



University of Saskatchewan  
Graduate Students' Association  
Council Meeting  
Tuesday, June 16, 2020. Email Meeting\*

As Council gathers, we acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

*Attendance: See appendix A*

*\*Email Meeting: The June 16th, 2020 Council Meeting took place over email due to the global health pandemic of COVID-19, where the Government of Saskatchewan made directives to practice social distancing in order to curb the spread of the virus.*

### **1. Call to Order**

All Council Members were emailed a link to the Agenda, as well as a link for voting on agenda items in order to participate over email. Councilors had 24 hours to participate. The Call to Order commenced as soon as Councilors received the link. The quorum for the meeting was reached. There was no issue in maintaining quorum as all members could go through the entire agenda over the course of 24 hours at their convenience. Mr. Osei Clarke compiled the meeting minutes.

### **2. Approval of Agenda**

The Chair, prior to the meeting, sent Councilors a request for any amendments to the agenda as circulated and provided a deadline to respond with any amendments. There were no amendments submitted.

*Motion to approve the Agenda. (Koop/Godakanda)*

Carried

### **3. Approval of Minutes**

*Motion to approve the April 7th, 2020 minutes. (Koop/Godakanda)*

Carried

#### **4. Information to be received**

- A. March 2, 2020, Diversity Committee minutes
- B. April 3, 2020 Elections and Referenda Committee minutes
- C. May 1, 2020, Executive Retreat Meeting minutes
- D. May 14, 2020, Executive Meeting minutes

*Motion to receive agenda items 4A-D. (Koop/Godakanda)*

Carried

#### **5. GSA Executives Report**

##### **A. President's Report**

The report was presented to Councilors and is available in the agenda package. There were no questions for President Inam.

##### **B. Vice President Finance & Operations Report**

The report was presented to Councilors and was available in the agenda package. There were no questions for VP Ramin.

##### **C. Vice President Academic & Student Affairs Report**

The report was presented to Councilors and is available in the agenda package. There were questions for VP Marquez-Mellidez.

**Councilor: Can you speak to the University's suicide prevention strategy that was just announced and with regards to Mental Health what is the status of the initiatives from the Canadian Standards Association (CSA)?**

VP Marquez-Mellidez: I did not know about this, thank you for bringing it up. I have started reading the protocols and standards that CSA has and I will be in discussion with senior administration about the possibility of implementing it. With regards to the suicide prevention strategy, so far, the GSA has not been consulted nor informed about this new strategy. I will look more into it and I will, hopefully, give you a more definite answer soon.

##### **D. Vice President External's Report**

The report was presented to Councilors and is available in the agenda package. There were questions for VP Gill.

**Councilor: I would like to know more about the Canadian Federation of Students and their support for students with disabilities here.**

VP Gill: The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) has been monitoring, assessing and updating the situation on a regular basis during these unprecedented times. Here is a list of activities the CFS has been involved in during this pandemic:

- On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the CFS created a toolkit for student unions to support their members. This toolkit can be found here:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Qem0cNZFKw-lhhO--F0lBmBVIRckhLsyGNf7dNXCZE/edit>
- The CFS asked the federal government to extend the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) to all students and recent graduates regardless of employment and income status. The CFS sent a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on April 15, 2020 from more than 45 associations (including the GSA from the University of Saskatchewan) to remove the condition of previous income and employment status from the CERB eligibility criteria. This letter can be found here:  
<https://cfs-fcee.ca/letter-to-justin-trudeau-re-students-need-cerb/>

Currently, the CFS is advocating to have the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) amount increased to \$2, 000 for all students, and to allow international students access to CESB nationwide.

- CFS is also fighting for graduate students on other issues such as, asking for tuition waiver due to the financial difficulties impacting students, extending the time for program completion for students, and extension to scholarships by Tri-council and other funding agencies. The CFS issued an open letter regarding these concerns to the federal government, provincial government, Canada's research funding councils, and universities' senior administration, on behalf of all their members. This letter can be found here: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/open-letter-grad-students-and-covid-19/>
- In May, a survey was conducted by CFS about the future of post-secondary education due to the impact of COVID-19 in which a significant number of students participated and shared their concerns. The result and details of this survey is available here: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/survey-post-secondary-students-reconsidering-fall-semester-plans-in-wake-of-covid-19/> More information on CFS initiatives during COVID-19 can be found here: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/covid-19/> They also post updates on their Facebook and Instagram page.

- When it comes to support for students with disabilities, this is one of the priorities of CFS to ask universities to increase support for students with disabilities, and make their institutions more accessible financially, emotionally and physically. Due to these continued efforts by CFS, in 2019, the federal government expanded eligibility criteria for grants for students with disabilities. I am representing the GSA in the upcoming CFS annual meeting, which is in July, 2020 and I will raise this concern after discussion with our executives.

## 6. Other Business & Announcements

There were a few comments/questions from Councilors requesting further information which the President responded to.

**Councilor:** Can the transit bus pass/fee for graduate students be made optional in any given term?

**President:** Thank you for your input Council member. The GSA is still in discussion with SaskTransit regarding the U-Pass for fall 2020 and we are working towards a favourable outcome for all graduate students. A final decision has not been made yet. Graduate students can opt out of the U-Pass under the eligibility criteria found here: <https://gsa.usask.ca/services/upass-details.pdf>

**Councilor:** I would like to report a concern that many graduate students in the physics department currently have. The university has not granted access to lab facilities that are necessary in order to perform their research. These students are particularly concerned that they had to pay tuition for the summer term, despite being unable to do any thesis work. Their programs will likely now take longer to complete and be more costly than expected. I would like to ask the GSA to discuss with the university administration the possibility of a tuition refund for graduate students who are unable to access the lab spaces they need to work.

**President:** Thank you for sharing your concerns Council member. The GSA is currently in discussion with Dr. McDougall, who is part of the Pandemic Response Team (PRT), regarding ongoing graduate student concerns. We are continuously advocating to be a part of the PRT in order to have graduate students' voices heard and are also meeting with other senior leaders to address students' concerns.

Presently, the university is focusing on allowing access to campus to graduate students who fall under a specific approval criterion, which can be found on page 11 here:

<https://updates.usask.ca/documents/framework-for-increased-activity-across-all-areas.pdf>

Graduate students who wish to return to campus should contact their supervisor to apply for the safety permit which allows access to buildings/labs on campus.

**Councilor:** What financial support has been given to international students in course-based programs?

**President:** Thank you for the question Council member. Graduate students may be eligible for the Crisis Financial Aid being offered by the university in the form of loans and/or grants. Please contact Student Central at [askus@usask.ca](mailto:askus@usask.ca) to apply and include a brief description of your needs in the message. The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) is also advocating on behalf of all graduate students to expand the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) so it includes international students, who have been excluded, and to increase the CESB to \$2,000 for all students. Graduate students can help by contacting their local MP and voicing their concerns. More information on how graduate students can get involved in these initiatives can be found here: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/covid-19/>

The GSA will continue to offer bursaries to graduate students and is reallocating funds where possible to increase the funding for future bursaries. International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) can assist international students with other options that may be available as well. Their information can be found here: <https://students.usask.ca/international/issac.php#About>

**Councilor:** Are there any updates about spring/summer tuition being reduced after last month's discussion?

**President:** Thank you for sharing your concerns Council member. The GSA is currently in discussion with Dr. McDougall, who is part of the Pandemic Response Team (PRT), regarding ongoing graduate student concerns. We are continuously advocating to be a part of the PRT in order to have graduate students' voices heard and are also meeting with other senior leaders to address students' concerns.

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## **7. Adjournment**

*Motion to adjourn. (Koop/Godakanda).*

**Carried**

Appendix A

Academic Council	Name of Councillors and (alternates)	Sep.24 2019	Oct.15 2019	Nov.5 2019	Dec.3 2019	Jan.28 2020	Feb.25 2020	Mar.17 2020	Apr.7 2020	Jun.16 2020	Aug.18 2020
<b>Agricultural and Resources Economics (ARE) Graduate Student Association</b>	Ran San (Valentina Ofori)	N/A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
<b>Animal &amp; Poultry Science Grad Students' Assoc.</b>	Muhammad Imran (Kiana Rieger)	P	A	P	A	A	A	A	P	A	
<b>ARCHAIA</b>	Adrienne Ratuszniak (Michelle Gowan)	P	P	A	A	P	A	P	A	A	
<b>Biology Graduate Student Association</b>	Rebecca Smith (Ruth Greuel) (Andrea Wishart)	N/A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
<b>Chemistry Course Council</b>	Naheda Sahtout (Doug Fansher)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
<b>College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Anatomy, Physiology &amp; Pharmacology</b>	Kushagra Parolia (Andrew Roebuc)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	A	R	P	P	P	
<b>College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Biochemistry, Microbiology &amp; Immunology</b>	Sampurna Ghosh (Megha Rohamar)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
<b>College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Community Health &amp; Epidemiology</b>	Harini Aiyer (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	P	A	P	A	P	
<b>College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Health Sciences</b>	Michael Zaki (N/A)	N/A	N/A	N/A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
<b>Computer Science Graduate Council (CSGC)</b>	Rifat Zahan Muhammad Aminul Islam (Md. Nadim)	N/A	p	p	P	P	P	P	P	P	



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<b>MBARC</b>	Alexander Mueller (Megan MacDonald)	N/A	N/A	P	P	A	A	P	P	P	
<b>PEGASUS</b>	Kimberlee Dube (Ethan Runge)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
<b>Pharmacy &amp; Nutrition Graduate Students' Council</b>	Janine Rover (Mujtaba Badr)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
<b>Physical Therapy Student Society (PTSS)</b>	Julia Koop (Brandey Blahut)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
<b>Plant Sciences GSA</b>	Asanka Godakanda (Berenice Romero)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
<b>Psychology Graduate Students' Association</b>	Farron Wielinga (Josh Katz) (Brandon Sparks)	P	P	R	P	A	A	A	A	A	
<b>SENSA</b>	Mostofa Kamal Purbasha Mistry (Layane Moura) (Anita Bhatt)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
<b>SPHSA</b>	Aisha Sajid (Janessa Tom) (Chunbei Liu)	N/A	N/A	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	
<b>Sociology GSA</b>	Connor Morrison (Cerah Dube) (Alana Demkiw)	N/A	P	P	A	P	A	A	A	P	
<b>Soil Science Graduate Student Association</b>	Rachel Brockamp (Aimee Schryer)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	



