



Graduate Student Experience: Advocacy Priorities and Outcomes from 2023-2024

April 2024

Esteemed Members of the USASK Senate,

It is both an honour and a privilege to present this report on behalf of the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) at the University of Saskatchewan. As representatives of the graduate student population, we recognize the paramount importance of actively seeking and utilizing student feedback to enhance the academic and overall experience of our constituents.

Graduate students play a crucial role in the academic ecosystem, contributing to research, teaching, and the intellectual vibrancy of our institution. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that their voices are heard, their concerns addressed, and their needs met to the best of our abilities.

I am delighted to provide an update on the recent activities of the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) at the University of Saskatchewan. Over the past several months, the GSA has been diligently working on various initiatives aimed at enhancing the experience of graduate students and ensuring the smooth functioning of our organization.

First and foremost, the GSA has been focused on "getting our house in order." This includes conducting thorough financial audits to ensure transparency and accountability in our financial management. As a result of these audits, we have identified areas for improvement and have taken steps to optimize our financial processes. Notably, we have sought out investment opportunities that promise slight changes with the potential for significant long-term impacts. One such example is the discovery of bank account options that not only offer financial benefits but also effectively pay for themselves over time. Additionally, we are proud to announce the establishment of investments totaling \$15,000 per year, which will further support our mission and initiatives.

Furthermore, I am thrilled to report on the incredible success of our recent fundraising efforts. Our gala event has raised over \$30,000 thus far, which will directly contribute to funding the event itself and acquiring new equipment for the GSA. Notably, the acquisition of a 360-degree video machine stands out as a versatile investment. Not only can it be utilized for various GSA functions, but it also presents an opportunity for rental, potentially generating additional income for the organization.

In addition to financial matters, the GSA has been actively engaged in filling several key positions, including hiring, award, and other committees. These appointments are crucial on our campus and having graduate student representation is vital in ensuring the intersectional and interdisciplinary operations of our communities.

Moreover, we are committed to fostering inclusivity and democracy within the GSA. To this end, we have opened our elections processes, inviting all graduate students to step forward and lead the change they wish to see.

Focus of the 2024-25 year

Survey to Inform Incoming Executives

As part of our commitment to evidence-based decision making, the GSA will conduct a comprehensive survey to gather feedback from graduate students regarding their experiences, needs, and priorities. The insights gleaned from this survey will inform the strategic planning process for the incoming executive team, ensuring that their initiatives are responsive to the evolving needs of the graduate student community.

Graduate Student Financial Security: Recognizing the financial challenges faced by many graduate students, the GSA will advocate for increased funding opportunities, including scholarships, grants, and assistantships. We will also work closely with university administration to explore avenues for reducing tuition fees and enhancing access to affordable housing options.

Food Security Initiatives: Building upon existing programs, the GSA will spearhead initiatives aimed at addressing food insecurity among graduate students. This may include expanding food bank services, establishing community gardens, and partnering with local organizations to provide nutritious and affordable meal options.

Professional Development and Job Readiness: To better prepare graduate students for the transition into the workforce, the GSA will advocate for enhanced professional development resources and opportunities. This may involve organizing workshops, networking events, and mentorship programs tailored to the diverse career aspirations of graduate students across disciplines.

As we take a moment to reflect on the events that have transpired since our last gathering, it's evident that we've embarked on a journey filled with memorable experiences and achievements. Among the highlights, two events stand out prominently—the successful poster competition and the delightful holiday hangout.

Firstly, our participation in the poster competition was nothing short of a triumph. The collaborative effort and dedication exhibited by each member of our team were truly commendable. From the initial brainstorming sessions to the meticulous execution of our ideas, we navigated through challenges with resilience and innovation. The culmination of our hard work was reflected in the captivating poster that we presented, earning us accolades and recognition within the academic community. This achievement not only showcased our collective talent but also reinforced the strength of our teamwork and camaraderie.



Additionally, the holiday hangout provided us with a much-needed opportunity to unwind and foster deeper connections outside the realm of academia. The festive ambiance, filled with laughter and shared memories, created an atmosphere of warmth and joy. Whether it was exchanging stories by the crackling fireplace or indulging in seasonal delicacies, every moment was infused with a sense of togetherness and friendship. Our holiday hangout not only served as a respite from our academic pursuits but also strengthened the bonds that bind us together as a community.



In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to each member of the University of Saskatchewan Senate for their time, dedication, and support of USASK graduate students. If it wasn't for us graduate students, you wouldn't be here, if it wasn't for you, we wouldn't be here. Together, we make this institution work.

"We are the ancestors of the future, and what we do now will shape the world for generations to come"

Kinanâskomitinowow – miigwech – Thank you- I am grateful for all of you.

Warm regards,

Kayla Benoit – Interim President

Abbas Fazel Anvari-Yazdi – VP External Affaris

Ramin Mohammadi VP Finance and Operation

Sristy Sumana Nath- VP Academic and Student Affairs

Graduate Students' Association (GSA)

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