Dear Members of University Council,

The GSA continues its efforts to increase the activities and services we provide throughout the year. Most importantly, we look for ways to increase our student engagement in activities that we promote in hopes to prepare them for a successful academic career and future. To that end we are focused on four main areas this month, three of which celebrates the research, philanthropy, and leadership that our graduate students do:

1. Graduate Research Conference (GRC) 2020
2. Three-Minute Thesis competition
3. Annual Gala
4. Tuition

1. Graduate Research Conference 2020
Every year, the GSA organizes the Graduate Research Conference and all graduate students are invited to participate, network, and discuss their research in a professional environment. This year, with support from the CGPS, the GSA is proud to present the Graduate Student Research Conference, “Behavior, Society & Technology: A glimpse of current research approaches” to be held on **February 13th and 14th, 2020**. The GRC 2020 aims to bring together graduate students from a wide range of fields to be part of this opportunity and share their knowledge and expertise in different topics. Most importantly, the GRC provides students with the opportunity to exchange ideas or scientific questions, achievements, share the challenges they face in their field and possibly establish collaborations between participants.

2. 3MT Thesis Competition
The GSA is also organizing the Three Minute Thesis competition that will be held on **March 6th** at the GSA Commons. This event gives the opportunity to share and celebrate the outstanding
research that our graduate students perform here at this institution. We encourage faculty and members of the University to join us to celebrate with us the research and scholarly activity of our graduate students. We thank each of our financial supporters as this event could not be possible without your support.

3. Annual Gala
The Annual Gala will be held on April 4th, 2020 at the Remai Modern Museum. Tickets will include free admission to the museum one hour prior to the event. At this event, we will honour graduate students who have demonstrated community engagement, academic excellence and leadership as well as our faculty members who support student’s success. The Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan and many dignitaries as well as senior administrators will honour us with their presence. We are hopeful that members of the campus community will join us on this day to celebrate our graduate students and their successes.

4. Graduate Student Tuition Setting for Thesis-based programs 2020-2025
The current tuition proposal for thesis-based graduate programs aims to increase tuition by 10% each year for the next 5 years for domestic students, along with an increase in the differential fee for international students by 6.9% each year for the next 5 years. In five years, domestic students will see a 50% tuition increase, and international students will see a 124% increase in tuition. The University’s principles such as predictability, transparency and affordability and accessibility, are lacking in this proposal.

First of all, when we talk about the principle of predictability; it is really unreasonable that current graduate students would be able to expect these large increases. The university is planning on giving a bursary to graduate students beginning in 2020/2021 to minimize the effects of this tuition increase (to only a 3% increase for domestic students and a 6.1% increase for international students) but this proposal to provide a bursary assumes a Masters student will complete their program in only 2 years and a PhD student will only take 4 years. This proposal does not consider that degrees are different from department to department. Most students who do research do not finish a Masters program in 2 years or a PhD program in 4 years. These students will be drastically disadvantaged by this proposal.

Second, this proposal is not transparent for graduate students because it has been created by administration without any consultation of graduate students. Students are informed about the
new proposal, without opening a possibility for any real feedback. Consultation sessions are simply a means of passing information to students.

Third, when we talk about affordability, we want to make sure we do not add more financial stress to our graduate students. With many of our students struggling to balance tuition and living costs, it is important to ensure that we protect the core of this university, our researchers. Research drives the university forward and we are very competitive researchers, producing high quality research, which is why we belong to the U15. By raising tuition, graduate students are forced to leave school to work a second/third job, which withdraws from our ability to successfully complete the research project.

Finally, this current tuition proposal is counterproductive because it is going to lead to a decrease in the research productivity of the university. It will also put even more financial stress onto supervisors who do not wish to see their graduate students working two/three jobs to cover the cost of their tuition and living costs. Instead of focusing on reaching the median of U15 for tuition costs, we should be focusing on how we can work on ensuring our students have the means to support their education without enduring added stress.

The GSA is open to discuss concerns, ideas/initiatives that graduate students, faculty member and the campus community may have. We look forward to continue working with all of you for the betterment of our graduate students.

Mery Mendoza
President, Graduate Students’ Association