

IMAGINE

celebrating 75 years
1946 - 2021
BOLD & AMBITIOUS

COLLEGE OF GRADUATE & POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

DEAN'S REPORT TO CGPS COUNCIL | OCT '21



College Priorities

Enhancing Experiences | Creating Community | Developing Flexibility

We have much to continue collaborating on to position ourselves as a leading institution in graduate studies and postdoctoral training. This year we need to make significant progress on the various initiatives we began this past year namely **reimagining graduate funding**, undertaking a **collegial college governance review**, developing a **CGPS Indigenous Strategy**, **developing flexibility within College policies**, creating a framework for **transformative skills**, among other priorities. To move these initiatives will require the regular engagement of the CGPS Council that has purview over CGPS policies and, to accomplish this, we will be holding several extra Council meetings and various opportunities to connect, collaborate and incentivize.

The current mood of accelerating change considering the world as it is now, technology-enabled, and flexible is marked this fall by both celebration of the college's 75th anniversary with reflection on what has come before and how graduate education has evolved in Canada and with sadness at the sudden loss of our colleague, Ms. Kelly Clement, we say farewell. Together, we will remain committed to elevating the reputation of graduate education at USask by staying focused on our priorities and our commitment to excellence in graduate and postdoctoral programming.

Fall Term Daily Enrolment Trend data as of September 30th shows year over year enrolment **up overall by 3%** (+104 students), Indigenous enrollment is up 14% (+35 students) and international enrollment is flat at a 0.6% increase (+9 students).

Enhancing Experiences

- We saw improvement in successful Tri-Agency funding for doctoral students with **3 Vanier Scholars**: Fidelia Orji, Computer Science, Jocelyn Huntley-Peltier, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Gabrielle Doreen, Educational Foundations announced in April 2021; **9 NSERC awards**, 6 higher tier awards \$35,000 per year for 3 years; **11 SSHRC awards** (6 higher tier awards \$35,000 per year for 3 years); **2 CIHR awards (0 in 2020)**. **Current application quotas are 6 CIHR, 21 NSERC, and 23 SSHRC and the competition is underway.**
- We were visited by the NSERC's leadership September 14th and took part in the roundtable consultations as part of developing the NSERC 2030 strategic plan. I participated alongside a small group of students and faculty in a session with President Dr. Alejandro Adem and Vice President Dr. Danika Goosney to discuss building the next generation of talent. Many thanks to those who took time to provide our views on the importance of NSERC's investment in students and fellows and to those who provided suggestions to improve existing and developing new opportunities.

- We are excited to release the 2021-22 CGPS Imagine Magazine to help us celebrate the college's 75th anniversary and highlight just a few of USask's graduate students, fellows, and alumni. Download a copy of the magazine [here](#).
- The reimagine funding working group met several times and throughout the summer a proposal was developed to revamp CGPS scholarship programs. The proposal will be delivered to Council in November and fulsome consultations will continue through the fall.
- The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies welcomes [Research Acceleration and Strategic Initiatives \(RASI\)](#) as the new USask institutional home for the 2022 NSERC USRA awards. This transition will take place over the fall of 2021 and RASI will lead the USask institutional call for [NSERC USRAs for 2022](#). This move will facilitate greater integration of cross-institutional support for NSERC USRA students alongside undergraduate student researchers across campus via the SURE Student Undergraduate Research Experience program at RASI.
- CGPS' programs and operations team continue work to improve our service to students and units.
 - We are working with colleagues in TLSE revisiting the graduate credential evaluations process, holding the first virtual credential evaluation training session for Grad admins mid-September. Work continues to improve processes, create new and updated calculators, and improve assessment turnaround times.
 - The team continues to support units and encourages units to make use the CGPS Service Desk to help us track our response performance. Between May 1 and September 30, 2021, [212 graduate theses](#) have been successfully defended; [2,622 requests related to students in-program](#) received through Jira were resolved, [779 admissions were facilitated](#), and [79 leaves were processed](#).
 - ETD process improvements began October 1st with students required to submit a GPS 404 – Final Thesis Confirmation Form to the ETD ensuring that students submit the thesis version approved by their committee/supervisor, that the submission aligns with CGPS guidelines, and remind students to apply to graduate and that their supervisor(s) attests to the correct version being submitted.

Creating Community

- This year marked the first time for September 30 to be marked as a National Day of Reflection on Reconciliation, a campus closure and the campus buildings illuminated in orange displaying the calls to action. In pursuit of change that actively decolonizes and Indigenizes college policies, practices and programs and supports the graduate community in making concrete steps as acts of reconciliation, the CGPS' Indigenous Advisory Circle has begun to develop college framework in support of recruitment and retention of Indigenous graduate students. Collaborative and consultative opportunities will be shared as soon as they are available.
- The college continues development of a community of collaborators in the pursuit of graduate excellence.
 - The Supervisor Handbook was released and available for download from both the [CGPS website](#) and the College [PAWS channel](#).
 - To honour the tremendous achievement and resiliency in this unprecedented year, doctoral students, their supervisors, and guests attended an exclusive virtual *Toast to Doctoral Students* on June 24th. This unique celebration was hosted by Dean Burshtyn with invited special guests who virtually toasted the success of USask's doctoral students. Students, their families, and special guests joined us from around the globe on three virtual channels simultaneously.
 - The college pivoted from a traditional singular orientation event to a welcome week format. We engaged with approximately [600 new students through various events, coffee breaks and virtual seminars both CGPS hosted and at invited events](#). The CGPS Grad Hub team represented CGPS and

- the student body at several college and partner events. We continue work connecting students with each other and resources through the [Grad Hub](#). I enjoyed a pleasant noon hour with our GSA leaders handing out swag.
- Developed in 2019 by CGPS' own Postdoctoral Coordinator, the 3MP launched as a university-wide friendly competition for postdoctoral fellows. The competitors had 1 static slide and 3 minutes to explain the breadth and significance of their postdoctoral research to a non-specialist audience to showcase their research to the USask community. This year, the event was featured during postdoc appreciation week (September 20-24). Winners have been selected and will be announced shortly. I had the pleasure to view the seven entries as a judge and I look forward to the event gaining momentum in the years to come.
 - As part of building a strong relationship with the Government of Saskatchewan, I had the opportunity in September to meet Livia Castellanos, Executive Lead International Education & Jurisdictional Initiatives of the Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education. We met to discuss the provincial strategy for international education and opportunities to find points of collaboration.

Developing Flexibility

- On May 27th, Assoc. Dean Ryan Walker hosted a well-attended virtual seminar entitled, Advancing Holistic Admissions Processes in Graduate Studies. We heard from both campus experts and partners that thinking differently in terms of admissions processes can be successful.
- Associate Dean Ryan Walker assembled a working group to review and develop a proposal for changes on examining committees and defences ([Policy 8](#)). Several improvements are proposed. It is anticipated the implementation as the consultation and governance process gain momentum will be March 2022.
- Since last February and a continuing fluid pandemic environment, the College remains steadfast in its ability to provide flexibility where appropriate. There are changes that we are now proposing to become the norm such as:
 - Acceptance of [Duolingo as an alternative](#) language-proficiency assessment is now a permanent alternative.
 - Virtual, blended and in-person defences are now all viable options for defending students.
 - Leveraging various communication methods (operational bulletins, web-based and monthly newsletters) to help keep USask's graduate community informed.

We know that students are fatigued by constant change and uncertainty, and most recently the requirement of vaccination declaration. As Oct 4th, more than 99% of graduate students had filled out their declaration and the [vaccination rates](#) are very strong among our campus community. I want to thank all of you who are keeping our campus as safe as possible and the Associate Deans and faculty members who put in so much effort to reach graduate students especially remote students who were not aware of the need to declare. It is reassuring to see that students do read emails from their supervisors!