



**University of Saskatchewan
Graduate Students' Association
Council Meeting
Minutes from Tuesday August 14, 2018 @ 5 PM**

Present: Marissa Evans (ARCHAIA), Chelsea Cunningham, Britney Lins (College of Medicine), Douglas Fansher (Chemistry), Rifat Zahan (Computer Science), Olamide Oriola (Electrical Engineering), Nazmul Hossain (Mechanical Engineering), Saman Naghieh (Biomedical Engineering), Brittany Laing (Geology), Indiana Best (Indigenous Graduate Students' Council), Mamata Panigrahi (Microbiology and Immunology), Natasha Boyes (Kinesiology), Se'era Anstruther (Pharmacy and Nutrition), Viktoria Hinz (SENS), Aimee Schryer (Soil Science), Breanne Murray, Narsimha Pujari, Anand Krishnan (WCVM), Eman Abdulhadi (School of Physical Therapy), Osai Clarke (Chemistry)

Executives: Naheda Sahtout (President), Jesus Corona Gomez (VP Finance and Operations), Edgar Martinez-Soberanes (VP Student Affairs), Somtochukwu Ufondu (VP External)

Organization of the Meeting:

Dr. Scott Adams acted as the Chairperson. The Chair acknowledged Treaty 6 Territory and Homeland of the Métis people and indicated that the meeting was properly constituted. Osai Clarke acted as the recording secretary for the duration of the meeting.

OPEN SESSION

Call to Order / Opening Remarks (Item 1)

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.

Approval of the Agenda (Item 2)

The Chair asked whether there were any amendments to the Agenda as circulated.

Motion to approve the Agenda as circulated. Moved by Naheda Sahtout. Seconded by Indiana Best.

Motion Carries.

Consent Agenda (Items 3 – 8)

The Chair asked whether there were any questions regarding any of the minutes in the consent agenda.

Motion to approve and/or receive for information items 3 – 8. Moved by Naheda Sahtout. Seconded by Somtochukwu Ufondu.

Motion Carries.

Report of the President (Item 9)

The President briefed Council on her circulated report making mention of three salient points, namely:

- 1) Graduate student representation on the University of Saskatchewan Board of Governors – a follow-through on the work spearheaded by previous GSA Executive.
- 2) Renewal of GSA Commons lease agreement which expires April 2019; and,
- 3) The Student Supervisor Agreement (SSA) - advocacy via a bottom up approach where students from each college/ school serve as the driving force for the expansion of the SSA's eventual mandatory university implementation.

There were no comments or questions.

Report of the Vice-President Finance and Operations (Item 10)

The Vice-President Finance and Operations also provided a brief summary of his report. The major messages were as follows:

- 1) Successful payment to all partners was completed for the closure of the 2017/2018 academic year (Health and Dental, Saskatoon Transit and the Canadian Federation of Students) as well as the Spring / Summer 2018 GSA Bursary.
- 2) Currently organizing the GSA Bursaries for the 2018/2019 academic year, 2019/2020 budget and preparation of the annual tax clinic.
- 3) Currently in the process of hiring a new coordinator for the GSA Commons.
- 4) Continued discussions with the bookkeeper and the auditor to ensure our financial audits are up-to-date.

There were no comments or questions.

Report of the Vice-President Student Affairs (Item 11)

The Vice-President Student Affairs updated Council on the following:

- 1) Fall orientation BBQ will be held on September 5th at 5pm in the Bowl.
- 2) GSA will participate in the Campus Expo on September 4th in the Bowl.
- 3) The VP Student Affairs attended the ThinkGrad conference hosted by the University of Manitoba. The issue surrounding paid leaves of absence was brought forth by the University of Saskatchewan GSA; this seems to be absent from most universities across Canada. It was interesting to note that if an international graduate student were to take a leave of absence it may jeopardize the individual's chances of qualifying for a post-graduate work permit.

There were no comments or questions.

Report of the Vice-President External (Item 12)

The Vice-President External informed Council of the following:

- 1) That a deal to secure a further discount of first aid training for graduate students was discussed with the manager; details will be discussed first with the Executive and a plan will be brought forth to Council in September.
- 2) There will be 5 Health Chats for the 2018/2019 year.
- 3) The GSA Guppies Co-recreational Spring/Summer soccer team made it to the playoffs.

- 4) The theme for the 2019 Gala Awards night was settled on; “Constellation of Stars”.

There were no comments or questions.

Report of the Indigenous Liaison (Item 13)

The Indigenous Liaison was away on research related travels abroad; therefore the President indicated that should there be any questions to direct them to gsa.aboriginal@usask.ca.

GSA Survey Results (Item 14)

The President delivered a short PowerPoint presentation on some of the key findings from the GSA Survey, some of which are as listed below. The President indicated that the slides to the presentation will be included in the minutes (at the end).

- 1) Students were generally content with the availability of courses within program of interest.
- 2) ~25% of students surveyed were not satisfied by current supervisor student relationship.
- 3) ~40% were uncomfortable approaching supervisor for help
- 4) Many factors affect academic performance but the survey revealed supervisor student relationship, financial security, access to resources, and quality of teaching were the biggest factors for USASK graduate students as well as mental health and wellbeing.
- 5) ~35% Depressed, 70% Anxious and 83% stressed.
- 6) This finding was compounded by the alarming amount of physical inactivity and lack of sleep amongst those surveyed.
- 7) 40% spend less time on their program so they can work to fund their program.
- 8) 15% may leave their program because of a lack of funds.
- 9) 70% feel the tuition fee increase doesn't reflect an increase or betterment in instruction received throughout program.
- 10) Most students did not understand the rationale behind the differential fee and felt it was discriminatory and unnecessary.

Does the 40 % who work, does that include teaching-assistants?

The question itself wasn't specific; however, it would probably not be inclusive of teaching-assistants and would most likely be off-campus work.

Is the Student Wellness Centre / Access and Equity Services able to support the high levels of anxiety and depression?

The GSA Executives will definitely bring forth the data to the Director of Student Services to ensure that graduate student concerns can be addressed. The findings will be used to write up a comprehensive document to help address the concerns of the graduate student body. The President indicated that there are more services this year that are available for students to access, especially Student Outreach and Councilors; however, more promotion and awareness will be needed to ensure that students are accessing these services.

A GSA Councilor also added that more self-assessment tools or awareness of those that already exist can serve as good mechanism for outreach to hopefully assist the many graduate students who need the help. Perhaps there is also the opportunity to strengthen this at a departmental level, including health and wellness workshops.

What are the next steps for this survey?

The concerns of graduate students will be highlighted and shared with the CGPS Executive team and the senior administration team.

Is it possible to see the numbers of health concerns at a more detailed level?

The President encourages GSA Councilors to approach her if they would like to see further details to the specifics of each of the data collected.

Academic Council Cheques and Ratification for 2018 / 2019 (Item 15)

The Chair indicated that this is the last Council meeting of the 2017/2018 academic year and called the President to make a few remarks.

The President began by thanking all the Academic Council representatives for their engagement on the Council, for participating on GSA Standing Committees and a special thank you to Dr. Scott Adams for serving as the GSA Council Chair.

The President reminded those Council members in attendance that Academic Council's need to be ratified again for the 2018/2019 academic year, forms being online on the GSA website. The President also indicated that Academic Council cheques will be ready for pick-up starting next week.

Other Business Announcements (Item 16)

The Chair emphasized the thank you once again for the engagement of Academic Council representatives and the many standing GSA Committees. The Chair also thanks the previous and present Executives for their hard work and tremendous hours devoted to the GSA.

The next Council meeting will be on September 25, 2018. There will be a call for Academic Council Ratification and a call for a GSA Council Chair.

Adjournment

*Motion to adjourn. Moved by Douglas Fansher. Seconded by Somtochukwu Ufondu.
Motion Carries.*

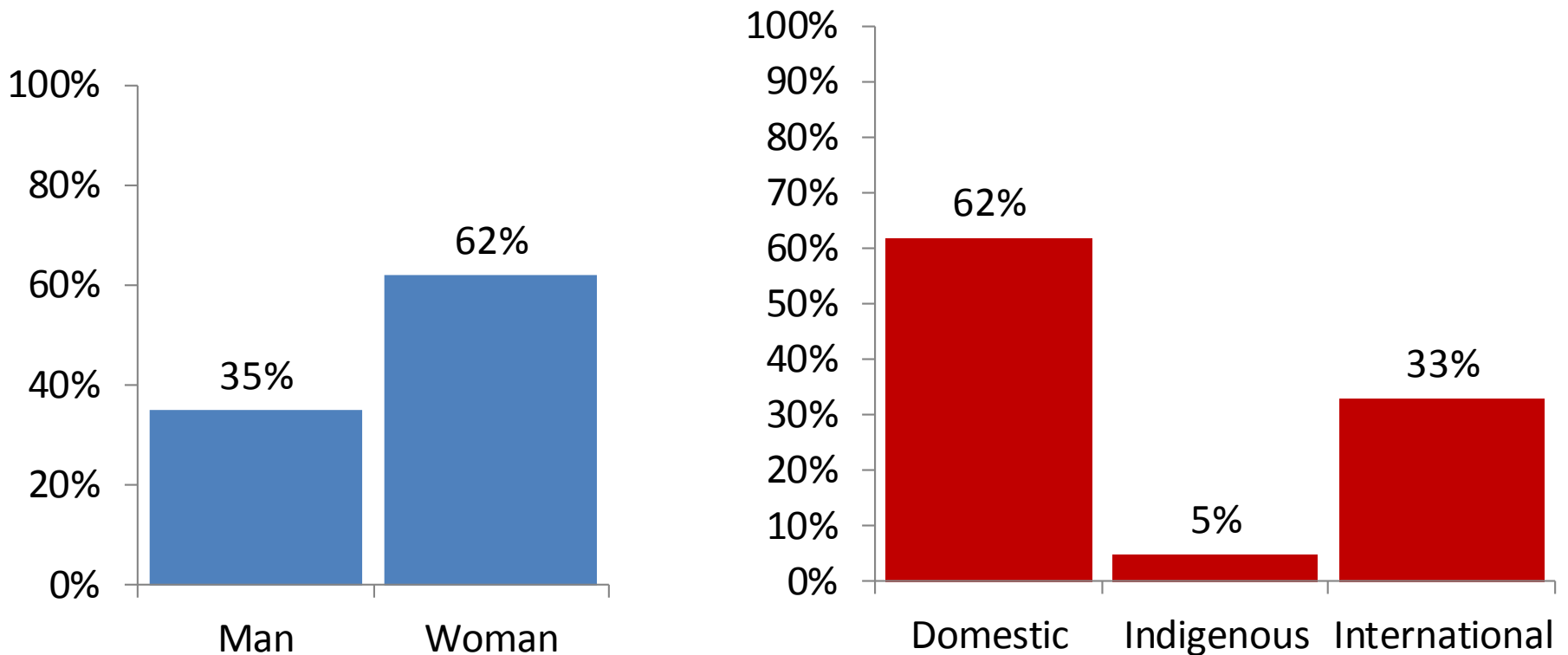
Meeting adjourned at 5:48 PM.

GSA Experience Survey

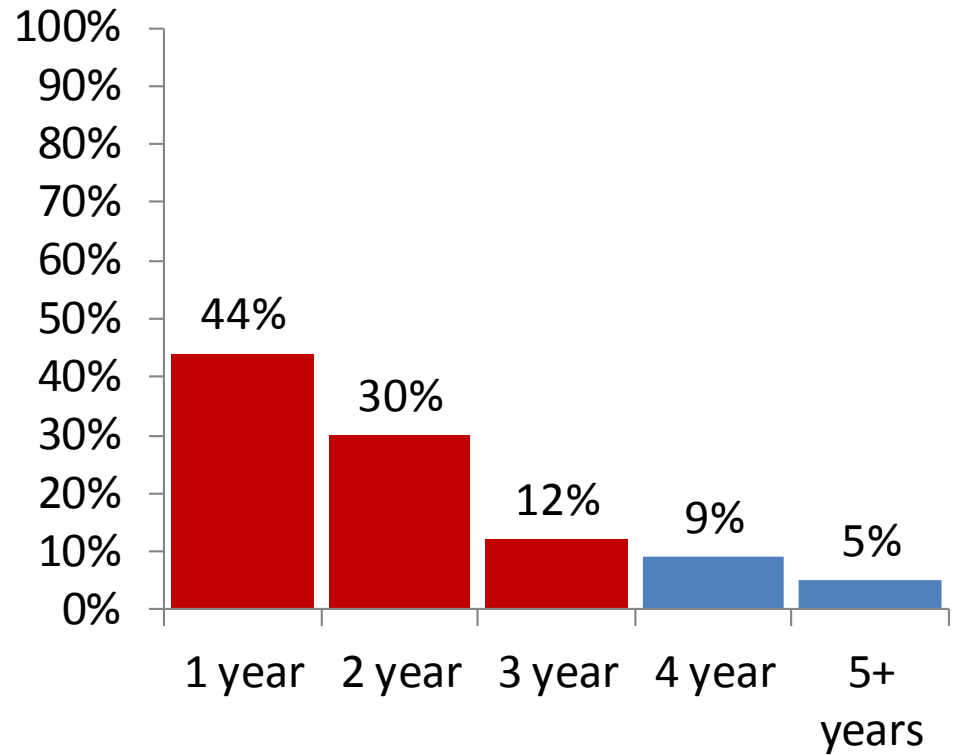
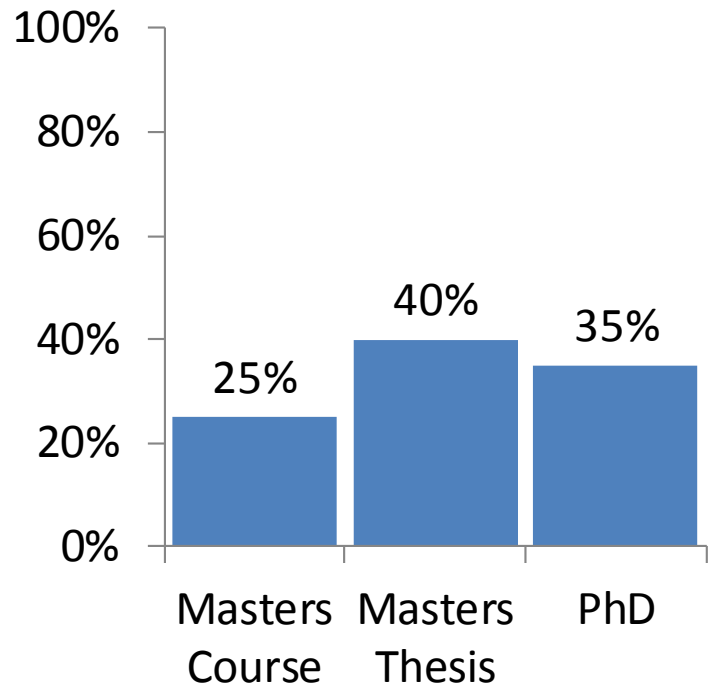
Respondent Statistics

~ 2 months

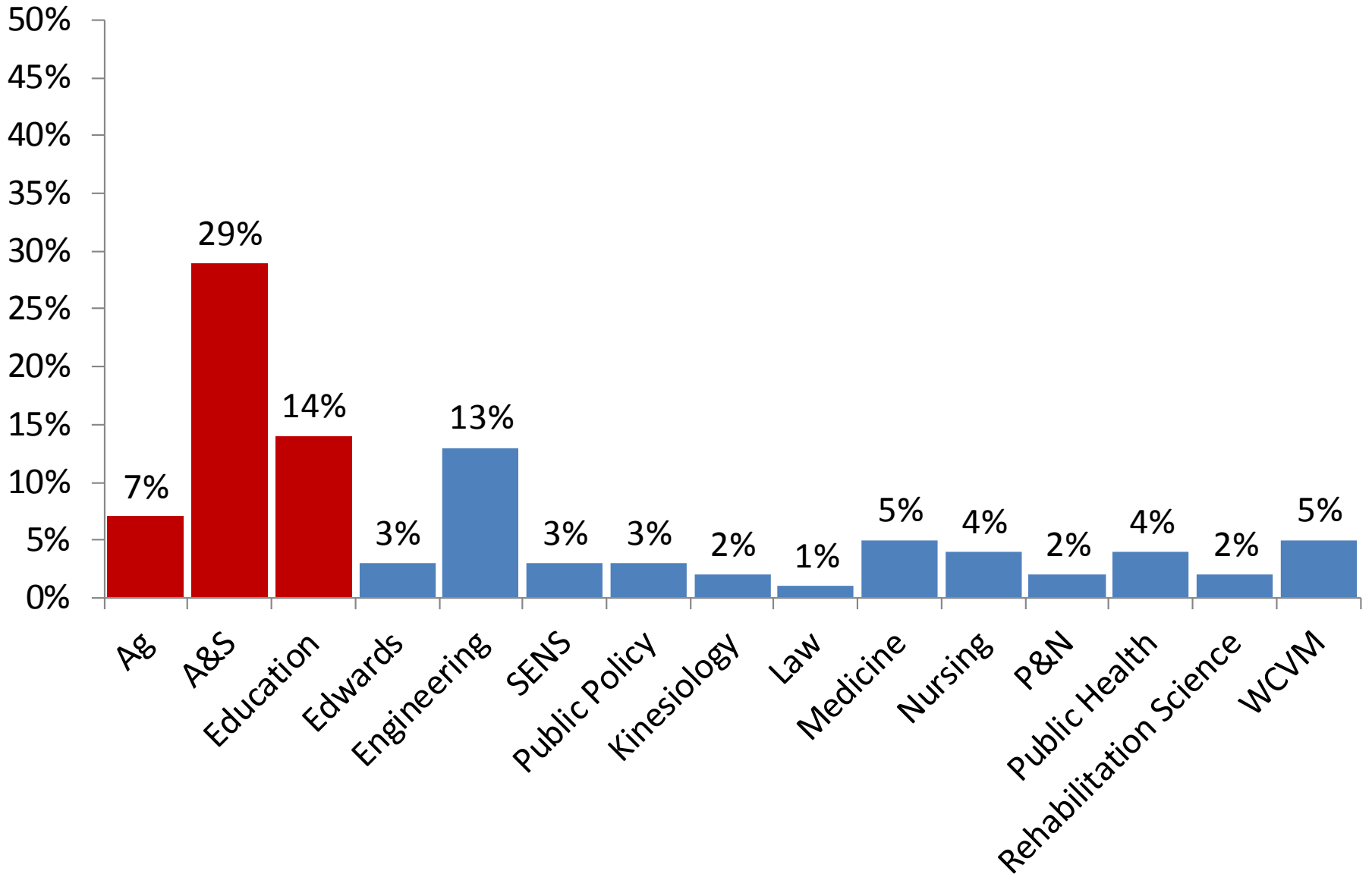
~ 450 responses



Program



College / School



Differential Fee

- Most students had no idea of the purpose of a differential fee.
- Students found the differential fee to be unfair and discriminatory and favoured a decrease or complete removal of the differential fee.
- It was suggested that this differential fee be proportional to the funding packages received by international students or should account for better services for international students.
- Overall, students saw that there was no additional benefit in their education with an increase in differential fee.

Courses

- Students indicated
 - that learning outcomes were generally clearly demonstrated and delivered in the courses.
 - that the overall quality of graduate level teaching was generally good.
 - that the availability of courses in the area of study was generally good.

Student-Supervisor Relationship

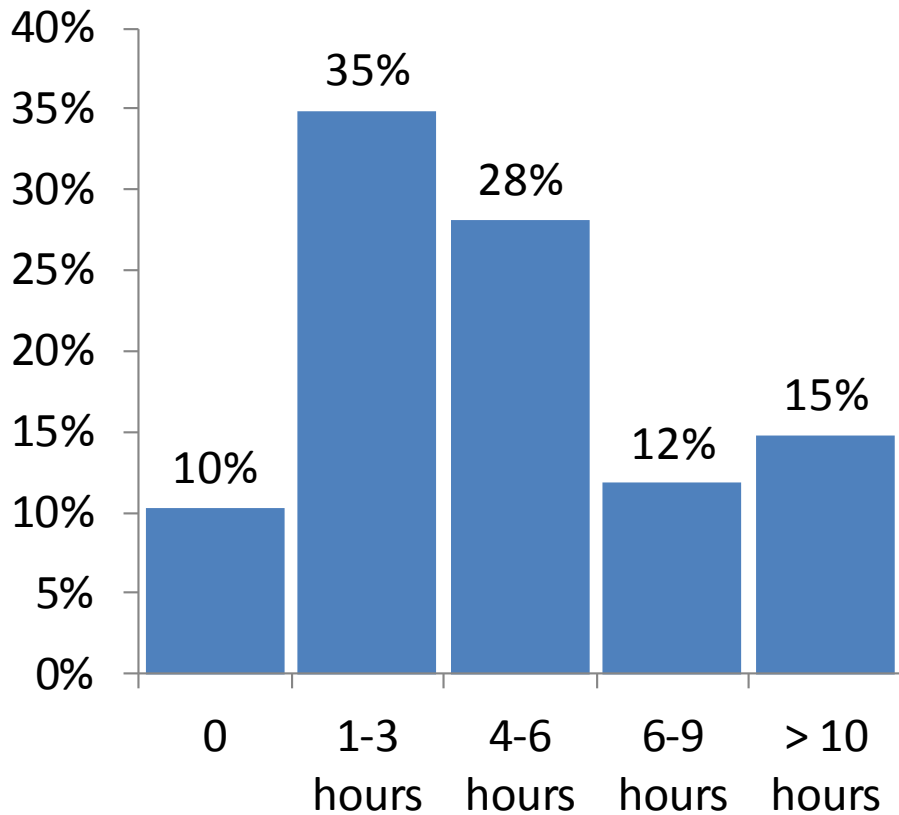
- 25 % of the students were dissatisfied with their **relationship** with their supervisor.
- 25 % of the students indicated a lack of satisfaction to the **advisory support** they receive.
- 40 % of the students showed little to no comfort in being able to **approach** their supervisor for help.
- 30 % of the students did not **meet** with their supervisor on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.
- 80 % of the students were aware of the SSA, 70 % of the students want to use the SSA but only 20 % currently do.

Factors Affecting Academic Performance

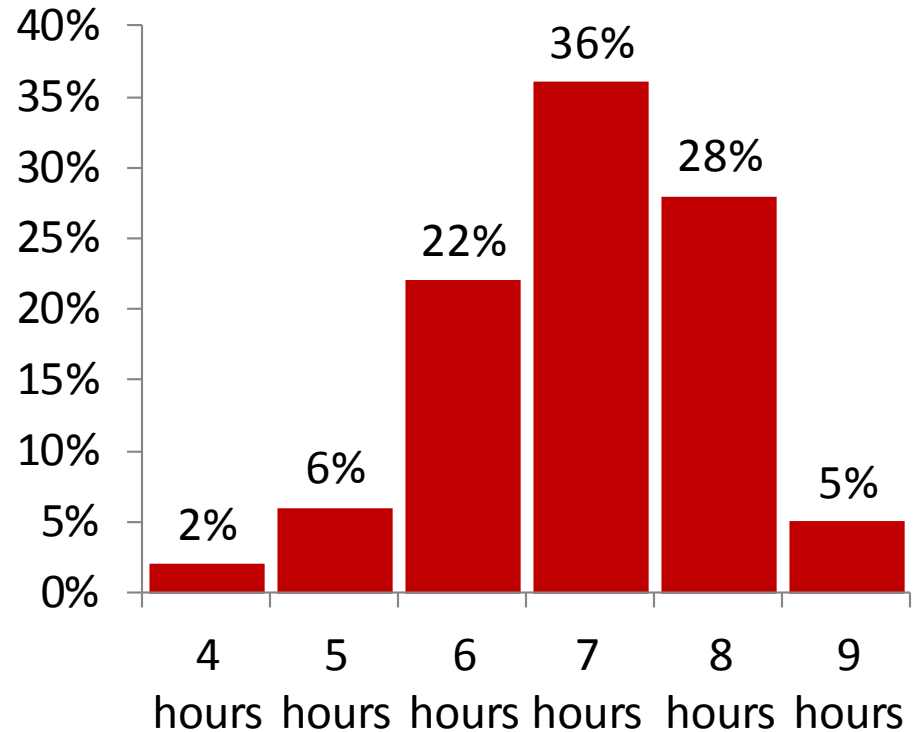
1. Supervisor relationship
2. Financial security
3. Faculty support and access to resources
4. Quality of teaching
5. Mental health and work-life balance

Wellness

Hours in the Gym



Hours of Sleep



Wellness

- 83 % of students felt somewhat to extremely **stressed** in their program of study.
- 70 % of students felt somewhat to extremely **anxious** in their program of study.
- 35 % of students felt somewhat to extremely **depressed** in their program of study.

1. Supervisor relationship

2. Financials

3. Deadlines and workload

4. Work-life balance

5. Fear of failure

6. Uncertainty of the future

7. Loneliness

8. Burnout

9. Lack of support

10. High expectations

Funding your Education

1. 51 % work (part or full time)
2. 12 % have student loans
3. 35 % use personal funds
4. 70 % have scholarships / bursaries / other awards.

HOWEVER

Funding your Education

- 40 % of students expect to be in **financial debt** by the time they graduate.
- 40 % of students spend **less time** on their programs so that they can work.
- 15 % of students might **leave** their studies due to financial stress.
- 70 % of students feel that tuition increases **DO NOT** improve the quality of their academic program.

GSA

- Students indicated that the GSA provides events and supports that are useful to graduate students.
- Students indicated that they could express themselves as gender or sexual minority in the GSA.
- Students indicated that GSA orientation events made them feel comfortable on campus and helped them to understand the services / programs on campus.

Ultimately the GSA will continue to move towards engaging graduate students and finding support systems for graduate students that would improve their academic journey at the U of S.