

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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As the summer draws to a close with the start of a bright new semester at the USSU, we have been working hard gearing up for the year. We are settled into our new roles and actively engaged with our student community to continue supporting them throughout this transitional year. There are now essentially two years of first-year students on campus. The sense of excitement is in the air as many of us are eager to bring back the nostalgic feeling of reliving our campus experiences from the days we have missed.

### **Return to Campus**

The executives finally got a chance to access our offices. We have re-opened our USSU information desk for students to drop-by. Our centre coordinators have also been able to gain access to their spaces and have been decorating them with art and other pieces to make them more inviting for student drop-ins and visits. Louis' and Louis' Loft have reopened and are providing delicious food to everyone on campus. A new shop, as well as returning titles, will be opening shortly in the food court. It has been exciting for us to prepare to revitalize many of our inaccessible operations during the past year's campus closure.

With the USask fall vaccination plan in place, we feel much more at ease returning to campus, and we have had a lot of encouraging feedback from students. We have been meeting with USask representatives to discuss strategies for a safe return to campus including topics such as masking protocols, pop-up vaccine sites on campus, accessibility around the PAWS Vaccine Status channel and more. Sustainability also has been a critical matter for us during this return, including conversations on mask recycling bins, refillable water stations to reduce plastic on campus due to the closure of water fountains etc. Safety is our number one priority and Protecting the Pack remains crucial. We continue encouraging students to be vaccinated if they can.

### **Studentcare**

We met with our healthcare provider, Studentcare, many times over the summer to discuss improvements to their health and dental plans and to improve accessibility for students who use the Empower Me program, an online counselling service that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We've also provided input to the remodeling of their office so that students seeking information about their services may chat with their representatives more comfortably. The health and dental plan are one of the most important services we offer students, and continues to allow students access to much needed medical services at an affordable rate.

### **Campus Groups**

For many students, contributing to campus organisations is a crucial component of their university experience. Students have been able to access and complete their ratification forms for their groups online. Our Campus Group Management System has now officially been rebranded

as USSUHub as we have reworked the system and made the program more user-friendly. We reduced our ratification costs to fifty percent until the end of July to encourage students to apply early and save money. All new campus groups (not ratified in the last five years) can now ratify for free, and we feel this process will significantly promote new student groups.

Our campus groups policy has now been separated into a suite of policies to help create a more comprehensive set of guidelines. Students can now apply for three official grants for their initiatives: the Project and Initiatives Grant, the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Grants, and the Sustainability Grant. We are also working to finalize our fourth new grant, which will focus on Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression. While all of this information is being added to our website, we continue meeting with numerous campus groups to discuss any questions about ratification. Additionally, we are attempting to ensure more student groups have easier access to Co-Curricular Records (CCR) credits for each event they organize.

### **Studentpreneur**

One of our newest projects will focus on student empowerment. We know that students are full of energy and are actively seeking opportunities to grow and explore their creativity further. We are launching a program called Studentpreneur. Students will be able to network with business leaders and experts through this series of events and seminars. They will also learn valuable marketing, financing, and other business skills due to this upcoming project.

### **Academic Advocacy**

In our academic advocacy, we have urged for increased study and learning spaces around campus, especially given the necessary social distance measures that students will need to maintain in the upcoming term. There have been ongoing conversations with the USask Library team around library hours and access to library resources. We had further conversations with USask representatives regarding increasing recording equipment in classrooms. We have also urged for the practice of lecture recordings to be continued for all courses offered in-person for the rest of the year, as we recognize they're an essential tool for students and their education. We were delighted to learn that our advocacy helped lead to material highlighting the importance of having access to lecture recordings and will now be included in professional development sessions and directed to faculty and instructors as they prepare for the new term.

### **Tuition Consultation**

In our Tuition Consultation Working Group, we finalized a series of proposals with the Graduate Students' Association earlier this summer. Our focus has been on making tuition consultations more accessible and comprehensive for students. These recommendations were forwarded to our USask Provost Dr. Airini for her consideration. We hope to hear back on these recommendations in the fall to have ongoing meaningful discussions on this topic.

### **Focus on Advanced Education**

We recognize that the pandemic has made severe strains on Advanced Education. During the summer, we researched critical points of advocacy necessary for students in the upcoming year. Our focus remains on accessibility and affordability in post-secondary education with the ongoing challenges students face through a lack of equitable opportunities. We met with Jennifer Bowes, MLA for Saskatoon University, and we discussed a broad range of student issues regarding tuition, mental health, and more. We are meeting with other provincial leaders in the next month to continue these conversations in advocating student needs and the future of higher education in Saskatchewan. In meetings with the University of Regina Students' Union, we have had ongoing conversations on lobbying platforms relevant to university students across Saskatchewan.

### **Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression**

Our focus on Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression remains crucial to us. We will be utilizing our strategic goals of Path Forward in our leadership for students. We continue to be vocal in creating awareness for dismantling systemic barriers and using our resources to develop Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression-focused programming. Our executive committee has prepared an Anti-Oppression Speaker Series that we want to launch this year. We also have ongoing plans to initiate programs focusing on EDI. In the meantime, we are also communicating with culture-focused student groups regarding USSU services. We also met with International Student and Study Abroad Centre staff to discuss the pandemic's barriers for international students. During the meeting, we also spoke on the important relationships between Immigrant communities and Indigenous communities.

Throughout the discoveries of numerous unmarked graves near former Residential Schools, we recognize the enormous grief Indigenous students are facing in this time of mourning. As an executive committee, we continue to educate ourselves on Indigenous issues, rights, and history. We have met with Joseph Naytowhow, the USSU Indigenous Knowledge Keeper, for guidance regarding the USSU's work with Indigenous student-focused initiatives and will continue meeting with him as the year progresses. We have had individual meetings with representative members from the Indigenous Business Students Society (IBSS), Indigenous Law Students' Association, and Indigenous Students' Union about supports for Indigenous students and how the USSU can aid in amplifying the voices of Indigenous students. We met with the Aboriginal Students' Centre staff to discuss Indigenous student-focused programming and resources, as well as potential collaborations. As members of the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU), we led the discussion for the board to finalize and send on a letter to the Federal Government urging implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action focusing on supports for Indigenous students in post-secondary education.

Furthermore, we reached out to the Student Wellness Centre and Access and Equity Services to create a dialogue on adding resources for Indigenous students through their services. We

advocated for increased consultations with Indigenous student groups during our meeting with the President's Executive Committee and have continuing plans to focus on Indigenous student-focused initiatives with their representatives. We attended the Indigenous Strategy Gifting Ceremony and hope to see USask proceed actively towards decolonization. Strengthening the USSU's relationship with the wider Indigenous student communities across our campuses remains essential as we continue to seek ongoing communication in addressing institutional issues.

### **Association of Constituency Presidents**

We held our first Association of Constituency Presidents (AOCP) meeting in August. It was wonderful to meet the new Presidents of each constituency, and we briefed the representatives on the USSU summer highlights, services, centres, and committees offered this year. Parking, ratification, and by-elections were among the major subjects discussed by our AOCP members at this meeting. Prior to this meeting, we also got a chance to meet with the Arts and Science Students' Union, Agriculture Students' Association, and the Law Students' Association about collaborations and resources. We successfully advocated for the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan to receive an extended duration on their parking due to the College of Medicine having a different study period compared to most other colleges. We value our constituents' input and strive to improve our outreach and services for them.

### **University Students' Council**

We welcomed our new University Students' Council (USC) Chair, Lia Storey-Gamble. We also redesigned our handbooks for Members of Students' Council. Our council meetings will begin on September 3rd, weekly on Thursdays at 6pm through Zoom. All meetings will be recorded, with meeting minutes transcribed in text and made available to the public on our website. All USask undergraduate students are welcome to join these weekly sessions. Additionally, we are also very excited to start our USSU committees work, with ten official committees and other potential ad-hoc committees on their way! Our Student At Large applications have been released online, with opportunities for students to get involved in our committees as a great way to learn about student governance, networking, leadership, and more.

### **Federal Election**

With an approaching federal election, we anticipate many students to be negatively impacted due to the unavailability of the Vote on Campus Program. We have been vocal about our disappointment with this decision. We supported UCRU's letter to Election Canada voicing our concerns about the lack of voter accessibility for students on campus. In partnership with UCRU, we will be launching a UVOTE campaign to provide information about voting and encouraging students to go vote off campus. We will also be creating content focusing on local candidate platforms regarding Advanced Education and how they plan to support students. We encourage all students to stay informed on this election, as well as those who are eligible to vote, to do so and participate in this important democratic process.

## **Centres**

Our Help, Pride and Women's Centre coordinators have launched their new volunteer applications and are developing a hybrid method for volunteers to contribute both in-person and online through Discord. The Help Centre has been updating their resource libraries in preparing for the new year. Our Pride Centre celebrated Pride Month in July through their Queer Confessions online campaign. The IBSS and our Pride Centre are collaborating on creating a two-spirit-focused discussion group. The Queer Women's Night discussion group collaboration between the Women's Centre and Pride Centre will be shifting to in-person meetings as the centres seek to re-populate their community space. The Women's Centre concentrated on two critical advocacy issues this summer. Firstly, a successful outcome arose from their collaboration with Gender Engagement in Medicine, when the College of Medicine heard student and community concerns and removed anti-choice related placement options for their students. Secondly, the Women's Centre released a supporting statement and created awareness for Bill 605: An Act to Provide Safe Access to Abortion Services.

## **Looking Ahead**

Next month, our executives and coordinators will focus on Welcome Week, Campus Groups Week, Accessibility Week, and Sexual Violence Awareness Week. We hope students can participate in these campaigns through in-person events and online resources. We are excited to have the opportunity to make a safe return to campus and are thrilled to once again see students take part in campus culture.

With Respect,

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