



Graduate Students' Association

April 2026

# Senate Report



**Prepared For:**  
University of Saskatchewan Council

**Prepared By:**  
Graduate Students Association





## PREAMBLE

Honourable Members of the University Senate,

I write to you on behalf of more than 4,000+ graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan. It is my privilege to present the Graduate Students' Association's annual report for the 2025/2026 academic year.

This has been a year of both significant progress and real challenges. Our students have navigated rising living costs, geopolitical uncertainty, and the continued aftereffects of the pandemic on academic life and community. At the same time, the GSA faced internal governance pressures that tested our institutional structures. I want to be candid with Senate about these realities, because the work outlined in this report was accomplished in that context, not apart from it.

Despite these challenges, the GSA delivered meaningful results across every area of its mandate. We restored our organizational foundations, launched new financial strategies, expanded student support programs, advanced long-standing advocacy priorities, and saw the strongest graduate student engagement with the GSA since before the pandemic. The details of these success are described in the sections below.

### Executive Summary

The following table summarizes the principal outcomes of the 2025/2026 academic year:

Area	Key Outcome
<b>Non-Profit Status</b>	Reinstated with ISC effective September 1, 2025, after lapse since 2022
<b>Financial Strategy</b>	Health/Dental Savings Account funds invested in GICs; projected annual return of \$20,000+
<b>Need-Based Bursaries</b>	Record applications received; expansion planned for 2026/2027
<b>Research Partnership</b>	First-ever GSA partnership on a SSHRC grant (~\$200,000 CAD awarded)
<b>Childcare Advocacy</b>	Five-year strategic plan initiated with university leadership



<b>U-Pass</b>	Summer term inclusion under negotiation with City of Saskatoon
<b>Anti-Racism</b>	Symposium held; MOU in progress; training budget established
<b>Indigenous Engagement</b>	Inaugural Indigenous Resource Fair; expanded community outreach
<b>Student Engagement</b>	16 events hosted; highest attendance since pre-pandemic
<b>Awards and Gala</b>	40+ applications across 10 categories; Gala held at TCU Place, April 25

## 1. Governance and Organizational Foundations

### 1.1 Reinstatement of Non-Profit Status

The GSA successfully regained its non-profit status with Information Services Corporation, effective September 1, 2025. The status had lapsed in 2022 due to delayed audits, which resulted in missed annual filings. This lag created a barrier to fundraising, grant eligibility, and financial growth. Reinstatement required the completion of both the FY2023 and FY2024 audits and extensive organizational effort.

With this reinstatement, the GSA is once again eligible to pursue grant applications, charitable fundraising, and new revenue opportunities. The contributions of Vice-President Finance Lindsay Carlson, whose persistence across two consecutive terms was essential to this outcome, are gratefully acknowledged.

### 1.2 Financial Stewardship and Investment Strategy

Historically, the GSA held no revenue-generating investments. Substantial funds sat in standard savings accounts earning negligible returns. This year, the executive team initiated the GSA's first strategic investment program, transferring funds from our chequing and our "rainy day" Health/Dental savings accounts into an RBC Investment Account. Funds were allocated across short and long-term Guaranteed Investment Certificates.

This strategy is projected to generate a minimum of \$20,000 in interest income over the next year. Previously, the funds earned nothing in chequing and approximately <1% APY in the savings account. This initiative establishes a foundation for responsible financial growth that will benefit future GSA operations and student programming.



## **2. Student Financial Support**

### **2.1 Need-Based Bursary Program**

The demand for graduate student financial support has reached unprecedented levels this year. 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 in all three calls), reflecting the financial pressures facing graduate students in the current economic environment, including rising living costs and geopolitical instability.

In response, the GSA is increasing the number of bursaries in the 2026/2027 budget and has formally requested that CGPS contribute additional funding to expand the program. We are grateful to CGPS Dean Dr. Debby Burshtyn for her positive and supportive response to this request.

### **2.2 Food Bank, Travel Fund, and Emergency Support**

The GSA continues to allocate financial resources toward essential support services, including the campus food bank (\$10,000), the Crisis Financial Aid program (\$10,000), and the graduate student travel award administered by ISAAC. These contributions reflect the GSA's commitment to ensuring that financial hardship does not become an unnecessary barrier to academic success.

## **3. Research Partnerships**

### **3.1 SSHRC Partnership Development Grant**

For the first time in its history, the GSA served as a formal partner organization on a successful Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Individual Partnership Development Grant. The grant is valued at approximately \$200,000 CAD (File Number 890-2025-0076, award period March 2026 to March 2028) and is 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. The GSA serves as a partner organization from Saskatchewan, supporting the broader research collaboration.

The GSA's inclusion as a named partner alongside major Canadian universities is a significant milestone in the organization's research engagement and external credibility. This partnership reflects the GSA's growing role in connecting graduate students with national-scale research opportunities.



## **4. Advocacy and Government Relations**

### **4.1 Childcare**

Accessible and affordable childcare for graduate students has been identified as a GSA priority for over a decade. However, no long-term actionable plan had been established until this year. Through sustained engagement with senior university leadership and the support of CGPS, the GSA initiated a five-year strategic plan for graduate student childcare. This represents a landmark step forward on this file.

Concurrently, a group of MBA students is developing a comprehensive childcare business plan as part of their capstone project, exploring sustainable and scalable delivery models. The GSA has also been engaging with both the federal and provincial governments, with childcare as a key agenda item. We extend our appreciation to university senior leaders for their collaboration. The Acting VP External Affairs, Sunny Bui, parent of two children and user of campus childcare services, has been included in all childcare discussions.

### **4.2 GSA Transit Pass (U-Pass)**

GSA members currently pay more than USSU members for a U-Pass that covers eight months, compared to the twelve-month coverage available to undergraduates. The GSA has been in ongoing discussions with the City of Saskatoon to address this inequity and extend coverage to include the spring and summer terms.

Progress has been slowed by administrative and bureaucratic challenges on the City's side. As a constructive step, the GSA agreed to include questions from the City's transit survey in the GSA Student Experience Survey. We are currently awaiting the City's approval for the necessary amendments to the U-Pass agreement, which will be followed by a referendum among GSA members.

### **4.3 Tuition Advocacy for Course-Based Students**

The VP Indigenous Engagement attended multiple events to advocate for lower tuition increases for domestic and international students in course-based programs. Through participation in tuition conversations hosted by CGPS Faculty, RSAW, and JSGS, the GSA ensured that the concerns of course-based graduate students were represented in these discussions and that their voices were heard even when direct attendance was not possible.

## **5. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

### **5.1 Anti-Racism Symposium and Memorandum of Understanding**

In partnership with the USSU and Student Health and Wellbeing, the GSA organized an Anti-Racism Symposium on November 19, 2025 at the GSA Commons. The symposium featured



student-led discussions, research presentations, and interactive workshops designed to provide students with practical tools to recognize and address racism on campus.

Feedback from the symposium has informed the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University, the GSA, and the USSU to advance equity and anti-racism. The MOU is in the process of being finalized. As part of the GSA's commitment under this agreement, a dedicated budget line has been established for anti-racism training for all GSA executives, staff, and councilors.

## **5.2 Inaugural Indigenous Resource Fair and Intercultural Exchange**

The GSA hosted its first Indigenous Resource Fair on January 21, 2026. The event connected graduate students with Indigenous-specific campus resources and volunteer opportunities within Indigenous-led programs. It featured diverse Indigenous meals, cultural activities, and teachings from an Elder and Knowledge Keeper. The fair facilitated meaningful connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and is expected to become an annual event, with potential to serve as an educational resource for incoming international students learning about Saskatchewan's Indigenous context.

## **5.3 Indigenous Community Relations**

Throughout the 2025/2026 academic year, the GSA actively sought opportunities to involve Indigenous students in the GSA and to increase the GSA's presence within ratified, Indigenous-led student groups. Outreach extended to the BIRM program, the Cousin's program, Métis Students of USask, the Indigenous Students Union, and Indigenous student leaders through the Indigenous Students Leadership Committee.

# **6. Student Engagement and Community Building**

This year saw a significant resurgence in graduate student engagement with the GSA, reaching levels not seen since before the COVID-19 pandemic. The GSA hosted 16 events over the course of the academic year, the highest number in a single year in the organization's recent history, with strong and consistent attendance across all programming. Indigenous engagement initiatives saw particularly meaningful participation, reflecting the effectiveness of the GSA's outreach efforts and the graduate student community's genuine interest in building an inclusive campus culture.

## **6.1 Graduate Voices Initiative**

The GSA launched Graduate Voices, a storytelling project designed to celebrate the diverse journeys of graduate students at USask. The initiative provides a platform for students to share their experiences, from research achievements to personal resilience, with the university and broader community. Graduate Voices is intended to strengthen visibility, connection, and pride within the graduate student body.



## **6.2 GSA Awards and Annual Gala**

The annual GSA Awards program received over 40 applications across ten categories this year. To broaden recognition, the GSA invited three finalists per category to the Annual Gala on April 25 at TCU Place, attended by senior university leadership, deans, government officials, and academic supervisors. The GSA is also undertaking a structural review of the Awards program to ensure it reflects the values of the graduate student community and to establish a sustainable funding model through a devolved fund, replacing the previous dependence on sponsorship contributions.

## **7. Professional Development**

The GSA has identified professional development as an area requiring greater attention and investment. Gaps in the availability and accessibility of professional development programming for graduate students have been observed. The GSA encourages the continued expansion of professional development offerings and is grateful to CGPS for introducing professional development courses to begin addressing this need.

## **8. Forward Priorities for 2026/2027**

The GSA identifies the following as priority areas for the coming academic year:

- Expanding the need-based bursary program in partnership with CGPS to meet growing demand.
- Securing City of Saskatoon approval for U-Pass summer term inclusion then consulting graduate students via a referendum.
- Advancing the five-year childcare strategic plan toward implementation milestones.
- Finalizing and executing the Anti-Racism MOU with the University and USSU.
- Re-evaluating the GSA Awards structure and establishing sustainable funding for award recipients.
- Continuing to grow graduate student engagement and event programming.
- Strengthening the GSA's financial position through the investment strategy and non-profit fundraising capacity.

## **9. Closing**

This has been a consequential year for the Graduate Students' Association. We began with inherited organizational gaps and navigated real challenges, both external and internal. We end the year with a restored non-profit status, the GSA's first investment portfolio, a long-term childcare plan in motion, a national research partnership, and the strongest student engagement we have seen in years.



There is still much to do. The U-Pass remains inequitable. The bursary program needs to grow faster than the demand that drives it. Childcare is a five-year commitment, not a quick fix. These are the realities we carry into the next year.

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 councilors, who engaged in difficult governance conversations and held this organization accountable. I thank CGPS, and Dean Dr. Debby Burshtyn in particular, for meeting us as genuine partners. And I thank the graduate students of this university, who showed up to our events, applied for our awards, shared their stories, and trusted us to represent them.

It has been the honour of my career to serve as President of the Graduate Students' Association. I respectfully ask this Senate to continue standing with us.

*Palash Roy*

**Palash Ranjan Roy**

President, Graduate Students' Association  
University of Saskatchewan