Advocacy**

We met with Minister Makowsky, Minister of Advanced Education, and Minister Hindley, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. We spoke about many of the ways in which students are struggling with their mental health, particularly during the pandemic. There was a lot of discussion on the Healthy Campus program updates and how more students could benefit from its resources. We also discussed how critical it is for our provincial government to prioritize specialized resources for Indigenous and international students. We also talked about the need to develop strategies for instructors to be educated in supporting students with mental health resources.

Additionally, we met with the University of Regina Students' Union executives to discuss updates in our finalization of our provincial lobbying document. There was also communication with the Saskatchewan Polytechnic Students' Association regarding their potential involvements in joint advocacy efforts.

### **U-Pass**

One of the most significant improvements we've made this year is moving the U-Pass system online. Students can use their phones to access their bus passes. Students no longer need to stand in long lines in front of our USSU office to obtain a sticker on their student ID at the start of the semester. There are additional alternatives for students who do not have access to a phone. We've also set up charging stations at Place Riel in case any students' phones run out of battery.

### **Open Education Resources Tenureship Proposal**

Open Education Resources (OER) are critical to the future of making education more accessible. We want to explore proactive strategies to support OER usage on our campus from our Union. We're launching a new advocacy strategy to encourage the use of OER on campus by providing tenureship points. We spoke with Heather Ross (Educational Development Specialist) and met with the Director of Teaching and Learning at the University of British Columbia to learn more and engage in this initiative.

Our executives have also met with the Interim Vice-Provost of Teaching, Learning, and Student Experience to discuss the proposal further, and will meet with the chair of the University Review Committee (URC) and its members in the near future to propose some changes to the Standards for Promotion and Tenure.

### **Centres**

September was a busy month for our centres as we transitioned back to working on campus and welcomed back students. The Help, Pride, and Women's Centres onboarded volunteers who completed training modules and continued readying the centres for student engagement. All of the spaces began doing peer support and providing safe spaces for students to gather in small groups and access resources.

The Women's Centre hosted **Sexual Violence Awareness Week** from September 20-24. The event featured informative sessions including Understanding Sexualized Violence with Morgan Price from Saskatoon Sexual Assault and Information Centre and Consent and Campus Culture with Natalya Mason from Saskatoon Sexual Health. Other events in the week included a letter-writing campaign, a TED Talk discussion group night, and an interactive Time's Up campaign on Instagram.

The Pride Centre Hosted **Queerapalooza** from September 27-30. The event is our on-campus pride week, and the centre hosted events that sought to educate and welcome students on our campus. Events included a Queer 101 education session, a Two Spirit Smudge and discussion group, Gaymer Night, and an online campaign focused on Truth and Reconciliation. The centre had hoped to host a Drag Show at Louis' but postponed the event due to increasing COVID numbers.

The Help Centre worked on plans for **Mental Health Awareness Week**, which will take place in the first week of October. The event will feature multiple speakers offering information on relevant topics throughout the week. The centre was also busy preparing students for exams, performing peer support, and providing resources to students in need.

The Food Centre continues to run the uFood emergency hamper program for students. Students can order non-perishable goods online from our website for pick up at our office.

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### **Looking Ahead**

Next month, our executives and coordinators will focus on Mental Health Awareness Week, Sustainability Week and Academic Awareness Week. We are seeking to create more conversations with the USask Administration on making our campus safer. We also hope to connect with more students to support and amplify their needs in this upcoming month.

With Respect,

Tasnim Jaisee, President  
Abhineet Goswami, Vice-President Operations and Finance  
Tauqeer Iftikhar, Vice-President Academic Affairs  
Nickol Saenz, Vice-President Student Affairs