

University Council Report

Prepared By :

Graduate Students Association of USask

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President 2026-27





Graduate Students' Association

Dear University Council Members,

In my June report, I outlined the current Executive's intention to strengthen graduate student engagement while carrying forward the GSA's longer-term priorities. Into September, this work has moved into student-facing programming, specific discussions with university partners, and clearer steps for several advocacy initiatives.

The GSA delivered four days of Welcome Week programming, confirmed financial support from the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and advanced discussions about graduate student childcare. We also raised concerns about proposed changes to grad student workspaces in the Health Sciences Building. These developments reflect the approach I described in June: creating value with the resources available, maintaining continuity, and building the community needed to support meaningful advocacy.

Graduate Student Engagement and Welcome Week

One of our main goals this year is to increase graduate student engagement while paying attention to the purpose and accessibility of our programming. Our September Welcome Week provided an early opportunity to put that commitment into practice. The GSA hosted graduate student orientation, a welcome barbecue and services fair on September 2, bingo on September 3, an evening social and city night tour on September 4, and a family-oriented event on September 5. Over 1000 grad students registered for these events that offered different ways for new and returning graduate students to connect.

The services fair brought university and community partners into direct contact with graduate students. The family programming also reflected a priority for the GSA: recognizing that many graduate students participate in university life alongside partners, children, and other caregiving responsibilities.

Continuing the Childcare Initiative

In June, I described our intention to continue the childcare initiative inherited from the previous Executive and move it toward sustained government engagement. During the summer, we continued that engagement and began clarifying the university processes required to develop a viable project.

The GSA met with Campus Planning and Real Estate to discuss possible locations, facility requirements, and the project-development process. According to our meeting record, College Quarter was identified as the most viable area discussed, while no immediately suitable surplus campus building was identified. We talked about the submission entering the university's Capital Investment Framework through an Idea Proposal, with an appropriate Vice-President sponsor. A feasibility assessment would then help establish the location, construction or renovation requirements, operating model, and anticipated costs.

The capstone business plan has provided a foundation for this work. Our next steps are to complete the necessary review of that plan, consult existing campus childcare operators, and work with university partners on an appropriately scoped proposal. Our advocacy objective remains accessible and affordable childcare for graduate student families, including the request for 90 government-sponsored spaces. Those spaces have not been allocated, and a site or capital funding has not been secured.

Childcare remains an academic participation, recruitment, and retention issue. Advancing this initiative requires both government engagement and a credible institutional pathway. The summer discussions have helped make that pathway more specific, while also making clear the work still ahead.

Graduate Research Workspaces in Health Sciences

An additional advocacy priority emerged over the summer concerning proposed changes to shared workspaces for highly qualified personnel in the Health Sciences Building. Graduate students raised concerns about how a shared-workspace model could affect their research routines, access to stable work areas, storage, accessibility, confidentiality, and connection to their research groups. The GSA recognizes the university's real space pressures while asking that consultation provide an opportunity to influence the design of the model, rather than focus only on its implementation.

I wrote to university leadership requesting clearer consultation parameters, consideration of alternative approaches, and an explanation of how graduate student feedback would inform decisions. Deputy Provost, Dr. Loleen Berdahl confirmed that the Joint Governance Committee for the Academic Health Sciences had discussed these concerns. The GSA will continue to seek meaningful graduate student participation and clarity about how research and accessibility needs will be reflected in the eventual approach.

Graduate Student Funding and the CGPS Partnership

In June, I identified graduate student funding and responsible use of Association resources as central priorities. Over the summer, the GSA worked with CGPS to clarify support for the 2026–27 academic year with CGPS committing financially to our shared initiatives and programs. These commitments provide specific support for financial assistance and graduate student programming. I thank Dean Debby Burshtyn and the CGPS team for their partnership and for discussing the Association's requests within the College's financial capability.

Financial support must also be accompanied by practical tools. The GSA is continuing its collaboration with Student Finance on workshops covering budgeting, debt and borrowing, saving and investing, and tax-related information. The next Budgeting 101 session is scheduled for October 14. Our objective is to connect financial assistance, financial education, and accessible programming so that graduate students can make use of the support available to them.

Long Term Sustainability for the GSA Awards

My June report outlined the intention to review the GSA Awards and explore a more sustainable funding model. There has not yet been substantive progress on this initiative. We are waiting for the Awards Committee to be formed so that the review can proceed through the formal committee process.

The work ahead includes developing a fundraising plan and arranging meetings with university partners to explore sustainable funding options, including the proposed endowed model. These discussions and the committee's review have not yet taken place.

Anti Racism and Campus Inclusion

The GSA's June report identified anti-racism as a responsibility extending beyond individual events into education, professional development, and organizational culture. Interim Provost and VP Academic, Dr. Patti McDougall reaffirmed commitment to the anti-racism Memorandum of Understanding with the GSA and USSU.

Graduate Student Voice and Professional Development

GSA Council has been invited to contribute graduate student perspectives to the UPlan 2035 consultation process. This would provide an opportunity for graduate students to discuss how university priorities relate to their research conditions, access to services, professional development, and participation in campus life.

We have also continued collaboration with the University Library and will be incorporating programming from the GMCTL. In addition, the GSA has introduced a request process through which graduate student researchers can seek promotion of participant-recruitment opportunities through GSA communications. This provides another practical connection between the Association's communications work and graduate student research.

Carrying the Work Forward

The period since June has reinforced the importance of continuity and careful follow-through. Delivering programming is one part of that responsibility. Advancing childcare, research-workspace consultation, sustainable recognition, and anti-racism commitments requires sustained attention beyond any single event or meeting.

As we move further into the fall term, our focus is to build on the relationships established over the summer and turn identified next steps into work that can be assessed and reported back to our members. I thank Council and our university partners for their continued attention to graduate student needs. I look forward to working together on the conditions that allow graduate students and their families to participate fully in the University of Saskatchewan community.

Respectfully submitted,

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University of Saskatchewan