



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN GRADUATE
STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

2026 ANNUAL AWARDS GALA

Saturday, April 25th, 2026

TCU Place

35 22 St E, Saskatoon, SK



Graduate Students' Association



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As we gather here today, we acknowledge we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another. We recognize the Cree, Saulteaux, Dene, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota peoples as the original caretakers of these lands. By honoring this territory, we acknowledge the spirit of this place and commit to a future built on mutual respect, truth, and the ongoing work of reconciliation.



2026 ANNUAL AWARDS GALA

PROGRAM

5:30 PM DOORS OPEN AND GUEST REGISTRATION

Networking, Refreshments, and Photography
Musical Performance: Youth Singer - Prisha Roy

6:30 PM OPENING REMARKS

Master of Ceremonies' welcome
Land Acknowledgement
Performance: Indigenous Drummers - Johnny [Tootosis] Cross
Opening Remarks
 Dean of College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
 Minister of Advanced Education
 Acting Provost and Vice-President Academic
 Shadow Minister of Advanced Education

7:15 PM CULTURAL PERFORMANCE: SICA YOUTH AFRICAN DANCE GROUP

7:30 PM AWARDS CEREMONY: PART I

Excellence in Community Service
Research Excellence in Indigenous Studies
Research Excellence in Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences, Law, or Education (HASSLE)
Research Excellence in STEM - Natural Sciences
Research Excellence in Interdisciplinary Studies

8:00 PM BUFFET DINNER AND LIVE MUSIC - CHESTERFIELD BAND

8:50 PM AWARDS CEREMONY: PART II

Research Excellence in STEM - Technology and Engineering
Advising Excellence
Professional Excellence
Research Excellence in STEM - Medical Science/Public Health
Mark Kroeker Student Leadership Award

9:30 PM STATEMENT: YEAR IN REVIEW

9:35 PM CLOSING REMARKS

10:00 PM EVENT END - TRAVEL SAFELY





SPECIAL GUESTS



DR. DEBBY BURSHTYN

Dean of CGPS



DR. PATTI MCDOUGALL

Acting Provost and VP Academic



HON. KEN CHEVELDAYOFF

Minister of Advanced
Education



DR. TALJINDER GREWAL

Shadow Minister of Advanced
Education and MLA Saskatoon
University – Sutherland





SPECIAL GUESTS



DR. ANGELA JAIME
Vice Provost Indigenous
Engagement



CHERYL HAMELIN
VP University
Relations



DR. MARJORIE DELBAERE
Interim Vice-Provost,
Students and Learning



DR. BALJIT SINGH
VP Research





SPECIAL GUESTS



LINDSAY CARLSON
GSA VP Finance and
Operations



PALASH ROY
GSA President



JOHNNY (TOOTOOSIS) CROSS
Drummer





SPECIAL GUESTS



PRISHA ROY

Singer



CHESTERFIELD

Band



SASKATOON IGBO CULTURAL ASSOCIATION

Cultural Dance Group





AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

This award shall honor a graduate student who has made significant impacts and positive contributions to the local community in Saskatoon and beyond. This shall be awarded to a student who has shown extensive initiative and significant achievements in serving the community in addition to excelling in their academic studies. This shall be awarded to a student who has contributed a minimum of seventy-five (75) hours of volunteer work during the corresponding Fiscal Year.



ALIYA KHALID

FINALISTS



JESSICA WEI-LIN LAM



RAVICHANDRA PATIL



ALIYA KHALID

Aliya Khalid is honoured for outstanding excellence in community service through her sustained leadership, compassion, and commitment to human and animal wellbeing. As a PhD candidate at the University of Saskatchewan, she has played a central role in advancing campus and community wellness initiatives, most notably as the sole coordinator of the PAWS Your Stress Therapy Dog Program. Aliya's service is distinguished by her ethical, inclusive, and research-informed approach, prioritizing both student mental health and animal welfare. Beyond campus, she has demonstrated deep commitment to equity and community engagement through mentoring, refugee support, animal rescue work, and national and international service roles. Through empathy, integrity, and tireless dedication, Aliya has made a meaningful and lasting impact on the university and the broader Saskatoon community.



JESSICA WEI-LIN LAM

Jessica Wei-Lin Lam is recognized for outstanding excellence in community service through her sustained commitment to arts-based community building, environmental sustainability, and equity-focused leadership. A PhD candidate in Geography and Planning, Jessica actively contributes to Saskatoon's arts and cultural communities, including SK Ballroom, JazzMe YXE, the Saskatoon Choral Society, and Persephone Theatre, fostering inclusive, welcoming spaces for BIPOC and 2SLGBTQ+ communities. She is also deeply engaged in neighbourhood-level service through environmental initiatives such as the Nutana Community Garden and governance roles on condominium boards. Within the University of Saskatchewan, Jessica demonstrates strong dedication to mentorship, graduate student leadership, and equity through her service on GSA committees and her ongoing support of peers and undergraduate students. Through creativity, consistency, and care, Jessica exemplifies community service that connects people, place, and belonging.



RAVICHANDRA PATIL

Ravichandra C. Patil is recognized for outstanding excellence in community service through his dedicated leadership, advocacy, and commitment to fostering inclusive and supportive environments for graduate students and the broader community. A PhD candidate in Biological Engineering, Ravichandra has demonstrated exceptional service through key leadership roles, including President of PSAC Local 40004 and President of the Engineering Graduate Community Council. In these roles, he has advocated for graduate student workers, strengthened academic and wellness programming, and promoted equity, diversity, and inclusion across campus. Beyond the university, he contributes to community well-being through mentoring international students, participating in Rotary initiatives that serve vulnerable populations, and advisory work supporting mental health awareness initiatives. Through integrity, reliability, and service-driven leadership, Ravichandra exemplifies meaningful community engagement and a strong commitment to collective well-being.



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN INDIGENOUS STUDIES

This award shall honor a graduate student who has made significant impacts and positive contributions to the local community in Saskatoon and beyond. This shall be awarded to a student who has shown extensive initiative and significant achievements in serving the community in addition to excelling in their academic studies. This shall be awarded to a student who has contributed a minimum of seventy-five (75) hours of volunteer work during the corresponding Fiscal Year.

RECIPIENT



DANIELLE BIRD



DANIELLE BIRD

Danielle Bird is recognized for outstanding research excellence through her impactful, community-grounded scholarship in Indigenous Studies. A PhD candidate at the University of Saskatchewan, Danielle's research critically examines settler-colonial carcerality and Indigenous peoples' experiences within Canada's criminal justice system. Her work centres Indigenous perspectives, relational methodologies, and gendered analysis to challenge assumptions that normalize Indigenous incarceration and to expose the ongoing impacts of colonial violence. Danielle's scholarship has been widely disseminated through peer-reviewed publications, national presentations, invited talks, and community-based knowledge sharing. Her research excellence is reflected in major competitive awards, including SSHRC Doctoral and Master's Scholarships, and multiple national research honours. Through rigorous scholarship, ethical research practice, and sustained community engagement, Danielle exemplifies research excellence that advances Indigenous knowledge and supports meaningful social change.



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN HUMANITIES, ARTS, SOCIAL SCIENCES, LAW, OR EDUCATION

This award shall honor a graduate student who has made significant impacts in the field of humanities, arts, social sciences, law or education and who has produced outstanding research results throughout their course of study. The awarded graduate student shall be a favorable member in the research community, shall exemplify scholarly achievements and shall have contributed to positive collaborations amongst researchers and the community.



GIDEON UMEZURIKE

FINALISTS



JASMINE REDFORD



KIEGAN LLOYD



GIDEON UMEZURIKE

Gideon Umezurike is recognized for outstanding research excellence through his exceptional scholarly productivity, originality, and interdisciplinary impact in literary studies. A PhD candidate in English at the University of Saskatchewan, Gideon's research bridges postcolonial studies, transcultural theory, disability studies, and medical humanities. His doctoral work introduces the concept of the "infertilitary form," offering a novel framework for examining reproductive disability in contemporary Nigerian fiction. In addition to strong dissertation progress, Gideon has demonstrated remarkable research output, with multiple peer-reviewed articles forthcoming, extensive international conference presentations, and active engagement in academic publishing and peer review. His work reaches audiences across Canada and globally, reflecting both scholarly rigour and broad relevance. Through sustained publication, knowledge dissemination, and collaborative research, Gideon exemplifies the highest standards of research excellence in the humanities.



JASMINE REDFORD

Jasmine Redford is recognized for outstanding research excellence through her innovative, interdisciplinary scholarship in Canadian literary and comics studies. A PhD candidate in English at the University of Saskatchewan, Jasmine's SSHRC-funded research examines violence, identity, and nationalism in Canadian comic books, with a particular focus on Captain Canuck. Her work uniquely integrates scholarly analysis with original artistic practice, resulting in peer-reviewed publications, book chapters, industry-focused writing, and co-authorship of a graphic novel. Jasmine has presented her research at major national and international conferences and is guest-editing an upcoming special issue of a leading journal in Canadian literature. Alongside her research, she contributes extensively to academic publishing, graduate student leadership, and undergraduate mentorship. Through imaginative scholarship, sustained productivity, and public-facing engagement, Jasmine exemplifies research excellence that expands the reach and impact of the humanities.



KIEGAN LLOYD

Kiegan Lloyd is recognized for outstanding research excellence through his interdisciplinary scholarship in the history and philosophy of education, religious studies, and intellectual history. A doctoral student in Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan, Kiegan's research examines Western esotericism, alternative learning communities, and pedagogical authority, offering original insights into how contested and marginalized knowledge traditions shape educational thought and practice. His work has been disseminated widely through peer-reviewed publications, book chapters, and more than twenty national and international conference presentations across Canada, the United States, and Europe. Supported by prestigious funding, including a SSHRC Graduate Scholarship, Kiegan also contributes actively to the research community through peer-review service, academic leadership, and collaborative research. Through sustained productivity, theoretical innovation, and global engagement, Kiegan exemplifies research excellence in the humanities and education.



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN STEM

NATURAL SCIENCES

This award shall honor a graduate student who has made significant impacts in the field of natural sciences who has produced outstanding research results throughout their course of study. The awarded graduate student shall be a favorable member in the research community, shall exemplify scholarly achievements and shall have contributed to positive collaborations amongst researchers and the community.



MD HELAL UDDIN



FINALISTS

CODY KOLOSKI



MARZIEH HEIDARI NIA



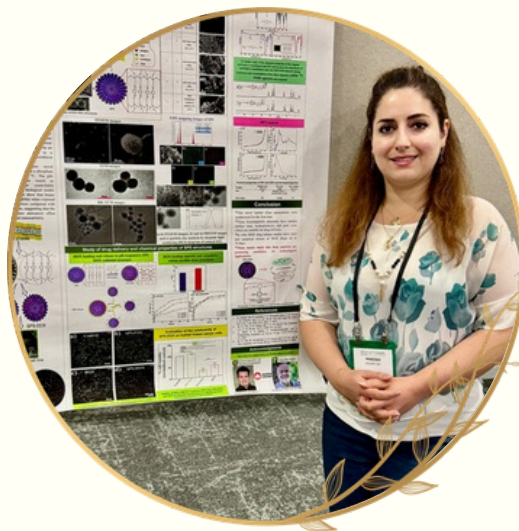
MD HELAL UDDIN

Md Helal Uddin is recognized for outstanding research excellence through his impactful contributions to aquatic toxicology and environmental biology. A PhD candidate in the Department of Biology at the University of Saskatchewan, Helal's research investigates the neurobehavioural, developmental, and reproductive effects of selenium exposure in fish. His work provides novel insights into how environmentally relevant selenium concentrations disrupt neural signalling, behaviour, and reproduction across generations, with important implications for the protection of aquatic ecosystems. Helal's research record includes extensive peer-reviewed publications in leading environmental science journals, a strong international conference presence, and a rapidly growing citation impact. His work is contributing to evidence-based approaches for developing water quality guidelines in Canada. In addition to research excellence, Helal demonstrates leadership through teaching, mentorship, and service within the graduate community, exemplifying excellence in the natural sciences.



CODY KOLOSKI

Cody Koloski is recognized for outstanding research excellence through his impactful contributions to vector-borne disease ecology and microbial pathogenesis. A PhD candidate in Veterinary Microbiology at the University of Saskatchewan, Cody's research focuses on the Lyme disease bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and its transmission between vertebrate hosts and tick vectors. His work integrates host immunology, tick biology, and pathogen population dynamics to reveal how host immune status and sex influence bacterial abundance and transmission efficiency. Cody has authored multiple first-author publications reporting novel discoveries, including sex-specific patterns of infection in hosts and ticks, and immune-mediated effects on pathogen transmission. His research has been widely disseminated through international conferences and has received numerous presentation awards and competitive scholarships. Through scientific rigour, innovation, and strong research leadership, Cody exemplifies excellence in the natural sciences.



MARZIEH HEIDARI NIA

Marzieh Heidari Nia is recognized for outstanding research excellence through her innovative contributions to physical chemistry and advanced functional materials. A PhD candidate in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Saskatchewan, her research focuses on the design and characterization of hierarchical biopolymer and hybrid silica nanomaterials. By integrating advanced synthesis with state-of-the-art spectroscopic and microscopic techniques, Marzieh has developed novel soft matter and hybrid systems with applications in drug delivery, antimicrobial coatings, and sustainable water treatment. Her work demonstrates exceptional mastery of structure–property relationships and bridges fundamental chemistry with real-world challenges. With an impressive record of first-author publications in high-impact journals, active collaboration across institutions, and strong engagement in teaching and mentorship, Marzieh exemplifies excellence in natural sciences research.



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

This award shall honor a graduate student who has made significant impacts in two or more separate, but related, fields of study and who has produced outstanding research results throughout their course of study. The awarded graduate student shall be a favorable member in the research community, shall exemplify scholarly achievements and shall have contributed to positive collaborations amongst researchers and the community.



MARIAM MIR

FINALISTS



SABA KAMRAN



SIDRA UZAIR



MARIAM MIR

Mariam Mir is recognized for outstanding research excellence through her interdisciplinary leadership in biomaterials science, polymer chemistry, and biomedical innovation. A PhD candidate in Chemistry at the University of Saskatchewan, Mariam's research integrates chemistry, biomaterials engineering, and pharmaceutical sciences to develop advanced materials for controlled drug delivery, antimicrobial applications, and implantable medical devices. Her work bridges fundamental research and real-world impact, including leadership in ISO-compliant production systems for drug-eluting cardiovascular stents. With an exceptional publication record, international research visibility, and strong translational expertise, Mariam's scholarship demonstrates the power of interdisciplinary research to address pressing healthcare challenges. Through innovation, collaboration, and applied impact, she exemplifies excellence in interdisciplinary research.



SABA KAMRAN

Saba Kamran is recognized for outstanding research excellence through her interdisciplinary scholarship in educator wellbeing, inclusive education, and teacher preparation. A PhD student in Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Saskatchewan, Saba's research integrates perspectives from education, psychology, mentorship studies, leadership, and wellbeing research. Her work focuses on the experiences of pre-service teachers in inclusive classrooms and examines how mentorship, institutional practices, and learning environments shape educators' occupational wellbeing. Saba has actively disseminated her research at national and international conferences and holds leadership roles within the Canadian Society for the Study of Education, representing graduate researchers at a national level. With forthcoming peer-reviewed publications and a strong record of interdisciplinary engagement, Saba's research bridges theory and practice to support inclusive, sustainable, and equitable educational environments.



SIDRA UZAIR

Sidra Uzair is recognized for outstanding research excellence through her integrative scholarship spanning nutrition science, public health, molecular biology, and microbiome research. A PhD student in Human Nutrition at the University of Saskatchewan, Sidra brings together training in food and nutrition, public health, health systems management, and molecular research to address complex questions about diet, bone health, body composition, and the gut microbiota. Her doctoral work leads a multidisciplinary randomized controlled trial examining the effects of fermented and non-fermented dairy intake on skeletal and metabolic health, combining clinical assessments, dietary analysis, and microbiome data. With experience in advanced laboratory techniques, bioinformatics, and population-level analysis, Sidra bridges biological mechanisms with public health relevance. Through strong scholarly output, mentorship, and collaborative leadership, she exemplifies excellence in interdisciplinary research.



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN STEM

TECHNOLOGY & ENGINEERING

This award shall honor a graduate student who has made significant impacts in the field of technology and engineering, who has produced outstanding research results throughout their course of study. The awarded graduate student shall be a favorable member in the research community, shall exemplify scholarly achievements and shall have contributed to positive collaborations amongst researchers and the community.



**OMIYALE BABATUNDE
OLAMIDE**

FINALISTS



**MD SHAMIMUR
RAHMAN**



SAUMENDU ROY



OMIYALE BABATUNDE OLAMIDE

Omiyale Babatunde Olamide is recognized for outstanding research excellence through his innovative contributions to technology and engineering. A PhD candidate in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan, his research focuses on topology-informed biomimetic design of multi-tendrill soft robotic systems for safe and adaptive manipulation. Integrating advanced computational design, materials science, and soft robotics, his work advances next-generation robotic technologies with practical applications in manufacturing and biomedical systems. Omiyale has authored or co-authored more than 35 peer-reviewed publications spanning additive manufacturing, corrosion engineering, nanotechnology, and robotics, with his work cited over 800 times. His research excellence is complemented by extensive industrial experience, teaching, and mentorship. Through innovation, interdisciplinary integration, and strong real-world impact, Omiyale exemplifies excellence in technology and engineering research.



MD SHAMIMUR RAHMAN

Md Shamimur Rahman is recognized for outstanding research excellence through his impactful contributions to software engineering and technology innovation. A PhD candidate in Computer Science at the University of Saskatchewan, his research focuses on improving code review practices by integrating technical and human-centred perspectives. His work addresses critical challenges in software maintenance, reviewer selection, communication quality, and civility in collaborative development environments. Shamimur has published extensively in top-tier international venues, including ICSE, FSE, MSR, and ICSME, and his research offers evidence-based solutions that enhance developer productivity and team effectiveness. Beyond research, he demonstrates strong leadership and service through teaching, mentorship, and his role as President of the Computer Science Graduate Council. Through rigorous scholarship, interdisciplinary insight, and community engagement, Shamimur exemplifies excellence in technology and engineering research.



SAUMENDU ROY

Saumendu Roy is recognized for outstanding research excellence through his impactful contributions to explainable artificial intelligence (XAI) in software engineering. A PhD candidate in Computer Science at the University of Saskatchewan, his research addresses critical challenges in the reliability, usability, and trustworthiness of machine learning explanations for developers. His work presents a coherent and forward-looking research trajectory—from identifying disagreements among post hoc explanation methods to developing practical, developer-centric solutions and extending explainability to transformer-based models. Saumendu has published in leading international venues such as ICSME, EASE, and ICSE@FORGE, and his work has already attracted strong scholarly attention. Beyond research, he demonstrates leadership through mentorship, teaching, and service as President of the Computer Science Graduate Council. Through technical rigour, real-world impact, and community engagement, Saumendu exemplifies excellence in technology and engineering research.



AWARD FOR ADVISING EXCELLENCE

This award shall honor a graduate student advisor who has shown excellent supervisory and mentoring skills as well as exceptional support for their advisees' ideas, scholarly work, and financial needs. The honored advisor shall embody the capacity to stimulate graduate students to think critically and creatively, while enhancing their graduate student learning experience.



DR. LINGLING JIN

FINALISTS



DR MICHAEL COTTRELL



DR. ALISON OATES



DR. LINGLING JIN

Dr. Lingling Jin is recognized for exceptional excellence in graduate advising through her deeply committed, inclusive, and high-impact mentorship. Renowned for her accessibility, reliability, and care for student success, she fosters a research environment where students are empowered to grow as confident, independent scholars. Dr. Jin actively supports students' professional development by encouraging ambitious research, conference participation, publication in leading venues, and competitive scholarship applications. Her mentorship has guided students to significant academic achievements, prestigious awards, and successful careers across academia, industry, and government. A strong advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusion, Dr. Jin has built a vibrant, multicultural research community grounded in respect, collaboration, and excellence. Through scholarly leadership, generosity, and genuine care for student well-being, she exemplifies the highest standards of advising excellence.



DR MICHAEL COTTRELL

Dr. Michael Cottrell is recognized for an extraordinary career of excellence in graduate advising and mentorship at the University of Saskatchewan. Over more than three decades, he has supervised and supported an exceptional number of Master's, PhD, and EdD students, with a particularly strong commitment to Indigenous, international, and equity-deserving students. Renowned for balancing rigorous scholarly expectations with deep care for student well-being, Dr. Cottrell creates inclusive environments where students feel respected, supported, and empowered to succeed. His mentorship extends beyond individual supervision through sustained leadership, advocacy for student funding and support, and transformative initiatives that have strengthened graduate education across the university. Through integrity, generosity, and unwavering dedication to students, Dr. Cottrell exemplifies the highest standards of advising excellence.



DR. ALISON OATES

Dr. Alison Oates is recognized for outstanding excellence in graduate advising through her deeply student-centred, compassionate, and empowering mentorship. She is known for fostering rigorous scholarship while creating inclusive, supportive environments where students thrive academically, professionally, and personally. Dr. Oates consistently goes beyond supervisory expectations, investing time, care, and advocacy to help students navigate challenges, build confidence, and realize their potential. Her mentorship emphasizes meaningful research engagement, knowledge translation with real-world impact, and professional development at every stage of training. A trusted advocate, innovative scholar, and inspiring leader, Dr. Oates' advising has shaped the success of undergraduate and graduate students alike, leaving a lasting impact across the College of Kinesiology and the University of Saskatchewan.



AWARD FOR PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

This award shall honor a non-thesis based graduate student who has made significant academic achievements in their field of study and who has made outstanding non-academic contributions to their department of studies. The awarded graduate student shall be a favorable member exemplifying scholarly achievements and community involvement.

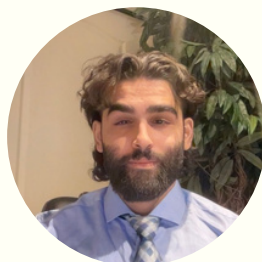


**DR. MELANIE ELHAFID
LINCANGO**

FINALISTS



MEGAN MCCONNELL



IBRAHIEM ESSALAH



DR. MELANIE ELHAFID LINCANGO

Dr. Melanie Elhafid Lincango is recognized for outstanding professional excellence, demonstrated by her exceptional ability to integrate clinical practice, graduate education, research, and professional leadership. A general surgery resident and graduate student in Health Professions Education, Dr. Elhafid has balanced the rigorous demands of surgical residency with sustained academic excellence and national-level scholarly contributions in medical and surgical education. Her work in simulation-based education and surgical training addresses meaningful gaps in resident learning and reflects a deep commitment to improving educational environments. Beyond scholarship, she has demonstrated leadership within her residency program, including creating the program's first resident wellness retreat, which is now an annual tradition. Known for her professionalism, collaboration, and advocacy, Dr. Elhafid exemplifies excellence through mentorship, innovation, and dedication to both patient care and medical education.



MEGAN MCCONNELL

Megan McConnell is recognized for outstanding professional excellence through her exceptional academic achievement, applied public health leadership, and real-world policy impact. A Master of Public Health student at the University of Saskatchewan, Megan has demonstrated the ability to translate rigorous scholarship into meaningful action. During her MPH practicum with the City of Prince Albert and the Saskatchewan Health Authority, she led a comprehensive evaluation of a municipal liquor store hours bylaw, contributing directly to evidence-based policy decisions at the municipal level. Her work has been presented to the city council, provincial partners, and national audiences, reflecting its broad relevance and impact. With a strong academic record, award-winning practicum performance, and a commitment to professionalism, collaboration, and public service, Megan exemplifies excellence in public health practice and emerging professional leadership.



IBRAHIEM ESSALAH

Ibrahiem Essalah is recognized for outstanding professional excellence through his ability to translate public health theory into meaningful, community-driven practice. As a Master of Public Health student at the University of Saskatchewan, he has demonstrated exceptional professionalism, cultural humility, and applied expertise across local and international settings. During his MPH practicum with Cowessess First Nation, Ibrahim played a central role in the design and implementation of a youth-focused Type 2 diabetes prevention initiative that integrated physical activity, mental health promotion, and culturally grounded education. He approached this work through the principles of community-based participatory research and Two-Eyed Seeing, ensuring alignment with community priorities and long-term sustainability. His professional excellence is further reflected in his experience as a Queen Elizabeth Scholar in Barbados, where he contributed to global health research on nutrition literacy and noncommunicable diseases. Through reliability, integrity, and impactful practice, Ibrahim exemplifies excellence in public health professionalism.



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN STEM

MEDICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

This award shall honor a graduate student who has made significant impacts in the field of medical science and public health, and who has produced outstanding research results throughout their course of study. The awarded graduate student shall be a favorable member in the research community, shall exemplify scholarly achievements and shall have contributed to positive collaborations amongst researchers and the community.



BHADRAPRIYA SIVAKUMAR

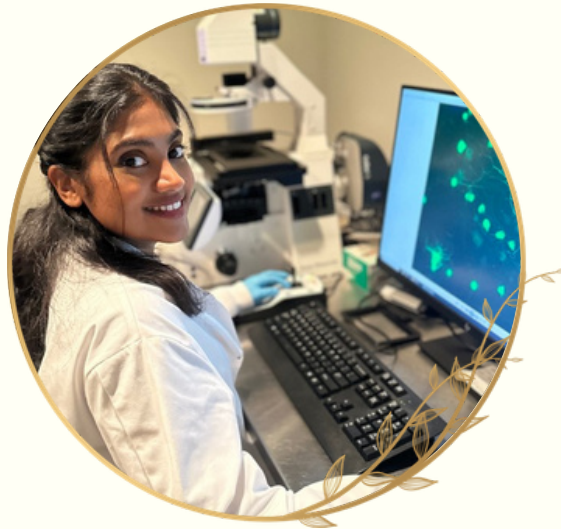


MOHAMMADREZA JAVAN

FINALISTS



SHABNAM ABDI



BHADRAPRIYA SIVAKUMAR

Bhadrapriya Sivakumar is recognized for outstanding research excellence through her innovative contributions to neuroscience and peripheral nerve regeneration. A PhD candidate in the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan, she investigates the therapeutic potential of mesencephalic astrocyte-derived neurotrophic factor (MANF) in promoting nerve repair following traumatic injury. Combining advanced molecular biology, ex vivo nerve explant models, and in vivo rodent injury models, Bhadrapriya's work reveals critical mechanisms underlying MANF-mediated neuroregeneration and Schwann cell plasticity. Her scholarship is distinguished by strong publication output, international conference presentations, and competitive research awards, including recognition from the Society for Neuroscience. In addition to her research excellence, she is deeply committed to mentorship, teaching, and community engagement, exemplifying a holistic approach to medical sciences and public health research.



MOHAMMADREZA JAVAN

Mohammadreza (Reza) Javan is recognized for outstanding research excellence through his innovative contributions to tumour immunology and cancer research. A PhD candidate at the University of Saskatchewan, Reza's work focuses on understanding how macrophages are influenced by tumour-derived signals within the tumour microenvironment. Using sophisticated three-dimensional in vitro tumour models, including collagen-based microtissues, he investigates immune-tumour interactions with greater physiological relevance than traditional cell culture systems. His research advances understanding of macrophage polarization and immune suppression in breast and ovarian cancer, with clear implications for biomarker discovery and therapeutic development. Reza's work has been widely disseminated through peer-reviewed publications and scientific conferences and has received recognition for research excellence and communication. Through interdisciplinary integration, technical rigor, and collaborative engagement, he exemplifies excellence in medical science and public health research.



SHABNAM ABDI

Shabnam Abdi is recognized for outstanding research excellence, evidenced by her innovative and impactful contributions to comparative oncology and translational cancer research. A PhD candidate at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, her work investigates the role of the EphA2 receptor tyrosine kinase in human and canine melanoma, an aggressive cancer with limited treatment options. By integrating molecular biology, cell signalling, and comparative oncology, Shabnam's research identifies conserved cancer mechanisms across species and highlights new therapeutic targets relevant to both veterinary and human medicine. A major achievement of her work includes the development of novel methodologies to isolate and culture primary canine melanocytes, greatly advancing melanoma research capacity. With an exceptional publication record, competitive research awards, and strong engagement in teaching and mentorship, Shabnam exemplifies excellence in medical sciences and public health research.



MARK KROEKER EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARD

This award honors a graduate student who has shown strong leadership and exceptional initiatives at the University of Saskatchewan, going above and beyond their call of duty, whilst carrying out the mission of the GSA. This student shall have shown outstanding involvement and collaboration with graduate students in their unit of study, as part of an Academic Council, or the GSA Council.



MEGHA ROHAMARE



**SALOME CHIDINMA
CHIKA-IGBOKWE**

FINALISTS



NICHOLAS NEUDORF



MEMORY OF MARK KROEKER

Mark Kroeker was born in Loma Linda, California on September 21, 1989 with a fatal condition known as hypoplastic left heart syndrome and underwent a cardiac transplant when he was just one week old. After recovering from transplant surgery in California for eleven months, Mark moved with his family to British Columbia where he insisted on living a completely normal life. Mark loved school. He was always a strong student leader, and was highly involved with his community. During his final year he was a student representative on the Vancouver School Board. In high school he was very involved with the drama club and won several awards from his school and a citywide annual event known as Vancouver Drama-Rama. After graduating from high school, Mark went to study at Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B. where he completed a B.A. in Geography. Mark served as VP External on the Mount Allison Students' Advisory Council for three years, and was well respected by the community as a leader. Mark enrolled in a Masters program at the University of Saskatchewan in the department of Geography and Planning, exploring urban Aboriginal attitudes regarding city planning in Saskatoon under the supervision of Dr. Ryan Walker. As per usual, he immediately became engaged in his community, serving as President of the Geography and Planning Students' Association, and Chair of Course Council for the GSA. Many of us who knew Mark personally are still struggling to come to terms with the enormous void in our hearts and lives left by his sudden and unexpected death in May, 2014. The award in his name to acknowledge exceptional student leadership is a very fitting and meaningful tribute to the Mark Kroeker we all remember.





MEGHA ROHAMARE

Megha Rohamare is recognized for outstanding student leadership through her sustained commitment to building inclusive, engaged, and supportive graduate student communities at the University of Saskatchewan. A PhD candidate in Biochemistry, Microbiology & Immunology, Megha has demonstrated exceptional leadership at the departmental, college, and university levels through longstanding service to the BMI Graduate Student Association and the College of Medicine Graduate Student Society. In multiple executive roles, she has played a central role in organizing academic, social, and professional events that foster meaningful connections between students, faculty, and staff. Known for her collaborative, thoughtful, and reliable leadership style, Megha consistently leads with empathy, integrity, and inclusivity. Balancing strong academic achievement with extensive service, she exemplifies the principles of engagement, responsibility, and student-driven leadership celebrated by this award.



SALOME CHIDINMA CHIKA-IGBOKWE

Salome Chika-Igbokwe is recognized for exceptional student leadership through her visionary, inclusive, and impactful contributions to the University of Saskatchewan. A PhD candidate in the School of Public Health, Salome has demonstrated outstanding leadership in advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives, most notably through her central role in coordinating campus-wide Black History Month programming. She is also the co-founder of Black Graduate Students in Saskatchewan, a rapidly growing peer-support network that connects and mentors more than 100 Black graduate students across the university. Balancing academic excellence with service, Salome has authored over fifteen peer-reviewed publications and is the recipient of the prestigious 2024 Margaret McNamara Education Grant. Through courage, collaboration, and commitment, Salome exemplifies student leadership that creates meaningful change and lasting community impact.



NICHOLAS NEUDORF

Nick Neudorf is recognized for exceptional student leadership through his proactive, collaborative, and student-centred approach to graduate governance at the University of Saskatchewan. As President of the School of Public Health Students' Association, Nick has led transformative initiatives that strengthened student representation, accessibility, and professional development. He played a central role in securing SPHSA's ratification as a GSA Academic Council, ensuring a formal and lasting voice for public health students within university governance. Nick is the founder of the School's first MPH Practicum Information Night, which connects students with community organizations and bridges academic learning and professional practice. Known for his accessibility and responsiveness, he introduced regular student drop-in sessions and fostered interdisciplinary collaboration through partnerships with the Health Science Students' Association. Balancing strong academic achievement with service, Nick exemplifies principled, inclusive, and impactful student leadership.

SPONSERS



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Graduate
and Postdoctoral Studies

GRAD.USASK.CA



Graduate Students' Association

ALUMO



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Kinesiology

KINESIOLOGY.USASK.CA



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Residence Services

A DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES
LIVewithUS.USASK.CA



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

School of Environment
and Sustainability

SENS.USASK.CA



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Office of the Vice-Provost
Students and Learning



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Engineering

ENGINEERING.USASK.CA



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Office of the President



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Western College of
Veterinary Medicine

WCVM.USASK.CA



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Office of the Provost and
Vice-President Academic

USASK.CA/VPACADEMIC



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

School of Public Health

SPH.USASK.CA



EDWARDS
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Nursing

NURSING.USASK.CA



**Office of the Vice-Provost
Indigenous Engagement**

INDIGENOUS.USASK.CA



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Pharmacy
and Nutrition

PHARMACY-NUTRITION.USASK.CA



THANK YOU

GSA AWARDS COMMITTEE

Amy Meyer, Angelica Uy, Sunny Bui, Lily Buckles-Whittle,
Maureen Amuche Nwobodo, Blessing Dwumah Manu, Sunny Bui
& Palash Roy

GSA EXECUTIVE TEAM

Lindsay Carlson, Laila Valila, Mandela Alema, Sunny Bui & Palash
Roy

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Brenna Maxwell

COUNCIL

Clement Abdallah, Shamsuddeen Ma'auf, Aiminayanate Pepple

COORDINATORS

Esther Adeola-Gold, Sahand Saed, Dasha Guliak, Arezou
Askarian Abyaneh





AND TO OUR GUESTS

**THANK
YOU**

