

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 24, 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
- **Cody Wilson:** Agriculture and Bioresources
- **Arbe Chumala:** Arts and Science
- **Sam Wardell:** Arts and Science
- **Gracie Radke:** Education
- **Parthi Shah:** Edwards School of Business
- **Sakina Abedi:** Edwards School of Business
- **Max Clark:** Kinesiology
- **Ayodele Daniel Omotoso:** Engineering
- **Chang Ge:** Dentistry
- **Shubham Jiaswal:** International Students
- **Melissa Vogler:** Law

Also Present:

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

Absent:

- **Isfar Chowdhury:** Medicine
- **Samuel Janzen:** Nursing
- **Chinwe Udenze:** Pharmacy and Nutrition
- **Nyasha Alicia Munzara:** International Students
- **Raelynn Boutin:** Agriculture and Bioresources
- **Mitia Robinson:** Prince Albert
- **Nate Desjarlais:** Indigenous Students

Guests:

- **Jocelyn Orb:** Director of Student Health and Wellbeing

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM.

2. Land Acknowledgement

Chairperson Selim 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.

USC009	VP Vincent/ Councillor Wilson	Carried
---------------	--------------------------------------	----------------

Motion to enter informality.

USC010	President Safaeian/ Councillor Shah	Carried
---------------	--	----------------

5. Council Address:

5.1 Jocelyn Orb, Director of Student Health and Wellbeing

Jocelyn introduced herself as a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan and explained that she is pursuing her PhD.

She explained that she has been connected to the University of Saskatchewan for many years and has observed significant changes in campus culture, student needs, and approaches to health and wellness.

The purpose of the presentation was to:

- Introduce students to available Wellness Centre services.
- Discuss current pressures on healthcare services.
- Address issues surrounding access and wait times.
- Discuss health equity.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration with student leaders.
- Encourage students to seek help early

Jocelyn explained that the University of Saskatchewan has an interdisciplinary primary care team, which is relatively uncommon among Canadian universities.

The Wellness Centre provides services through:

- Family physicians
- Nurses
- Nurse practitioners
- Psychiatry
- Mental health counsellors
- Dietitian services

- Addictions and harm-reduction support
- Peer health programming

The core health services are supported through provincial health funding, while additional services are supported through the student wellness fee and the Gitzel Family Fund for Mental Health.

The Wellness Centre aims to provide student-centred care rather than simply telling students what they should do.

Intake counselors help students determine what type of support they need and where they should access it.

Jocelyn emphasized that university students are adults who may be accessing health services independently for the first time.

Students currently cannot book appointments online.

Students are encouraged to:

- Call the Wellness Centre.
- Visit reception in person.
- Speak with intake staff about their needs.

The Wellness Centre is not currently open on weekends or evenings.

Some counselling services are available virtually during evenings.

Jocelyn cautioned students against sending personal health information by email because email is not necessarily a secure method for communicating sensitive medical information.

The Wellness Centre provides primary care and preventative health services.

Services discussed included:

- Immunizations
- Sexual health services
- Contraception
- Pregnancy-related care
- Chronic disease support
- Diabetes management
- Hypertension and cardiovascular care
- Dietitian services

Students in health-science programs can also access required immunizations before beginning clinical placements.

The Wellness Centre does not have an X-ray machine. Students with suspected broken bones or conditions requiring imaging may need to attend Royal University Hospital or another appropriate facility.

Some physician time is reserved for urgent cases, but students must first be assessed by nursing staff.

Mental health services continue to experience high demand.

Jocelyn explained that:

- Students commonly prefer one-on-one counselling.
- Group therapy and workshops have been offered but tend to have lower attendance.
- Students who are experiencing an acute mental-health crisis can generally be assessed more quickly.
- Students seeking support for issues such as anxiety or depression may experience longer waits for ongoing counselling.

The Wellness Centre also has psychiatrists on staff, which Jocelyn described as an important resource given the complexity of some student mental-health needs.

A harm-reduction service has been available for approximately two years.

Services include:

- Addictions counselling
- Naloxone training
- Support for substance use
- Support for behavioural/process addictions
- Groups such as Smart Recovery

Jocelyn noted that substance-use concerns among students extend beyond alcohol and may include cannabis, gambling, and other forms of behavioural addiction.

Jocelyn clarified that the Wellness Centre does not generally provide sick notes.

Students who miss classes because they are sick can use the University's student self-declaration process.

However, health providers can provide documentation when appropriate for students experiencing health circumstances that affect their academic programs, such as situations involving withdrawal or academic accommodations.

Students experiencing problems with professors accepting self-declarations were encouraged to contact the Wellness Centre for assistance navigating the situation.

The Wellness Centre supports several peer-led programs.

Programs discussed included:

- Healthy Mind
- Invisible Disabilities
- Peer Listener Support
- Healthy Body Harm Reduction
- Cultural Wellness
- Food Security

The peer-to-peer model was emphasized because students may feel more comfortable discussing certain issues with trained peers rather than professional health-care providers.

The Wellness Centre and Peer Health operate a breakfast program at Marquis 104.

The breakfast takes place:

Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday
8:00–9:30 AM

The program is intended to address both:

- Food insecurity
- Student social connection and community building

A student food-security facilitator has also been hired to support this programming.

Several additional programs were discussed, including:

- ADHD support
- Smart Recovery
- Roads to Wellness
- Nature Therapy Walks
- Speech and language anxiety support
- Cultural wellness programming
- Black Nursing Student Society-related programming

Jocelyn emphasized that programming can change each semester and that student groups can request programming based on their needs.

The Wellness Centre acknowledged that wait times are one of the major concerns raised by students.

Jocelyn stated that:

- Students experiencing urgent health concerns will be triaged.
- Students experiencing significant mental-health crises can receive more immediate attention.
- Routine counselling appointments may involve longer waits.

- Wait times tend to increase around midterms and later in the semester.

Students were encouraged to seek support before problems become severe.

The Wellness Centre conducts annual patient satisfaction surveys.

Jocelyn reported that satisfaction among students who successfully access services is generally very high.

However, common concerns include:

- Difficulty getting an appointment.
- Wait times.
- Uncertainty about where to seek help.
- Anxiety or discomfort about reaching out for care.

Common issues bringing students to Wellness services include:

- Relationships
- Anxiety
- Academic stress
- Financial hardship
- Housing difficulties

Jocelyn discussed previous work conducted with the USSU and other campus groups concerning racism and anti-racism.

A research project involving Dr. Jacob Alhassan examined student experiences of racism at the University.

Approximately 35 students participated in qualitative interviews.

Students described experiences occurring across different parts of their lives, including:

- Arrival in Saskatoon
- Transportation
- Housing
- Academic colleges
- Campus services
- Interactions with staff

The research team identified themes from the interviews and prepared a report.

Jocelyn indicated that the report was nearing completion and could potentially be shared with student leaders.

Particular concerns involving Black nursing students had also been identified through counselling and student experiences, including experiences in academic and clinical settings.

Jocelyn discussed ongoing concerns surrounding student food insecurity.

The Wellness Centre has received funding from Nutrien to support the breakfast program.

The funding provides approximately \$50,000, with funding expected to continue for another two years.

Jocelyn noted that some funding may be available to support additional student initiatives related to food security, depending on the proposed project.

Loneliness among university students was identified as a significant concern.

Jocelyn referenced Canadian College Wellbeing Survey findings indicating that younger adults, particularly those in the 18–25 age group, experience high levels of loneliness.

She explained that programs such as the breakfast program are intended not only to address food insecurity but also to create opportunities for students to socialize and build community.

Jocelyn discussed suicide prevention as an important concern for the university-age population.

She emphasized that students experiencing thoughts of self-harm should seek help immediately.

The Wellness Centre wants student leaders to encourage students to access services even when they are concerned about wait times.

Students in crisis can be assessed and triaged even if they have not previously used Wellness Centre services.

Jocelyn noted several emerging concerns:

- Increased cannabis use.
- Cannabis-related mental-health concerns.
- Substance use as a form of self-medication.
- Increasing numbers of students with complex mental-health needs.
- Limited availability of mental-health services in the broader community.

She noted that community services also have significant wait times.

Psychiatric services in the community can have particularly lengthy waits.

The shortage of family physicians in Saskatoon was discussed.

Jocelyn noted that it can be difficult for students to find a family doctor outside of the university system.

The Wellness Centre therefore plays an important role in providing primary care to students.

The discussion also touched on student health-plan coverage.

Jocelyn noted that students may benefit from greater coverage for wellness-related services.

Examples mentioned included:

- Massage therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Other wellness-supporting activities

She encouraged student representatives to provide input because students have the best understanding of their needs and how they use the health plan.

- Councillor Abedi asks about whether the anti-racism research identified which colleges experienced the greatest challenges.

Jocelyn explained that the study was not specifically designed to rank colleges. Students were instead allowed to describe their experiences broadly through semi-structured interviews. The experiences ranged from arrival in Saskatoon to interactions within academic colleges and campus facilities. She noted that counsellors had identified particular concerns among Black nursing students, including experiences within the nursing program and clinical settings.

- President Safaeian asked whether the research report could be made available to members of the College of Medicine/other student representatives so that they could bring the information back to their colleges.

Jocelyn indicated that she believed this should be possible and that the report was close to being ready for sharing.

- Chairperson Bytyqi asked what kinds of mental-health groups students would actually attend.

Jocelyn explained that anxiety consistently ranks highly when students are asked what programming they want, but attendance at anxiety-focused groups has been low.

The Wellness Centre has experimented with:

- Different days
- Different times
- Different formats
- Less intimidating program names
- More general wellness programming

The Roads to Wellness program was given as an example of a less clinical approach, involving activities such as crafts, painting, music, and therapy-dog activities.

A councillor suggested that students may be more willing to attend if programs are presented as social or recreational events rather than explicitly as mental-health workshops.

- Councillor Bytyqi asked how Wellness programs are currently marketed.

Jocelyn explained that programs are primarily promoted through:

- Peer Health
- Instagram
- Facebook
- Word of mouth

She acknowledged that the Wellness Centre could benefit from additional guidance regarding student-focused marketing.

Motion to enter formality.

USC011	President Safaeian/Councillor Clark	Carried
---------------	--	----------------

6. Minutes and Reports for Information

6.1 USC meeting minutes for last week

Motion to adopt the USC meeting minutes

USC012	Councillor Radke/Councillor Abedi	Carried
---------------	--	----------------

6.2 Executive Committee Minutes & Report – President Safaeian presents:

- IT training with Scott Henderson and the USSU Chair.

- A pre-council meeting.
- Continued work on Open Educational Resources (OER).
- Advocacy for increased OER adoption.
- Work with the University of Regina and Saskatchewan Polytechnic leadership to advocate for OER funding and adoption.
- Participation in a two-day Provost Search Committee process.
- Candidate presentations and voting as part of the search process.
- Due to confidentiality, details of the Provost Search Committee process could not be disclosed.
- The executive reported that five new discount partnerships had been added to USave. The goal is to reach 100 discount partnerships by the end of the year.
- Advocacy concerning additional scholarship opportunities was also identified as an ongoing project.
- The executive reported that a promotional video for UExchange had been filmed with VP Mendez Rosales. The video is intended to encourage students to use the service.

Motion to adopt the USC Executive Committee Minutes & Report –

USC013	Councillor Wilson/Councillor Jaiswal	Carried
---------------	---	----------------

7. College/Constituency Report

7.1 Agriculture and Bioresources:

Councillor Wilson presents the following:

- The college is participating in the CIBC Run for the Cure on October 4. The fundraising target is \$1,000.
- The annual ag-Bag Drag concert will take place October 23.
- Two first-year representatives have been elected, and they have attended their first ASA meeting.
- Internal college clubs have been ratified and are beginning to plan events.
- Industry representatives continue to visit the college lounge.
- Lunch-and-learn events are being held approximately every two weeks.

7.2 Arts and Science

Councillor Chumala present the following

- Arts and notebook night on September 23
- Nomination for new MSC closed on September 23

7.3 Dentistry

Councillor Chang does not have anything to present

7.4 Education

Councillor Radke presents the following:

- One week remains for the current by-election.
- The College of Education's 100th graduating class will hold its graduation at the Western Development Museum.

7.5 Edwards School of Business

Councillor Abedi presents the following:

- First-year representatives have been ratified into the student society.
- A lunch-and-learn was held with a company.
- Students are participating in numerous company information sessions.
- A football-related event was scheduled for the weekend.
- Edwards formal is upcoming.
- The Edwards Business Students' Society is working on:
 - A sustainability action plan.
 - An advocacy document.
- These documents are expected by the end of September or mid-October.

7.6 Engineering

Councillor Omotoso does not have anything to present

7.7 Indigenous Students

No councillor present

7.8 International Students

Councillor Jaiswal does not have anything to present

7.9 Kinesiology

Councillor Clark presents the following:

- A breakfast meeting was held with the Dean, Associate Dean, and guidance counsellor.
- The meeting went well.
- Tickets are still being sold for the upcoming beach volleyball night.

7.10 Law

Councillor Vogler presents the following:

- First official LSA meeting on September 25
- 2 first-year representatives elected recently

7.11 Medicine

No councillor present

7.12 Nursing

No councillor present

7.13 Pharmacy and Nutrition

No councillor present

7.14 Prince Albert Campus

No councillor present

7.15 St. Thomas More

No councillor present

7.16 Western College of Veterinary Medicine

No councillor present

8. Business

9. New Business

9.1 USC Committees

Chairperson Bytyqi discussed upcoming USC committee work.

The council will begin populating USC committees at the next meeting.

Councillors were asked to:

- Review the bylaw.
- Review the USSU website for information about each committee.
- Consider which committee they would like to join.
- Nominate themselves for committees.
- Nominate another councillor where appropriate.

It was emphasized that each councillor should sit on at least one committee.

Councillors who were absent from the current meeting should be informed that the next meeting will be particularly important for committee assignments.

10. Questions, Comments, and Announcements

Guest Finnie announces the presence of a by-election for the MSC of College of St. Thomas More.

An event is to be conducted on October 8, which is painting a tote bag

VP Vincent:

The last day of campus group week will be Friday, September 24. A campus group leader social was also planned for **4:30 PM** at Campus Club Space. Pizza would be provided, and a Polaroid camera would be given away.

VP Gonzalez Avila:

Take Back the Night is happening tonight, September 24, at 8 pm, as part of Sexual Violence Awareness Week. If councillors are available, they are welcome to join.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 pm.

