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University of Saskatchewan Students' Union

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University Students' Council Minutes
November 5, 2026 – 6:00 PM
Roy Romanow Student Council Chamber

Present:

- **Abtin Safaein:** President
- **Elmer Vincent:** VP Operations and Finance
- **Ashley Mendez Rosales**: VP Academic Affairs
- **Azul Gonzalez Avila**: VP Student Affairs
- **Raelynne Boutin**: Agriculture and Bioresources
- **Cody Wilson**: Agriculture and Bioresources
- **Arbe Chumala:** Arts and Science
- **Sam Wardell:** Arts and Science
- **Ilia Rezaei Paskiabi:** 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
- **Mitia Robinson**: Prince Albert
- **Nate Desjarlais**: Indigenous Students
- **Laiba Masood**: St. Thomas More
- **Easton Hudson:** Engineering
- **Ayodele Daniel Omotoso:** Engineering
- **Isfar Chowdhury:** Medicine
- **Abby Fortier**: Nursing
- **Nyasha Alicia Munzara**: International Students
- **Chinwe Udenze:** Pharmacy and Nutrition

Also Present:

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

Absent:

- **Melissa Vogler:** Law
- **Jordie Finnie**: St. Thomas More

1. **Call to Order**
   The meeting was called to order at 6:06 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.

USC039	**Councillor Masood / Councillor Wardell**	**Carried**

5. **Minutes and Reports for Information**

5.1 USC Minutes:

Motion to approve last week's USC meeting

USC040	**Councillor Radke / Councillor Boutin**	**Carried**

5.2 Executive Committee Minutes & Report

President Safaeian:

- Met with the President of Capilano University in British Columbia. A list of approximately 104 university presidents across Canada was compiled. Contact information was gathered to facilitate outreach. A draft invitation email was prepared and reviewed with the participating executives and an executive assistant. The next step is to begin contacting university presidents and encourage their participation in the monthly roundtable meetings.
- The President met with the executive team and senior management to gather feedback on the VP Indigenous projects and initiatives position. Significant work has been completed on the position portfolio. Consultations were held with the Council of Wise Ones, Indigenous leaders, and student organizations, including Indigenous student groups and ITEP. The portfolio was reviewed in detail with relevant stakeholders. The policies and bylaws for the proposed roundtable have been completed. The next step is to reach out to university presidents to establish participation in regular monthly meetings.
- Participated in a pumpkin-carving event with ACES, an Indigenous student group.
- The proposed Indigenous VP portfolio was shared and reviewed with members of ACES and other Indigenous student organizations.
- Also participated in a skull-painting event organized through Peer Health.

VP Vincent:

- Continued working on improvements to the administrative side of the USSU Hub. The objective is to make internal operations more efficient, particularly the processing of funding applications and student group ratification requests.
- Participated in preliminary planning for Winter Welcome Week.
- Met with representatives of the Visual Arts Student Union regarding difficulties surrounding their event, *Silence*. The event was initially scheduled to take place at the Gordon Snelgrove Gallery but was subsequently moved to Murray Building. Following further discussion, the event was moved back to the gallery. The event has been delayed until winter
- Attended the first Planning and Priorities Committee meeting.
- Participated in the first meeting of the Campus Groups Committee.
- Attended a TWA committee meeting.
- The transit survey initiative remains ongoing. The City has responded to the USSU's outreach and provided potential meeting times after Reading Week. Meetings with the City will be arranged accordingly.
- Continued attending events organized by various campus groups, including ACES.

VP Mendez Rosales:

- Continued assisting students with individual academic concerns and cases. Support was provided through in-person appointments and telephone conversations.
- The Academic and Governance Assistant has also been assisting with student-related matters.
- Reached out to the relevant student accessibility organization to better understand the existing note-taking program. Several students had previously raised concerns about the program and its effectiveness. The objective is to arrange a meeting to identify potential improvements and ensure that the program better addresses students' needs.
- Attended a meeting with the Campus Planning and Development team.
- An email was distributed to academic committee members requesting their availability.
- Work is underway to revamp the academic advocacy website. Several existing videos and resources are outdated. The Vice President intends to gradually replace these materials with updated information throughout the academic year.

VP Gonzalez Avila:

- Continued working with the executive team on planning Winter Welcome Week.
- Announced that the student housing registry website had officially launched and was available to students as of Thursday.
- Attended a meeting with Jim Walters and the Campus Planning and Development team.

- Continued attending meetings related to childcare services, including discussions surrounding policies and existing arrangements.
- Partnered with the Pride Centre for a free event.
- Collaborated with Peer Health to organize the skull-painting event.

Motion to adopt the USC Executive Committee Minutes & Report –

USC041	**Councillor Wardell / Councillor Masood**	**Carried**

5.3 Campus Group committee minutes and reports

The committee's first meeting was described as successful and included the review of:

- Two notification requests.
- Five funding applications.
- Approximately $300 in approved funding.
- Ratification requests for the Adventist Christian Fellowship and the USASK Chess Club.

Motion to adopt the Campus Group committee minutes and reports -

USC042	**Councillor Shah / Councillor Wilson**	**Carried**

6. College/Constituency Report

6.1 Agriculture and Bioresources:

Councillor Wilson presents:

- The Halloween food drive was successful.
- The total quantity of non-perishable food collected had not yet been finalized.
- The Nutrien Digital Agriculture Centre officially opened on Monday.
- The new facility has been developed to introduce and integrate emerging technologies into agricultural education and learning.
- The initiative is expected to support innovation and the integration of technology into the agricultural industry.

6.2 Arts and Science

Councillor Chumala presents:

- The constituency is planning future events and activities.
- The Arts and Science Gala is scheduled for January 29.
- The College of Arts and Science rebranding event took place on October 29.
- Attendance appeared to consist primarily of faculty members.
- The event focused on gathering support and feedback regarding the direction and identity of the College.

- The Arts and Science Students' Union President expressed support for the proposed Vice President of Indigenous Initiatives and Projects.

6.3 Dentistry
Councillor Ge presents:

- The breakfast event took place from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM and provided students with an opportunity to drop in and have breakfast.
- The College's fall formal was scheduled for November 7.
- The formal was intended exclusively for students within the College of Dentistry.

6.4 Education
Councillor Radke presents:

- The date for the Purple Party has been confirmed for November 27 at Dino's.
- Further information regarding the event will be provided later.
- A committee has been established to work on updating and developing new constituency merchandise.

6.5 Edwards School of Business
Councillor Abedi presents:

- The Edwards School of Business Students' Society received its cheque from the fundraising auction.
- A total of $3,638 was donated to SESC for Interval House.
- Edwards School of Business students will attend the National Displaced Student Conference in Winnipeg during the break.
- A Lunch and Learn event with PepsiCo is planned after Reading Week.
- A More Than a Rainbow workshop is also scheduled after the break.

6.6 Engineering
Councillor Omotoso presents:

- The second Engineering MSC had officially joined the constituency's representation.
- Both the MSCs were working together to address issues affecting engineering students.
- A meeting with the USSU President had been planned but could not take place due to scheduling circumstances.
- The meeting is expected to be rescheduled for the following week to discuss ongoing engineering-related concerns.

6.7 Indigenous Students
Councillor Desjarlais presents:

- A follow-up event was held on Friday, featuring karaoke and food.

- The event was successful and provided an opportunity for Indigenous students to connect.
- The Indigenous Student Career Fair took place at the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre.
- Several major employers attended.
- Organizations included KPMG and MNP, providing Indigenous students with valuable employment and networking opportunities.
- Extensive outreach and consultation have been conducted with Indigenous students and student leaders.
- Meetings were held with different Students' Union Presidents, who expressed support for the proposed position and provided additional concerns and suggestions.
- Councillor Desjarlais also attended the Indigenous Student Leadership Community's monthly meeting.
- Feedback received during these discussions was being incorporated into the proposed portfolio.
- Work continued on organizing documentation, reviewing the proposed responsibilities, and ensuring that the position was appropriately structured.
- Further consultations and discussions were planned before the proposal could move forward.

6.8 International Students
Councillor Nyasha presents:

- A movie night was scheduled for November 6 at 4:30 PM.
- The event is intended to provide international students with an opportunity to relax and socialize following a busy academic period.

6.9 Kinesiology
Councillor Clark presents:

- A therapy-dog event was held on November 4 and was well received.
- The proposed date for the Kinesiology Formal is January 9.
- The constituency intends to secure the venue at Louis' as soon as possible.
- A talk and bake sale are tentatively planned for November 18.
- A Pilates night was also held on the evening of November 4.

6.10 Law
No councillor present

6.11 Medicine
Councillor Chowdhury presents:

- The College's Halloween event was successful and attracted strong student participation.

- Several students participated enthusiastically in the costume activities.
- The College is focusing on men's health throughout November.
- Activities are intended to raise awareness about men's mental health, prostate cancer, and testicular cancer.
- Fundraising activities will support relevant research and awareness initiatives.
- A fitness event was scheduled at Level 10 in Regina.
- Another group exercise event was planned at Bevo Studios in Saskatoon following Reading Week.
- Several Medicine students will travel to Ottawa for the National Day of Action from November 14–16.
- Their advocacy will focus on healthcare burnout, workforce shortages, and inadequate healthcare resources in rural Canadian communities.
- Fourth-year medical students are preparing their residency applications, which are due at the end of November.
- The College is organizing panels with program administrators and current residents.
- These sessions will provide guidance on the application process, specialty selection, and the information required for different residency programs.

6.12Nursing
Councillor Fortier presents:

- The College hosted a Halloween-themed event.
- The event was successful, with students participating in activities, taking photographs, and interacting with one another.
- Puppy Yoga is scheduled for November 15.
- The event is being organized in partnership with Crossmount and New Home Rescue.
- The organizations will provide the puppies and support the associated rescue initiatives.
- Approximately $205 was raised on the first day that fundraising opened.
- Additional donations are welcome to support the animal rescue organization.
- Presentations were held regarding the International Studies Program within the Nursing Program.
- The discussions highlighted the value of international learning opportunities.
- There was interest in strengthening financial support for students who wish to participate in international studies.

6.13 Pharmacy and Nutrition
Councillor Udenze presents:

- A pancake breakfast was held on November 4.
- The intention was to encourage collaboration and interaction between students and professors.
- However, Councillor Udenze observed that many students primarily attended to collect food and then left.
- Although attendance was positive, the event did not fully achieve its intended objective of facilitating meaningful interaction.

- The Professional Enhancement Club is organizing fundraising activities on November 18.
- The activities will include a taco-in-a-bag fundraiser and a donation drive.
- Funds will primarily support dietetics-related participation in the Canadian Dietitians' annual meeting and conference.
- The Pharmacy and Nutrition Winter Formal is scheduled for November 20.

6.14 Prince Albert
Councillor Robinson had nothing to present

6.15 St. Thomas More
Councillor Masood presents:

- A candy-jar guessing activity was organized, and the winner was notified by email.
- The College has an upcoming corporation meeting scheduled for Saturday, similar in nature to a University Senate meeting.
- Further updates will be provided at the next USC meeting.
- A poppy-related meeting session was also held.

6.16 Western College of Veterinary Medicine
No councillor present

7. Business

7.1 Councillor Impeachment
The motion was resolved by the councillor from Nutrition and Pharmacy.

7.2 VP Indigenous Projects and Initiatives

The President explained that the idea originated approximately two months earlier during an Indigenous student event. During conversations with Indigenous undergraduate students, concerns were raised regarding the absence of a dedicated Indigenous Vice President position within the undergraduate student union.

Students questioned why the Graduate Students' Association had a dedicated Vice President position representing Indigenous graduate students while undergraduate Indigenous students did not have equivalent representation.

Students also expressed concern that discussions surrounding Truth and Reconciliation were often prominent, but there was insufficient action and institutional support to translate those discussions into meaningful change.

Following these conversations, the President met with the relevant representatives to explore creating a dedicated position. The proposal received positive initial feedback, leading to the development of a formal position portfolio.

The President presented statistics to demonstrate the importance of dedicated Indigenous representation.

The figures discussed included:

- Approximately 3,500 Indigenous students at the University of Saskatchewan.
- Approximately 400 Indigenous graduate students.
- The majority of Indigenous students, approximately 85%, are undergraduate students.
- Indigenous graduate students currently have dedicated representation through the Graduate Students' Association, while undergraduate students do not have an equivalent dedicated position.

The President also highlighted the difference in student retention rates:

- Non-Indigenous student retention from first year to second year: approximately 86%.
- Indigenous student retention from first year to second year: approximately 75%.

This represents an approximate 10–11 percentage-point difference.

The President argued that the disparity highlighted the need for improved support systems, representation, and institutional accountability for Indigenous undergraduate students.

The proposed portfolio has been developed with reference to the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Particular reference was made to Call to Action 92(ii), which concerns equitable employment opportunities and Indigenous participation. One of the major responsibilities proposed for the position is the development of an annual Reconciliation Action Plan.

The plan would:

- Be developed through consultation with Indigenous students across the university.
- Include perspectives from First Nations, Métis, and other Indigenous student communities.
- Identify priorities and areas requiring improvement.
- Be developed in alignment with the 94 Calls to Action.
- Establish initiatives and objectives for the academic year.
- Be implemented in collaboration with the USSU executive and relevant university stakeholders.
- Support continuity and accountability so that reconciliation initiatives are not forgotten or abandoned between executive terms.

The President explained that the position portfolio had already been reviewed with Indigenous student leaders, the Council of Wise Ones, and other relevant organizations.

The Indigenous Students' representative, Councillor Desjarlais, provided additional context and strongly advocated for creating the position. He emphasized that approximately 3,500 Indigenous students should have meaningful representation within the undergraduate student union.

He also noted that the Graduate Students' Association had maintained a dedicated Indigenous Vice President position for several years, making the lack of equivalent undergraduate representation particularly concerning.

Councillor Desjarlais highlighted several concerns:

1. **Lack of Consistent Representation**
    - Some Indigenous student leaders have had limited interaction with the USSU.
    - Certain student organizations have experienced periods without meaningful engagement or support from the student union.
    - A dedicated position would provide a consistent point of contact and improve communication.
2. **Need for Meaningful Reconciliation**
    - Land acknowledgements and public statements are important, but they must be accompanied by tangible action.
    - The proposed position would provide resources, responsibilities, and accountability to support meaningful reconciliation initiatives.
3. **Continuity Between Terms**
    - Annual executive turnover can make long-term initiatives difficult to maintain.
    - A dedicated position would help ensure that reconciliation work continues rather than being delayed or forgotten when leadership changes.
4. **Addressing Concerns About Tokenism**
    - Some individuals have expressed concern that the proposed position could become symbolic rather than producing meaningful change.
    - Councillor Desjarlais argued that the position would have defined responsibilities, measurable objectives, and regular accountability through council reporting.
    - He emphasized that providing a dedicated position with actual resources and responsibilities would be preferable to having no dedicated representation at all.
5. **Workload and Responsibility**
    - Councillor Desjarlais acknowledged that the proposed portfolio contains significant responsibilities.
    - However, he argued that the importance of reconciliation justified establishing a dedicated position and supporting the work through collaboration with other committees and Indigenous student organizations

Councillor Desjarlais acknowledged that the proposal had been developed relatively quickly and that some concerns still needed to be addressed. He supported allowing additional time for consultation and refinement rather than rushing the proposal through without sufficient consideration.

A Special General Meeting (SGM) was identified as a possible approach to provide more time for discussion, feedback, and student engagement

Councillor Udenze questioned how the proposed Vice President could effectively represent Indigenous undergraduate students across the university. She noted that

existing MSCs have established colleges and student groups through which they can gather feedback. The proposed position would potentially represent Indigenous students across multiple colleges and programs.

Councillor Desjarlais explained that several existing mechanisms could be used to communicate with Indigenous undergraduate students, including:

- Elections.
- Online forums.
- Meetings with Indigenous student organizations.
- Surveys.
- University-wide announcements.
- Direct engagement with Indigenous student communities.

He argued that these methods could provide a reasonable way to gather feedback and communicate student concerns.

Councillor Masood expressed support for the position but raised concerns about whether the proposed action plans would lead to meaningful outcomes.

The concern was that students could invest considerable time developing initiatives only for the university to reject or disregard them.

Councillor Desjarlais acknowledged that institutional resistance could occur.

He explained that the purpose of the position would be to ensure that someone remained responsible for continuing the work, maintaining communication, and following up on initiatives over multiple years.

President Safaeian added that this challenge was not unique to the proposed position. Other USSU executives also encounter situations where their initiatives require university approval.

Building strong relationships with university administrators and stakeholders would therefore be important.

He also emphasized that not every initiative would necessarily require university approval. Some projects could be developed independently through partnerships with local organizations and community groups.

Councillor Desjarlais further noted that previous initiatives, including discussions surrounding an Indigenous student fee intended to provide additional support, had not progressed sufficiently. A dedicated position could help maintain momentum and prevent such initiatives from being sidelined.

Councillor Fortier asked what council members could specifically do to support the proposed position.

Councillor Desjarlais emphasized the importance of awareness and outreach.

Councillors were encouraged to:

- Share information about the proposed position with their constituencies.
- Discuss the proposal with other students.
- Share relevant communications and social media posts from the Indigenous Students' Union.
- Encourage students to participate in the proposed Special General Meeting.
- Help ensure that students understand the purpose and responsibilities of the position.

He emphasized that student participation and awareness would be particularly important when the proposal eventually goes before the wider student body.

Chair Bytyqi requested clarification regarding the proposed timeline for an SGM.

President Safaeian indicated that the intended timeline would be after the final examinations, approximately January 2027.

However, the process would first require a motion at a future USC meeting.

Council would then discuss the proposed SGM and determine whether it should proceed.

Councillor Wilson asked whether the proposed Vice President would be elected by all university students or exclusively by Indigenous students.

The discussion also considered the existing Indigenous student verification requirements and how they could be incorporated into the election process.

Councillor Desjarlais stated that Indigenous students should have the opportunity to elect their own representative.

However, the exact voting mechanism had not yet been finalized.

It would require further investigation to determine whether the existing election system could accommodate a separate voting process for verified Indigenous students.

President Safaeian and Councillor Desjarlais acknowledged that this was an outstanding matter requiring further work.

Councillor Wilson raised a concern about ensuring fairness across the student population and whether establishing this position could create expectations for similar positions representing other minority groups.

Councillor Desjarlais explained that the position was being proposed in recognition of the historical and ongoing circumstances affecting Indigenous communities.

He emphasized the importance of recognizing the specific impacts of colonialism, residential schools, and the historical barriers experienced by Indigenous students.

He argued that the proposed position was intended to address these particular circumstances and support the ongoing work of reconciliation.

8. New Business

9. Questions, Comments, and Announcements

Councillor Fortier asked whether the USSU had access to student statistics, particularly information organized by college and academic programs. The concern originated from discussions within the student association regarding the ability to verify students' eligibility for certain representative positions. Councillor Fortier explained that the Nursing Students' Association did not have access to specific information identifying which students were enrolled in the Nursing Program. USSU Communications & Marketing mentioned that USSU does not have access to individual student enrollment information. While general student numbers may be available, specific identifying information cannot be accessed or obtained through the USSU.The discussion also acknowledged that providing access to individual student information could create privacy concerns.

VP Gonzalez Avila reminded councillors participating in committees to check their emails and respond to the availability polls. The executive team is working to finalize committee schedules this week, before Reading Week begins. Councillors were encouraged to respond promptly to ensure that committee meetings could be arranged without further delays.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 pm.