Graduate Students' Association

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University Council Report

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Dear University Council Members,

Since my September report, Our priorities remain graduate student engagement, affordable and accessible supports, research conditions, childcare, and clear governance.

Graduate Student Engagement and Supports
The GSA is continuing to work on programming, family-oriented events, volunteer opportunities, and clearer pathways for graduate students to participate in evens, ratified groups, Council, Standing Committees.

We have also strengthened practical student supports. Legal-services access has been added to the GSA Health and Dental Plan at no additional cost. The GSA Commons now offers breastfeeding-friendly space, temporary breast-milk refrigeration, and a baby and toddler changing table. These are modest but meaningful supports for graduate student parents balancing study, research, work, and caregiving.

Childcare Initiative
The childcare initiative has moved toward a more defined institutional planning process. The GSA has received the graduate-student childcare business plan and is reviewing it alongside discussions with university partners. College Quarter has been identified in discussions as a suitable location for further consideration - no site, capital commitment, or operating agreement has yet been secured. The next step is to prepare a Capital Planning Request through the Strategic Capital Investment Committee process, with appropriate university sponsorship. I want to thank Jim Walters from Campus Planning and Real Estate for helping with this request and his commitment to this initiative with us. The GSA will also continue discussions with existing campus childcare operators and university leadership to clarify feasibility, operating models, capital needs, and opportunities for government-supported spaces.

Our objective remains accessible and affordable childcare that supports graduate student recruitment, retention, academic participation, and family well-being. The request for 90 government-supported spaces remains unfulfilled.

Affordability and Transit
The GSA continues to prepare for future UPASS discussions. Many graduate students remain registered, conduct research, or complete required coursework throughout the summer, including students in programs with substantial summer delivery requirements.

The Graduate Student Experience Survey closes October 30. Graduate student feedback will help identify patterns in transit access, affordability, and service needs, and will inform future discussions with Saskatoon Transit. The GSA encourages departments, colleges, and supervisors to remind graduate students to complete the survey.

The GSA also continued financial-literacy programming with Student Finance, including Budgeting 101 and planning for future sessions on borrowing, taxes, saving, and investing. These initiatives complement financial assistance by helping students use available resources effectively.

Research Conditions and Professional Development
I thank Dr. Baljit Singh and Dr. Debby Burshtyn for hearing graduate student concerns about research funding. The GSA Vice-President Finance and Operations, Hayley Pelletier, will meet with them in the coming months to explore how a flexible research fund can support graduate students whose research costs are not covered.

The GSA is proposing a model that would allow students to submit a short application outlining their research need, budget, available funding, and anticipated benefit. Potential eligible expenses could include publication costs, research-space or equipment rental, materials, and participant honoraria. The purpose is to improve research quality while creating more equitable access to professional-development and research opportunities.

The GSA has also established a participant-recruitment request process through which graduate student researchers may request promotion of approved studies through GSA communications. This provides practical support for graduate research while maintaining appropriate ethics and review expectations.

Campus Safety and Well-being
The GSA advocates for the graduate student experience across many areas, but safety is foundational to every student's ability to learn, work, conduct research, and participate in campus life. We have brought graduate student safety concerns to the Presidents Executive Committee and asked for a plan on campus safety. The concerns raised include

winter access to electrified parking for students returning from fieldwork or travel, lighting and safe routes to parking and transit, clarity around USAFE and emergency-response pathways, digital safety and service continuity, and safety measures at large university events.

Our role is to bring graduate student concerns forward clearly and to seek accountable leads, practical actions, and opportunities for student feedback. We look forward to continued engagement with university leadership on measures that strengthen safety across campus.

Governance and Electoral Reform
A substantial portion of my work since September has focused on strengthening GSA governance. This has included implementing member approved changes to the Constitution, Bylaws, and Policy Manual. I have also conducted research and prepared an electoral-reform package. The work addresses issues from previous GSA elections. Each policy change is being supported by a clear rationale linked to the issue it is intended to address.

We will proceed through the required review and approval processes. Our objective is fair, transparent, reliable processes that allow the GSA to govern ourselves effectively.

Awards and Sustainable Funding
The GSA remains committed to strengthening the long-term sustainability of graduate student awards and recognition. Calls for both the Awards Committee and Governance Committee have now been issued. These committees are expected to be established later this month and will provide the appropriate structures for reviewing awards sustainability, fundraising opportunities, and governance priorities.

Carrying the Work Forward
The GSA's current work reflects the need to combine immediate student supports with longer-term institutional advocacy. Progress on childcare, transit affordability, research conditions, safety, sustainable funding, and governance depends on collaboration with students, colleges, university leadership, and external partners.

I thank University Council members and university partners for their continued attention to graduate student needs. I look forward to continued work toward conditions that allow graduate students and their families to participate fully in the University of Saskatchewan community.

Respectfully submitted,


Signed October 15, 2026, 3:58 PM

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