

Board of Governors Report to Senate

Presented by: Mike Marsh, Senate-elected member of the Board of Governors

Date of meeting: October 2026

Subject: Board of Governors Report to Senate

Reporting period: April to September 2026

Background

It is a longstanding practice for a Senate-elected member of the Board of Governors to report on the Board's activities to Senate. This communication supports alignment among the university's governing bodies and enables Senate to consider and act on matters reported by the Board, recommend matters that promote the interests of the university, and request reports on matters within Senate's authority.

USask Board of Governors

The Board of Governors oversees and directs matters related to the management, administration and control of the university's property, revenues and financial affairs. Since the April 2026 Senate meeting, the Board met on April 21 and 22, June 23 and 24, and September 3, 2026.

Current Focus

The defining feature of the Board's current focus is supporting the new President through his first year and helping establish the conditions for a successful presidency. This priority shapes the Board's work to complete and align UPlan 2035, maintain financial sustainability, renew critical infrastructure, oversee risk and cybersecurity, strengthen enterprise governance, and ensure that major land, capital and financing decisions advance the university's academic mission and long-term public value.

Board Highlights

Strategic direction. Development of UPlan 2035 remained central to the Board's reporting. The Board received updates on consultations involving more than 3,000 members of the university community and external stakeholders and considered the emerging "local to global" theme. Governors emphasized student success, research impact, community service, a compelling institutional purpose, and alignment of academic, financial, operational, capital and fundraising priorities. Strategic discussions at the Board also addressed artificial intelligence, energy and nuclear opportunities, water security and trends in Canadian post-secondary education.

Financial stewardship, audit and risk. The Board approved the 2026-27 Comprehensive Budget and a financing strategy of up to \$250 million for critical capital and systems priorities, with individual projects subject to the appropriate approvals. It monitored financial results, enrolment, reserves, cybersecurity and enterprise risk, approved a revised Spending Policy with a 4.75 per cent annual spending rate, and approved the 2026-27 Internal Audit Plan.

Annual financial accountability. In September, the Board approved the 2025-26 Annual Financial Report and consolidated financial statements. The Office of the Provincial Auditor reported an unmodified opinion, subject to customary remaining procedures, and advised that the statements were fairly presented, financial-related controls were effective and the university complied with applicable legislative authorities. The Board also considered debt metrics, sustainability disclosures and clearer communication of restricted and unrestricted resources.

Capital investment and land stewardship. The Board approved investments supporting teaching, research, student experience and operational sustainability. This included work related to digital agriculture, Health Sciences optimization, utility renewal, parking, Integrated Services Renewal, the Huskie Clubhouse, and research equipment. It approved head leases as a foundational step in the Land Trust development strategy and continued to consider deferred maintenance, capital planning, the Campus Farmstead and long-term stewardship of university lands.

Governance and enterprise oversight. The Board advanced reviews of committee structures, bylaws, work plans, delegation authorities and decision-support practices. It approved policy changes relating to privacy, safety, emergency management, violence prevention, biosafety, fieldwork, working alone, hearing conservation and data management.

Matters of Strategic Interest to Senate

Expanding Saskatchewan's Health Workforce Through New Health Sciences Programs

The Board continued its support for Saskatchewan's health human resource strategy through investments in the Health Sciences Building Optimization Project. These investments will create new and expanded capacity for Speech-Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy, and Physician Assistant education programs, while also supporting future growth in health-professional training. The work aligns with provincial efforts to recruit, train, and retain health-care professionals across Saskatchewan and reflects USask's ongoing commitment to addressing workforce shortages while improving access to health services for communities throughout the province.

Planning for the Future of the Campus Farmstead

The Board received an update on the Farmstead Renewal Strategy, a 10-year framework to modernize the university's 17-hectare on-campus Farmstead as a purpose-built environment for integrated teaching, research and industry engagement. The Strategy identifies major priorities, including a new animal teaching and research units, a bioprocessing facility, and new operational buildings. It also establishes a comprehensive approach to biosecurity, animal welfare and operational efficiency aligned with national regulatory standards. As a strategic asset for agri-food innovation and partnerships, the renewed Farmstead will strengthen USask's future leadership in applied agricultural research and education.

Strong Community Support and Philanthropic Investment in USask

The Board received a fundraising report showing one of the strongest years of philanthropic support in the university's history, with more than \$95 million in commitments during the 2025-26 fiscal year. Significant gifts were directed toward student support, health research, agriculture, engineering, the arts, and future academic chairs. The Board noted that these investments demonstrate confidence that alumni, community members, industry partners, and charitable foundations continue to be placed in the University of Saskatchewan.

Board and Committee Membership for 2026–2027

Since the last Senate meeting, the Board’s composition has changed in two respects.

In May 2026, Abtin Safaeian succeeded Emma Wintermute as USSU President and student member of the Board. Effective September 10, 2026, the Government of Saskatchewan appointed Gordon Wyant to his first three-year term on the Board, succeeding long-serving member Grant Devine upon his retirement.

We were also happy to report that Herb McFaull and Keith Martell were reappointed by the Government to the Board for another three-year term.

The Board consists of eleven members:

- **President:** Vince Bruni-Bossio
- **Chancellor:** Scott Banda
- **Five members appointed by the government:** Gordon Wyant, Keith Martell, Marty Seymour, Herb McFaull and Karen Stewart
- **Two Senate-elected members:** Mike Marsh and Corinna Stevenson
- **Faculty member:** Ryan Walker
- **Student member:** Abtin Safaeian