

Room 110, 1 Campus Drive
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7N 5A3



Telephone: (306) 966-6960
Email: contactus@ussu.ca
Website: www.ussu.ca

**University Students' Council Minutes
September 17, 2026 – 6:00 PM
Roy Romanow Student Council Chamber**

Present:

- **Abtin Safaeian:** President
- **Elmer Vincent:** VP Operations and Finance
- **Ashley Mendez Rosales:** VP Academic Affairs
- **Azul Gonzalez Avila:** VP Student Affairs
- **Raelynn Boutin:** Agriculture and Bioresources
- **Cody Wilson:** Agriculture and Bioresources
- **Arbe Chumala:** Arts and Science
- **Sam Wardell:** Arts and Science
- **Chang Ge:** Dentistry
- **Gracie Radke:** Education
- **Parthi Shah:** Edwards School of Business
- **Sakina Abedi:** Edwards School of Business
- **Shubham Jiaswal:** International Students
- **Max Clark:** Kinesiology
- **Nate Desjarlais:** Indigenous students
- **Mitia Robinson:** Prince Albert
- **Melissa Vogler:** Law

Also Present:

- **Selim Bytyqi:** Chair
- **Jason Kovitch:** Communications & Marketing Manager
- **Atharv Govardhan:** Academic and Governance Assistant

Absent:

- **Ayodele Daniel Omotoso:** Engineering
- **Isfar Chowdhury:** Medicine
- **Samuel Janzen:** Nursing
- **Chinwe Udenze:** Pharmacy and Nutrition
- **Nyasha Alicia Munzara:** International Students

Guests:

- **Dr. Vince Bruni-Bossio:** University of Saskatchewan President
- **Dr. Patti McDougall:** USask Interim Provost and Vice-President Academic

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM.

2. Land Acknowledgement

Chairperson Bytyqi stated the [Land Acknowledgement](#)

3. Roll Call & Quorum

Roll call was completed, and the list of attendees is listed on the first page of these minutes. Quorum was present.

4. Adoption of an Agenda

Move to adopt the agenda as presented.

USC006	Councillor Abedi/ Councillor Wilson	Carried
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5. Council Address:

5.1

President Dr. Vince Bruni-Bossio and USask Interim Provost and Vice-President Academic Dr. Patti McDougall presented the following:

President Dr. Vince Bruni-Bossio explained that the university is developing a new strategic plan based on extensive consultation.

- The planning process involved:
 - Approximately 3,500 engagements or consultation touchpoints.
 - Student surveys and campus conversations.
 - Focus groups involving approximately 442 people.
 - Discussions with nearly 200 industry representatives, government officials, employers, and community members.
- The strategy is intended to establish a clear institutional identity and connect the university's strengths to the needs of Saskatchewan and the broader world.
- Five major areas of institutional strength were identified:
 - Food and water security.
 - Health and health research.
 - Community connection and community development.
 - Energy.
 - New technology, artificial intelligence, and quantum technology.
- Dr. Bruni-Bossio emphasized that the university is the only university in Canada with a quantum computer
- The strategy is guided by a "local to global" approach:
 - The university will strengthen its relationships with local communities and Saskatchewan.
 - Those local connections are intended to support broader international impact.
 - Global engagement should also increase diversity and opportunities on campus.
- The President said the plan will include measurable priorities and key performance indicators.

- The President emphasized that student experience will be treated as distinct from classroom learning.
- The university intends to separately consider:
 - Teaching and transformative learning.
 - Student experience, mental wellness, safety, campus culture, and belonging.
- He stated that student feedback influenced this change in approach.
- Students will have opportunities to provide further input as the plan is finalized and shared.
- The President also emphasized that connecting directly with students is one of his personal priorities.
- He said that senior university leaders should be approachable and that student feedback is important to the university's decision-making.

Dr. Patty McDougall explained that the Provost and Vice-President Academic is responsible for four broad areas:

- Academic strategy including academic, research, and administrative plans under the university's broader strategy
- Resource allocation and budgeting undertaken with CFO Deirdre Henne and others, with salaries representing the university's largest expense;
- Leadership and support for deans and executive directors.
- Institutional leadership, including student services.
- Dr. McDougall said she is completing her fourteenth year at the university, after nine years as Vice Provost for Teaching, Learning, and Student Experience and four years as Deputy Provost, and is now in her first year as interim provost
- Her portfolio includes services covering the student lifecycle:
 - Recruitment.
 - Admissions.
 - Learning and development.
 - Student support.
 - Career preparation.
- She described the importance of maintaining regular relationships with student leaders and student organizations.
- She noted that the university is reviving a student forum.
 - The forum will include the USSU and GSA executives and volunteer students, initially led by Vice Provost Marjorie Delbar, to advise on major issues, as well as students who are not in formal leadership roles.
 - Its purpose is to discuss major issues and advise university leadership.

Questions asked to Dr. McDougall and Dr. Bruni-Bossio through e-mail:

1. Scholarships, Bursaries, and Student Financial Support:

- Dr. Patty McDougall reported that the university recently held its most successful Day of Giving. Including a wheel-spinning activity that allowed participants to direct funds toward priorities such as scholarships, bursaries, open access textbooks, and mental-health supports, parking was deliberately excluded
 - She explained that funding for scholarships and bursaries comes from:
 - University operating budgets.
 - Donor contributions.
 - Government funding.
 - Endowment income. Endowments preserve the principal and spend investment income, with Board of Governors policies governing the percentage available
 - The university recently increased the percentage of endowment interest that can be used for student support.
 - She stated that this change will make more money available for scholarships and bursaries without changing the underlying investments.
 - The university had invested approximately:
 - \$27 million in undergraduate student financial support and employment opportunities.
 - Approximately \$21 million specifically in scholarships and bursaries.
 - Dr. McDougall explained the difference between scholarships and bursaries:
 - Scholarships are primarily based on academic merit.
 - Bursaries consider both academic performance and financial need.
 - Approximately two-thirds of available funding is directed to scholarships and one-third to bursaries.
 - The university is actively seeking more funding, including through the \$571 million comprehensive campaign over ten years, and donors may be steered toward bursaries
 - The university budget also included an additional \$1 million for student support.
 - Possible uses include:
 - Helping upper-year students who are close to completing their degrees but have run out of funds.
 - Assisting students who do not qualify for other forms of financial aid.
 - Dr. McDougall noted that bursaries would still generally require students to meet a minimum academic standard.
- Councillor Desjarlais asked about the increased endowment payout.
- Dr. McDougall clarified that the permitted spending rate had risen from approximately 3.5% by about one percentage point, alongside stronger investment performance.

2. Open-Access Textbooks and Educational Resources:

- Dr. McDougall described open-access textbooks as an important way to reduce student costs.
- Dr. McDougall described open-access textbooks as a major affordability initiative that began when the province provided \$250,000 to be divided among USask, the University of Regina, and Saskatchewan Polytechnic, with roughly 83,000–85,000 per institution.
- Max Feinberg was identified as an early advocate, and the program initially targeted large first-year courses before expanding by following interested faculty.
- Faculty may:

- Create a new open-access textbook.
- Adapt an existing open-access textbook.
- Adopt an existing resource without major modification.
- The university has reportedly generated more than \$10 million in student savings through open educational resources.
- The projected savings were described as approaching approximately \$13.68 million, based on estimated textbook costs.
- Dr. McDougall said the university currently has funding available for open educational resources but does not necessarily need to seek additional government funding immediately.
- She suggested that future discussions could include:
 - Marjorie Delbar, regarding student services and funding.
 - Nancy Turner, regarding open educational resources and related academic support.
- President Bruni-Bossio added that he had used open textbooks for seven or eight years and had reduced costs by approximately 250–\$ 350 per student in one course.
- The President agreed that more faculty should be encouraged to use open-access materials.
- He stated that:
 - Some faculty members already actively support open educational resources.
 - Others would like to use them but have not found suitable materials for their courses.
 - Quality must remain the primary consideration.
 - The university should work with deans and faculty to encourage broader adoption.

Councillor Desjarlais asks a question about digital facilities, software, test banks, slide decks, and other ancillary materials.

Dr. McDougall answers that

- Publishers often charge separately for test banks, slide decks, assessments, and other supplementary materials.
- The university has supported creating these additional resources.
- Copyright and licensing must be reviewed carefully.
- Some digital materials may still involve fees.
- The university tries to use resources that do not create additional costs whenever possible.

Chairperson Bytyqi asks how the university identifies faculty members interested in adopting or developing open-access textbooks.

- Dr. McDougall said interested faculty generally:
 - Contact the teaching and learning centre.
 - Participate in open-education initiatives.
 - Learn from colleagues who have already adopted these resources.
- She described these faculty members as early adopters who help influence other instructors.
- The President clarified that faculty who have not adopted open textbooks should not be characterized as uninterested.
 - Some faculty members may not yet have suitable materials.

- Some disciplines require specialized resources.
 - Some instructors are still determining how to maintain quality while using open materials.
- Dr. McDougall reiterated that quality is more important than adoption for its own sake.

3. Bowl and Transit challenges:

- Dr. McDougall recommended that the council invite Greg Fowler and his team to discuss:
 - Bowl construction.
 - College Drive traffic.
 - The university's broader sector plan.
 - She stated that the university had been communicating with the city regarding College Drive construction.
 - She stated that the university had been communicating with the city regarding College Drive construction.
 - Current and upcoming construction phases were described as:
 - Work from the hospital to Cumberland.
 - A later phase from Cumberland to Preston.
 - The construction is expected to continue for some time but is intended to improve transportation infrastructure.
 - Bowl construction involves replacement of approximately one percent of the university's linear infrastructure, including water and sewer lines.
 - Dr. McDougall acknowledged that communication about the construction had not always been easy to find on the university website.
- Councillor Desjarlais asked whether the university and city construction projects were planned to happen at the same time.
- Dr. Bruni-Bossio said he had asked the same question.
 - The explanation was that:
 - The university's underground infrastructure required immediate work.
 - The university did not have complete flexibility over the timing.
 - Coordinating the projects differently would have been preferable, but delaying the university's work created unacceptable risks.
 - The President acknowledged the inconvenience for current students but said the completed infrastructure should benefit future students and improve transportation and campus services.
 - The council was encouraged to invite university administrators to provide a more detailed briefing.

4. Guidance on AI is unclear, both for students and instructors

- A question presented asked whether clearer guidance would be provided regarding:
 - Acceptable student use of artificial intelligence.
 - Instructors' use of AI to create course materials and assignments.
 - Student involvement in developing AI guidelines.
 - Dr. McDougall said:

- The university has developed AI literacy resources, principles, and guidance.
- No single universal rule applies to every course or discipline.
- Expectations may vary depending on a course's learning objectives and stage.
- Kin and Law were cited as colleges developing common approaches, while the university's AI website posts a general set of student guidelines developed with student input.
- The university developed existing general student guidelines with student input and makes them available on its AI website.
- The university hopes colleges and departments will develop locally appropriate approaches that are more consistent than the current situation.
- The President said employers and industry are also concerned with whether graduates will be able to use AI effectively and ethically.
- He identified several university responsibilities:
 - Teaching students how to use AI professionally.
 - Maintaining academic integrity.
 - Considering ethical and transparent use.
 - Exploring AI in research.
 - Determining whether AI can improve administrative and student services.
- He noted that AI is developing faster than institutions can finalize policies.
- The President characterized AI as both a technical issue and a human and societal issue.
- He emphasized the need to protect deep learning and critical-thinking skills while using AI productively.

5. Payment plans

Dr. McDougall identified tuition payment plans as another topic for Marjorie Delbar.

VP Gonzalez Avila asked what was realistically possible regarding tuition payment plans.

Dr. McDougall said payment flexibility is a major concern for students.

- Dr. McDougall explained that:
 - The university had previously offered payment plans.
 - The previous structure was not working effectively.
 - The university changed the interest structure and removed the payment plan.
 - New payment tools and options may now be available for consideration.
 - There are contractual and administrative factors to review.
- Dr. McDougall said the university has a strong interest in making tuition easier to pay.
- She also mentioned the university's cost estimator as a financial-literacy tool.
- Marjorie Delbar was identified as a potential future speaker on payment-plan options.

Councillor Desjarlais asked whether the university had discussed AI regulation with the government.

Dr. Bruni-Bossio responded that:

- Government and industry are currently having much of the broader regulatory discussion.
- The university is monitoring those developments and will adapt its practices.

- The university can still contribute its views on ethical AI use, even if it is not the primary policy-maker.
- Dr. McDougall added that the university would not simply be dictated to by the government regarding classroom assessment practices.
- The university must also consider what employers and communities will expect from graduates.

Councillor Vogler asked whether the university had any influence over government and industry decisions regarding AI.

Dr. Bruni-Bossio clarified that:

- The university has a voice in public discussions.
- It may advise the government and participate in conversations about ethical AI.
- It is not currently the primary driver of AI policy.
- Government approaches differ internationally and continue to evolve.
- Dr. McDougall explained that the university must balance:
 - Its academic independence.
 - The needs of employers.
 - Ethical considerations.
 - The changing regulatory environment.

Councillor Desjarlais asked whether government regulation of AI companies could affect the AI products, partnerships, and licences used by universities.

Dr. Bruni-Bossio answers by involving Nancy Turner for further clarification, the university's AI specialist.

- He explained that the university evaluates AI tools by considering:
 - Their ethical implications.
 - The values of the companies that develop them.
 - Whether the tools align with university values.
 - Whether they can improve services for students.
 - Whether the tools are appropriately regulated and reliable.
- He described government regulation as largely reactive because AI technology is changing so quickly.
- Dr. McDougall also raised concerns about:
 - The energy consumption of AI tools.
 - The cost of using AI services.
 - The environmental effects of data centres.

Councillor Desjarlais started a discussion on the new data centre and its possible effects on Saskatchewan.

- Potential benefits identified included:
 - New jobs.
 - Revenue.
 - Research opportunities.
 - Economic development.
- Possible concerns included:

- Energy consumption.
- Environmental effects.
- Heat generated by data-centre operations.
- Dr. McDougall noted that waste heat might potentially be used to heat nearby buildings.
- The President said AI and related infrastructure create significant opportunities but must be evaluated through an ethical and environmental lens.
- Chairperson Bytyqi noted that the data centre was the subject of significant debate, with strong arguments on both sides.
- The discussion ended with recognition that AI offers major opportunities while also creating substantial ethical, social, and environmental questions.

Move to approve September 10, 2026 USC meeting minutes:

USC007	VP Gonzalez Avila/Councillor Clark	Carried
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6. Minutes and Reports for Information

6.1 Executive Committee Minutes & Report – The meeting did not occur due to illness

President Safaeian:

- President Safaeian reported that the executive meeting had not occurred because of illness.
- He summarized several activities:
 - Participation in the President's Executive Committee meeting.
 - Discussions with student leaders from other Saskatchewan institutions about open educational resources.
 - Participation in a confidential provost search committee.
 - A meeting regarding fundraising and increasing scholarship and bursary funding.
 - Advocacy for open educational resources.
 - Promotion of bursary applications before the October 1 deadline.
 - Work toward establishing a sexual health centre.
 - Support for students navigating formal complaints.
 - Continued work on the Youth Safe program and related partnerships.
 - Attendance at a Red Cross annual general meeting.
 - Support for academic-environment activities.

VP Vincent:

- Reported on:
 - Campus group appointments.
 - Faculty and student case meetings.
 - Follow-up with the university and city regarding construction.
 - Continued development of the USSU website.

- Upcoming Campus Group Week.
- Workshops scheduled on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
- Orientation, welcome-week, academic-awareness, and homecoming activities.

Councillor Desjarlais asks about the workshop times

VP Vincent clarified the workshop dates, times, and locations in response to a question. That being Monday, Wednesday, and Friday between 4:30 pm and 6 pm, the first two workshops hosted at Louis' and at Louis' Loft.

VP Mendez Rosales:

- Reported:
 - Attendance at the President's Executive Committee meeting.
 - An increase in student calls.
 - Participation in the first Academic Programs Committee meeting.
 - Six newly opened student cases.
 - Five continuing cases.
 - Participation in a breakfast volunteer activity.

VP Gonzalez Avila:

- Reported:
 - A mental-health exhibition called "To Be Seen."
 - Collaboration with the Wellness Centre.
 - Sexual Violence Awareness Week.
 - Workshops and awareness activities.
 - Work with the Women's Centre.
 - Truth and Reconciliation events.
 - Participation in Provost advisory committees.
 - Continued student-case work.

Approval of the current executive minutes was deferred until the following week because they were not yet complete.

7. College/Constituency Report

7.1 Agriculture and Bioresources:

Councillor Boutin presents the following:

- First-year representative nominations had closed.
- Voting was underway.
- A farm tour, game night, beer day, and club day had taken place.
- Engagement from first-year students was described as especially strong.
- Launch-and-learn events were planned.

7.2 Arts and Science:

Councillor Wardell presents the following:

- A by-election was being organized for a third representative position.

- Nominations were open until October 23.
- A games and crafts night was planned for around October 5-8; this will include notebook decorating and board games.
- The student association was working with college labour-relations representatives to improve the process for students raising concerns about professors.
- The aim was to guide students, reduce confusion, and offer advocacy before complaints were sent directly to the university.

7.3 Dentistry

Councillor Ge presents the following:

- Dean made a partnership with Engineering, Arts and Science, and Edwards. Work as an interdisciplinary team and work together to solve problems. This will work in a workshop format.

7.4 Education

Councillor Radke presents the following:

- By-elections were open for Social and Finance Executive positions.
- Nominations were expected to close on September 28.

7.5 Edwards School of Business

Councillor not present

7.6 Engineering

Councillor not present

7.7 Indigenous Students

Councillor Desjarlasi presents the following:

- Internal organization was underway.
- The group planned to collaborate on the Together We Felt project for Truth and Reconciliation.
- Work was also planned with Humanity First and Inspirely.
- The goal was to expand programming, grant opportunities, and support for Indigenous students.

7.8 International Students

Councillor Jaiwasl presents the following:

- Discussions were underway with the International Student Association about a larger event.
- Further information would be provided once participating groups responded.

7.9 Kinesiology

Councillor Clark presents the following:

- A bake sale at the college's welcome-back barbecue had been successful.

- Tickets were being sold for a beach-volleyball event on September 29.
- A breakfast meeting with faculty was planned for the following week.

7.10 Law

Councilor Vogler had nothing to present

7.11 Medicine

Councillor not present

7.12 Nursing

Councillor not present

7.13 Pharmacy and Nutrition

Councillor not present

7.14 St. Thomas More

Councillor not present

7.15 Western College of Veterinary Medicine

Councillor not present

7.16 Prince Albert

Councillor Robinson presents the following:

- Work was underway on student housing.
- A survey had been circulated regarding possible clubs for the campus.

8. Business

9. New Business

- Councillor Desjardins moved that the university and student organizations promote the used textbook program, noting that only twelve books were currently listed, that Edwards appeared to have no listings, and that stronger marketing could increase participation and provide students with a more diverse and affordable selection. The discussion clarified whether the push should come from the university, the USSU, or both.
- President Safaeian reported speaking with the dean of the library, who would share the program with library staff, and said a video with Ashley Mendez Rosales encouraging students to donate textbooks had been postponed because of illness and rescheduled for the following week. Gift cards and other incentives were being considered.

USSU doing a marketing push for used textbook:

USC008	Councillor Desjarlais/President Safaeian	Carried
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- Councillor Wilson added that the Agriculture and Bioresources student association could promote a central link or QR code through its own social media.

10. Questions, Comments, and Announcements

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:41 pm.