



Graduate Students' Association

April 2026

Council Report



Prepared For:
University of Saskatchewan Council

Prepared By:
Graduate Students Association



President's Final Report to University Council

Academic Year 2025/2026 | Palash Ranjan Roy | President

Members of University Council,

This is my final report to Council as President of the Graduate Students' Association. I want to use it not only to account for the work of this past year, but to offer Council an honest picture of where the GSA stands today and what the incoming leadership will inherit.

The 2025/2026 year was defined by two things happening at once: the GSA addressed long-standing organizational deficiencies that had accumulated over several years, while simultaneously responding to a graduate student population under growing financial and personal pressure. We did not have the luxury of doing one before the other. Both demanded attention at the same time, and the team delivered on both.

I also want to acknowledge that this was not a seamless year internally. The GSA navigated governance disputes within our own Council that required procedural rigour and difficult conversations. I raise this not to revisit those matters, but because I believe Council should know that this organization was tested this year, and that it held.

State of the GSA at the Start of This Term

It is important for the institutional record to be clear about where the GSA stood at the beginning of this term. The following conditions shaped the priorities and urgency of our work:

- The GSA's non-profit status with Information Services Corporation had lapsed since 2022 due to delayed audits and missed annual filings, blocking grant eligibility and fundraising capacity.
- The FY2023 and FY2024 financial audits had not been completed.
- Substantial GSA funds, including Health and Dental savings, sat in accounts earning negligible or zero returns with no investment strategy in place.
- Childcare for graduate students had been identified as a priority for over a decade, with no long-term actionable plan established.
- Graduate student engagement with the GSA had declined significantly during and after the pandemic, with low event attendance and limited community connection.
- The U-Pass remained inequitable: GSA members paid more than USSU members for eight months of coverage versus twelve.

These were not failures of any single previous administration. They were accumulated institutional gaps. Addressing them was the central work of this term.

Principal Outcomes of the 2025/2026 Year

Governance and Financial Foundations

The GSA regained its non-profit status with ISC effective September 1, 2025, following completion of both overdue audits. This restores the organization's eligibility for grants, charitable fundraising, and new revenue sources. I credit Vice-President Finance Lindsay Carlson, whose persistence across two terms made this possible.

For the first time in GSA history, the executive initiated a strategic investment program, transferring funds from our chequing and Health/Dental savings accounts into an RBC Investment Account and allocating them across short and long-term Guaranteed Investment Certificates. Projected annual return is a minimum of \$20,000, compared to less than 1% APY earned previously.

Student Financial Support

The GSA, in partnership with CGPS, distributes 110 need-based bursaries valued at \$1,000 CAD each annually. This year, the program received a record number of applications, more than 300 across all three calls, reflecting the financial pressures facing graduate students in the current economic environment. In response, we are increasing the number of bursaries in the 2026/2027 budget and have requested that CGPS expand its contribution. Dean Dr. Debby Burshtyn has responded positively to this request.

The GSA also continued its contributions to essential support services: \$10,000 to the campus food bank, \$10,000 to the Crisis Financial Aid program, and support for the graduate student travel award administered by ISAAC.

Research Partnership

The GSA became a named partner on a successful SSHRC Individual Partnership Development Grant (File Number 890-2025-0076, approximately \$200,000 CAD, March 2026 to March 2028), led by Dr. Zhixi Zhuang at Toronto Metropolitan University. Co-investigators include researchers from leading Canadian institutions, including Dr. Ryan C. Walker at the University of Saskatchewan, alongside collaborators from Simon Fraser University, Dalhousie University, the University of Waterloo, and the University of British Columbia. This is the first time the GSA has served as a formal partner on an external research grant.

Childcare

After a decade of advocacy without a concrete plan, the GSA this year initiated a five-year strategic plan for graduate student childcare in collaboration with senior university leadership and CGPS. In parallel, a group of MBA students is developing a business plan for sustainable childcare delivery as part of their capstone project. The GSA has also raised childcare as a priority in discussions with both federal and provincial governments. The Acting VP External Affairs,

Sunny Bui, a parent of two children and user of campus childcare services, has been included in all childcare discussions.

U-Pass

The GSA has been in ongoing negotiations with the City of Saskatoon to extend U-Pass coverage to include summer months. As a constructive step, the GSA included City transit survey questions in the GSA Student Experience Survey. We are awaiting the City's approval for amendments to the agreement, to be followed by a GSA member referendum. The inequity remains unresolved: GSA members continue to pay more for less coverage than undergraduates.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The GSA co-organized an Anti-Racism Symposium on November 19, 2025, in partnership with the USSU and Student Health and Wellbeing. A Memorandum of Understanding between the University, the GSA, and the USSU on equity and anti-racism is being finalized. The GSA has established a permanent budget line for anti-racism training for all executives, staff, and councillors.

The GSA hosted its inaugural Indigenous Resource Fair on January 21, 2026, connecting graduate students with Indigenous-specific resources, cultural activities, and teachings from an Elder and Knowledge Keeper. The VP Indigenous Engagement expanded outreach throughout the year to the BIRM program, the Cousin's program, Métis Students of USask, the Indigenous Students Union, and the Indigenous Students Leadership Committee.

Tuition Advocacy

The VP Indigenous Engagement attended multiple events to advocate for lower tuition increases for course-based graduate students, both domestic and international. The GSA ensured representation in tuition conversations hosted by CGPS Faculty, RSAW, and JSGS.

Student Engagement

The GSA hosted 16 events this year, the highest in a single academic year in the organization's recent history. Attendance across all programming was the strongest since before the pandemic. Indigenous engagement initiatives saw particularly meaningful participation. The GSA also launched Graduate Voices, a storytelling initiative providing a platform for graduate students to share their experiences with the broader university community.

Awards and Gala

The GSA Awards program received over 40 applications across ten categories. Three finalists per category were invited to the Annual Gala on April 25 at TCU Place, attended by senior university leadership, government officials, and academic supervisors. A structural review of the Awards program is underway to establish a sustainable devolved funding model.

Professional Development

The GSA has identified professional development as an area requiring greater investment and accessibility for graduate students. We are grateful to CGPS for introducing new professional development courses and encourage continued expansion of these offerings.

Unfinished Business and Transition Notes

The following items remain in progress and will require continued attention from the incoming executive:

Item	Current Status	Next Step
U-Pass Summer Extension	Awaiting City of Saskatoon approval for agreement amendments	Secure approval; conduct member referendum
Childcare Five-Year Plan	Plan initiated; MBA capstone business plan in development	Move toward Year 1 implementation milestones
Anti-Racism MOU	In process of being signed with University and USSU	Finalize and execute
Bursary Expansion	Increase approved in 2026/2027 budget; CGPS contribution requested	Confirm CGPS funding; implement expanded program
Awards Restructuring	Structural review initiated; devolved fund model under discussion	Complete review; establish funding mechanism
Investment Strategy	Funds in GICs; first returns expected within year	Monitor returns; evaluate reinvestment or allocation

Closing

I took on this role understanding that the GSA needed institutional repair before it could grow. That repair has been done. The non-profit status is restored. The finances are organized and invested. The audits are complete. For the first time, there is a childcare plan with a timeline, an investment strategy with projected returns, and a research partnership that places the GSA alongside major Canadian universities.

I also took on this role understanding that none of that institutional work matters if graduate students do not feel that the GSA belongs to them. This year, 16 events drew the strongest attendance since before the pandemic. Students applied for awards, attended the Indigenous Resource Fair, participated in the Anti-Racism Symposium, and shared their stories through Graduate Voices. That is the part of this year I will remember most.

The GSA is in a stronger position today than it was a year ago. It is not in a perfect position. The U-Pass remains inequitable. The bursary program needs to outpace demand. Childcare is a five-year commitment that has only just begun. These are not shortcomings of this term. They are the ongoing work of the organization, and I trust the incoming leadership to carry them forward.

I want to thank my executive team: Lindsay, Sunny, Laila, Mandela, and every student who contributed their time and energy alongside their own graduate work. I thank our councillors, who engaged in difficult governance conversations and held this organization accountable. I thank CGPS, and Dean Dr. Debby Burshtyn in particular, for their genuine partnership throughout this term.

It has been the honour of my career to represent the graduate students of this university. I thank Council for its partnership and its attention to the needs of our community.

Palash Roy

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University of Saskatchewan

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