Attendance: See Appendix A for the listing of members in attendance.

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:35 pm.

2. **Tributes**

There were no tributes for the February Council meeting.

3. **Adoption of the Agenda**

Motion: (Aitken/Brook) *That the agenda be approved as circulated.*

CARRIED

4. **Opening remarks**

The vice-chair, Dr. Pamela Downe, acknowledged that Council meets on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis, paying respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirming our relationship with one another.

Dr. Downe reminded those in attendance of the usual protocols for discussion and debate.

She informed Council of the recent President’s Executive Committee and Council chairs’ breakfast topics: the university’s wellness strategy and graduate student tuition and funding.

Dr. Downe also noted that the second call for Council member nominations was held from February 6th to February 13th, 2020. An election will be conducted through PAWS starting the first week of March 2020.

5. **Approval of Minutes of the meeting of January 16, 2019**

Motion (Bruni-Bossio/Aitken): *That the minutes be approved as circulated.*

CARRIED

6. **Business Arising from the Minutes**

None.

7. **Report of the President**

From his report, President Stoicheff noted in particular the opening of the USask Community Centre, which took place on January 29, 2020. He reported that the centre will allow students to find sense of belonging, build mental health, and seek support and education around health and wellness. He
thanked vice-provost, teaching learning and student experience, Dr. Patti McDougall, Peter Hedley and those who worked on the launch of the centre. He also reported that at the Universities Canada meeting in Ottawa in November 2019, the agenda exclusively about wellness and mental health, and at the April 2020, it will again be a major focus of the agenda.

The president also reported on the USask’s “Research Junction” partnership with the City of Saskatoon, which was an outcome of the MOU that was signed two years ago by the university and the city. He stated that all great cities deserve a great university in their midst and that we have a role to play in a strong way. He acknowledged the contributions of the city and an anonymous donor, which bring together researchers and members of City Council to illuminate many challenges that the city may face, e.g. pharmaceuticals in city wastewater, educating food producers, public policy implications for downtown higher density development, access to dental care for the homeless, reducing LGBTQ homelessness (also in partnership with OutSaskatoon).

The president highlighted that it is an important time of year for the USask Huskies, i.e. especially for the women’s basketball team, men’s hockey, track and field, the wrestling team, and the volleyball team.

The president followed-up the announcement of the departure of provost Tony Vannelli, recalling that he is leaving to Wilfred Laurier this summer to serve as their provost. He expressed sadness that Dr. Vannelli is leaving, but he was also pleased that this move allows him to be closer to his family. He acknowledged Dr. Vannelli’s collegial leadership style, and deep respect for and engagement with university governance, students, faculty, and deans’ council.

There was a question about what is being done at this university to support students who have very high levels of stress and burnout. The Council member noted that studies published since 2014 indicate it is a common issue in medical education in particular. What are we doing to identify those stressors, reduce them, or providing opportunities for wellness?

The president responded that Dr. McDougall had given a presentation to Council on the topic and that an update would be provided at a future Council meeting [table 1].

On behalf of Council, Dr. Downe also thanked Dr. Vannelli for his contributions as provost and wished him the best going forward.

8. Report of the Provost

The chair invited Dr. Vannelli to present the report of the provost. Dr. Vannelli thanked the university community for helping him to be the best leader he could be.

Along with Dr. Trever Crowe, interim dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS), Dr. Vannelli presented details for proposed graduate student financial support and tuition rates up to 2024-25 [appendix b].

The provost indicated that consultations with GSA student leadership, faculty, and decanal leadership teams would be ongoing. The provost committed to return to Council in March with an update, and to report back following the information item to the Board of Governors [table 1].
There was a round of Q&A.

There were two questions about where the matching research funding will come from. The provost responded that these represent funds that faculty receive from Tri Agencies, and that the strategy will encourage faculty to increase Tri Agency research grants.

There was a comment that fees plus tuition represent the total cost to students, but that only the tuition was reflected in the examples provided. Dr. Crowe responded that tuition- and fee-setting processes are not linked, and that this presentation was only focused on tuition.

A Council member inquired as to whether there was evidence that the tuition increases would result in more attractive programming and higher quality. She also commented that this level of increase, over this timeframe, is well over what others have done. Furthermore, she is not convinced that the tuition increase will result in better quality.

The provost responded that some students have expressed dissatisfaction with program quality, and that this is the effect of the low tuition rates. The additional funds will go back to the students, which will result in improvements. The faculty member asked that the provost report back on increased number of faculty, improvements in program quality, and student satisfaction and experience. The provost responded that the government grant also affects these outcomes.

There was a comment that two thirds of the tuition was being reinvested, so why not simply increase tuition by the percent needed to get to the one third of that net tuition revenue. In addition, that tuition is increasing for all graduate students but that the bursaries and scholarships are only going to thesis-based students.

A student guest posed a question about how the principles of predictability and transparency were being addressed in the strategy. There was also a question regarding the exact percentage of historical tuition increases for international vs. domestic students. Dr. Crowe replied that they are reporting a three-year average, and that he would follow up with the student on the specifics.

Another student asked what efforts were made to increase faculty attendance at this Council meeting, given that it is also a forum for consultation. She asked about the rationale of aiming to reach the U15 median for tuition rates and for international differential fees. She expressed a concern that with this funding strategy, rich students are going to get richer while poorer students will get poorer, and overall the average student will be disadvantaged. She also asked if the student stipends would remain constant over the five-years while tuition is increasing. The provost responded that the intent is to get the funding levels right and that this is important feedback to consider.

A Council member noted that NSERC expects 1:1 funding, usually of $10K per student. Therefore, NSERC will expect $10K from the University for each $10K grant not $8K. Another Council member asked how many Tri-Agency funded faculty we have, as this will impact the number of funded graduate students, and advantages some faculty but not others. The provost responded that the objective is to get highly qualified students who are well supported.

A Council member asked about the risks to supervisors and students with “guaranteed bursaries.” He noted that maintenance of funding for graduate students can increase stress and recommended contingency plans be put in place under the new strategy.
9. **Student Societies**

9.1 Report from the USSU

Carlos Munoz-Pimentel, vice-president of the USSU, presented the February 2020 USSU report. He reported that in the coming months, the USSU will be finishing off the year with two signature events: *Experience in Excellence* and *Women in Leadership*.

The USSU also had the opportunity to join its counterparts, the student unions from the top research universities in Canada, to lobby the federal government in Ottawa and advocate on the behalf of students.

The USSU also recently released ‘*Be What Students Need*’, which highlights six requests for the next provincial budget including making post-secondary education more affordable and accessible.

9.2 Report from the GSA

Mery Mendoza, president of the GSA, presented the February 2020 GSA report. She reported that the GSA is focused on four main areas this month, three of which celebrate the research, philanthropy and leadership of graduate students: the Graduate Research Conference (GRC) 2020; the Three-Minute Thesis competition; and the Annual Gala, which will be held on April 4, 2020 at the Remai Modern art museum.

Lastly, she expressed disappointment in the university’s proposed tuition strategy. She stated that the principles of affordability and accessibility need to be respected to ensure we are not adding more stress for graduate students, many of whom may already be struggling. She stated that we need to protect the core of the university, which is the research, and that graduate students embody this core mandate. She argued that the tuition strategy will lead to a decrease in research productivity, and will put more stress on graduate supervisors and students to cover the costs. She further recommended that increases to student stipends should be commensurate with tuition increases.

10. **Governance Committee**

Dr. Stephen Urquhart, chair of the governance committee, presented one request for decision.

10.1 Request for Decision: Council Bylaws amendment – monthly meetings

(URQUHART/Mousseau): *It is recommended that Council approve an amendment of the Council bylaws to eliminate the annual February meeting of Council as Part One III.5(b), effective February 29, 2020.*

Dr. Urquhart noted that the February Council meeting falls during reading week and quorum is difficult to reach. He reported that in consultation with the University Secretary’s office it was determined that it would be difficult to re-coordinate the standing committees in line with a rescheduled February Council meeting. The Coordinating Committee had also consulted with University Registrar’s office and determined from an academic calendaring standpoint that the proposed cancellation would be workable. He reported that reaching quorum challenging in February, but that a review of attendance records over the last few years indicates that attendance is lowest in February, May and June.

CARRIED
11. **Nominations Committee**

Dr. Vicki Squires, chair of the Nominations Committee, presented two requests for decision.

11.1 Request for Decision: Nomination to the University Review Committee (URC)

(SQUIRES/Urquhart): *It is recommended that Council approve the nomination of Joshua Lawson, College of Medicine, to serve as member of the University Review Committee effective immediately and continuing until June 30, 2022.*

The chair called for nominations from the floor three times. There were none. **CARRIED**

11.2 Request for Decision: Nomination to the Policy Oversight Committee

(SQUIRES/Urquhart): *It is recommended that Council approve the nomination of Keith Walker, Department of Education Administration, to serve as member of the Policy Oversight Committee effective immediately and continuing until June 30, 2022.*

The chair called for nominations from the floor three times. There were none. **CARRIED**

12. **Academic Programs Committee**

Dr. Ryan Brook, vice-chair of Academic Programs Committee, presented five requests for decision and one report for information as provided in the agenda materials as follows.

12.1 Request for Decision: Admissions Qualifications change – Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology graduate programs.

(BROOK/Fatou): *It is recommended that Council approve the proposed changes to the admissions qualifications for Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Immunology, effective the 2021-22 admissions cycle.*

**CARRIED**

12.2 Request for Decision: Admissions Qualifications change – Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) program

(BROOK/Fatou): *It is recommended that Council approve the proposed changes to the admissions qualifications for the Master of Physical Therapy (MPT) program, effective the 2021-22 admissions cycle.*

**CARRIED**

12.3 Request for Decision: Admissions Qualifications change – Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) program – pilot

(BROOK/Fatou): *It is recommended that Council approve the proposed changes to the admissions qualifications for Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) program, as a pilot starting the 2021-22 admissions cycle and continuing for three (3) years.*

**CARRIED**
12.4 Request for Decision: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Precision Oral and Systemic Health

(BROOK/ Fatoui): *It is recommended that Council approve the proposed Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in Precision Oral and Systemic Health, effective May 2020.*

CARRIED

12.5 Request for Decision: Master of International Public Management and Administration (MIPMA)

(BROOK/Fatoui): *It is recommended that Council approve the proposed Master of International Public Management and Administration (MIPMA) degree program, effective May 2020.*

CARRIED

12.6 Report for Information: Deletion of the Postgraduate Diploma in Biochemistry

Approval for this decision is delegated to APC, which approved the deletion at its meeting on January 29, 2020. Dr. Brook reported that no students had been enrolled in the program for last 20 years.

14. Other business

None.

15. Question period

There was a comment that USask’s data on administrative staff levels are no longer available to the researchers at Alex Usher’s blog, given they recently reported that it is now password protected. There was a suggestion to the president that this be fixed, which he committed to look into and then to report back at the next Council meeting [table 1].

There was a suggestion that consideration should be given to how the proposed tuition strategy can support affordability and accessibility, particularly for Indigenous students in PhD programs. The provost replied that the strategy will be customized as we go along, in particular for Indigenous students. In addition, that domestic student support needs to be increased. E.g. in the next round of devolved scholarships from CGPS, and next round of deans’ scholarships, Indigenous students should be prioritized in those processes.

A Council member commented that if the effect of a 10% increase is that 6.5% goes to support, the net increase is 3.5%, so why not raise tuition by 3.5% or by the net increase. The provost replied the status quo strategy does not give funding back to students. Dr. Crowe responded that we do not have enough money for all the graduate students, therefore are prioritizing research funding for students in thesis-based programs.

A student asked how and when was graduate students were informed of the townhall that occurred for tuition consultation. Dr. Crowe indicated he would report back on this [table 1].

There was a question for clarification about who the tuition increases apply to and to whom the funding applies. Dr. Crowe responded that the tuition increases apply to thesis, project, course-based graduate programs, but they do not apply to programs with non-standard tuition like the MBA, MPH, or MPAcc.
He reiterated that the funding applies to thesis-based students in support of the research mission of the university.

16. Adjournment

(Urquhart): The meeting was adjourned by motion.

Table 1. Action items

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Action item</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p.2 s.7</td>
<td>Update on the University’s wellness strategy for students</td>
<td>Dr. Patti McDougall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.2 s.8</td>
<td>Report back on tuition consultations</td>
<td>Dr. Tony Vannelli</td>
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<tr>
<td>p.6 s.15</td>
<td>Review restrictions on external access to USask administrative costs data</td>
<td>Dr. Peter Stoicheff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p.6 s.15</td>
<td>Provide dates of notice for graduate student townhall</td>
<td>Dr. Trever Crowe</td>
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Attachments

1. Appendix A – Attendance from the meeting of February 20, 2020
2. Appendix B – Proposed Graduate Student Financial Support and Tuition presentation

Next meeting March 19, 2020 – Please send regrets to michelle.kjargaard@usask.ca.

Deadline for submission of motions to the coordinating committee: February 24, 2020.