University of Saskatchewan Graduate Students’ Association

University Council Report, September 2020

On behalf of the GSA executives, we welcome all University Council members and campus community to a new 2020-2021 academic year. We recognize this new academic year brings many challenges and uncertainty to the campus community, and we are all adjusting and coping. While many things remain outside of our control, the GSA continues serving its members by providing and advocating for their needs and looking for new initiatives that will support their academic life during these unprecedented times. These unforeseen circumstances are pushing many of us to seek creative initiatives in order to support our graduate students academically, socially, and professionally. Therefore, we will continue our efforts in creating a sense of community among our student population in order to make a positive impact on the academic and social lives of our graduate students for the upcoming year.

In this report you will find our three main initiatives for the year 2020-2021:

(1) Creating and promoting events and activities that support mental health and wellbeing

The GSA is committed to supporting student success and promoting a healthy community with a culture of wellbeing. We are delighted to continue supporting our graduate students by providing Empower Me, an online mental health service that is available 24/7, and are working on developing new initiatives and resources that would support this goal during these virtual times. We will continue looking to increasing mental wellbeing activities that will support our students, engage them to combat loneliness, and help them to have greater experiences off-campus or virtually.

(2) Networking and student engagement with community
The GSA normally offers new events and initiatives that benefit our graduate students and motivate them to engage in community activities and outreach in-person. However, this year due to COVID-19 the GSA will be revisiting several of their events to modify them so they can be engaging online, build community for students who are studying remotely, and create a sense of belonging which students are looking for during these difficult times. We will continue providing workshops to our graduate students that help to network and enhance their experience here at the University of Saskatchewan. With the support of CGPS, we will organize events that celebrate the successes of our graduate students and honour our members on campus that support graduate student success through the Graduate Research Conference, the Three-Minute Thesis Competition, and the Graduate Student Awards Gala. We will continue to look for opportunities on how we can engage graduate students and graduate faculty to participate, network, and communicate their work, albeit in quite a different format this year.

(3) Student-supervisor relationship
We are always looking for ways to promote and enhance a healthy relationship between students and supervisors to achieve a successful academic journey and support both students and supervisors in this journey. As of May 2020, the student-supervisor agreement is mandatory for all incoming graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan. We are promoting the student-supervisor agreement to all graduate students and supervisors this year and will be exploring other tools and mechanisms in conjunction with CGPS to increase the use of this agreement among our graduate students and faculty members. This agreement will help to maintain accountability between students and supervisors and increase the success of graduate students both academically and professionally.

We will be working closely with our partners around campus to continue discussions on what support we can provide our students and how we can achieve a culture of success that will benefit the university-student experience as a whole.

Humaira Inam
President

Graduate Students’ Association