



Dear University Council Members,

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere thanks to Council, the Graduate Students' Association, and the broader university community as I begin my term as President of the Graduate Students' Association. I am grateful for the trust placed in me to serve graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan, and I look forward to working constructively with Council over the coming year.

Although the university-wide announcement has not yet gone out, an announcement has been shared with graduate students. I also want to acknowledge the supervisors of the current executive, Drs. Alison Oates, Bishnu Acharya, Michael Szafron, and Kurtis Boyer, for their support as we take on this responsibility alongside our academic work.

One of our main goals this year is to increase graduate student engagement across every area of the GSA's work. This includes holding more events, but it also means paying closer attention to the quality, purpose, and value of those events. Over many years as a student, I have learned the importance of stretching each dollar: creating value with the resources available, building opportunities that are tied to specific skills and learning experiences, and ensuring that GSA programming contributes to graduate student success.

Engagement is also necessary for the larger initiatives we are undertaking. The GSA cannot advance ambitious priorities such as childcare, awards reform, anti-racism work, graduate student funding, and professional development without a strong and connected graduate student community behind us. Building that community is what makes advocacy possible.

### **Continuing the Childcare Initiative**

One of our major priorities this year will be continuing the GSA's advocacy for accessible and affordable childcare for graduate students. The previous Executive initiated a five-year strategic plan for graduate student childcare in collaboration with senior university leadership and CGPS, while MBA students began developing a business plan for sustainable childcare delivery.

Our intention is to move this work from planning into sustained government engagement. This month, the GSA is scheduled to meet with the federal government through the Office of the Secretary of State, Buckley Belanger. Buckley Belanger and the Minister of Education, Everett Hindley were responsible for announcing the five-year extension of the Canada-Saskatchewan early learning and childcare agreements. Through these extended agreements, the federal government will provide more than \$1.6 billion to Saskatchewan

over five years. This funding is intended to support high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and childcare programs and services across the province, with a 3% annual funding increase to support sustainability. The agreements also extend infrastructure funding for an additional year, until 2026–27, to support projects in underserved communities.

While these are significant investments for families across Saskatchewan, the University of Saskatchewan was not specifically identified in the recent announcements. That omission is important for our advocacy. Graduate students at USask include researchers, lecturers, student parents, international students, and highly skilled contributors to Saskatoon and Saskatchewan. As the university and province continue to grow, childcare must be understood as an academic success issue, a recruitment and retention issue, and a workforce development issue.

In addition, while the GSA Executive is in Montreal for health plan training, we are making efforts to arrange meetings with local Members of Parliament who remain in Ottawa during the summer recess. These conversations will focus on how federal and provincial childcare programs can be better aligned with the realities of graduate students at USask. Accessible childcare directly affects whether graduate student parents can fully participate in academic, professional, and community life. This is especially important for women in academia, who should not have to choose between pursuing graduate education, contributing to research and teaching, and caring for their families.

For the GSA, childcare is also an engagement issue. When graduate student parents are excluded from campus life because childcare is unavailable, unaffordable, or misaligned with their schedules, the university loses part of what those students have to contribute. Our goal this year is to advocate for a model that recognizes the family unit as part of graduate student success and positions childcare as a necessary tool for attracting, retaining, and supporting the talent that USask, Saskatoon, and Saskatchewan need.

### **Long-Term Sustainability for the GSA Awards**

Another priority is the continued review of the GSA Awards. The previous Executive opened nominations for the annual GSA Awards to recognize outstanding contributions by graduate students, faculty, and staff to the graduate student community.

This year, we plan to survey our members regarding the awards and identify areas of improvement. We will also be engaging with the Office of the Vice-President University Relations, including Kimberly Kroll-Goodwin, and the Chief Financial Officer, Dee Henne,



to explore an endowed funding model for the GSA Awards. The goal is to move beyond year-to-year fundraising and establish funds attached directly to the awards themselves. This would support financial sustainability, protect the long-term future of the awards, and create a meaningful legacy for graduate student recognition at USask.

We intend to properly establish an awards review committee with representatives from the GSA, CGPS, and other contributors to this initiative. Such a committee would help ensure that the awards remain transparent, sustainable, and aligned with the values of graduate student achievement, leadership, research, service, and community contribution.

The awards are also part of engagement. Recognition helps students see themselves in the institution and helps departments, colleges, faculty, staff, and students celebrate graduate student excellence together. A stronger awards model would allow the GSA to stretch limited resources into lasting value for the graduate student community.

### **Anti-Racism, Professional Development, and Campus Culture**

The GSA will also continue to prioritize equity, inclusion, and anti-racism. The previous Executive reported work toward an Anti-Racism Memorandum of Understanding with the University and the USSU and also discussed engagement with the President's Executive Committee on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The increased number of racist incidents on campus and in the broader community, including more visible online racism as we return more fully to physical attendance and in-person community life, must be addressed directly. As we prepare to sign the Anti-Racism MOU with the University and the USSU, the GSA will approach anti-racism as a response, as education, prevention, and institutional culture.

This will include anti-racism events, but it must also extend into professional development. Graduate students are future researchers, instructors, professionals, public servants, entrepreneurs, and community leaders. Professional development must therefore include the skills needed to engage with civility, openness, and respect for different perspectives. Anti-racism work is part of what excellence requires in academic and professional excellence.

This is also where engagement matters most. The GSA must create spaces where students are willing to show up, learn from one another, and build the trust needed for difficult conversations. Our goal is to create meaningful opportunities for graduate students to



develop the personal, professional, and civic skills required for success during and after graduate studies.

### **Creating Value for Graduate Students**

A central theme of this year will be creating more value for graduate students through the GSA. That means being careful with resources, stretching the dollar where possible, and designing programming that meets real needs. Social connection matters, but so do opportunities that help students build skills, navigate academic life, access support, prepare for careers, and participate fully in the university community.

The previous Executive made important progress in rebuilding engagement after the pandemic, including student-informed programming, community events, financial literacy sessions, Graduate Voices, and expanded opportunities for students to connect with one another and university leadership. This year, the current Executive will continue that work with a focus on quality, accessibility, and long-term impact.

### **Carrying the Work Forward**

The University of Saskatchewan asks us to “Be What the World Needs.” The GSA has a responsibility to ensure that graduate students are supported in becoming exactly that. We are also part of a university community that values disruption as a way of challenging assumptions, improving systems, and building what does not yet exist.

For the GSA this year, that means carrying forward the work we have inherited while planning for the long term. It means ensuring that childcare advocacy plan progresses, that awards become financially sustainable, that anti-racism work is embedded into the culture of our organization, and that graduate students receive the support they need to thrive in Saskatoon, in Saskatchewan, and beyond.

The current Executive understands the importance of continuity. We are prepared to carry these initiatives forward with care, maturity, and accountability. We will do this by increasing engagement, creating value, stretching our resources responsibly, and building the graduate student community required to support the ambitious work ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sunny Bui'.



**Graduate Students'  
Association (GSA)  
University Council Report**

**June 2026**

Sunny Bui

President, Graduate Students' Association 2026/27

University of Saskatchewan