



Celebrating February as Black History Month is a time to learn and reflect within a Canadian context. I applaud the various activities throughout colleges and schools. I encourage you to take advantage of the University Library's various events including the [Provost's book club](#) that honour the legacy and contributions of members of the university's Black community. CGPS is contributing to the dialogue through different platforms and providing opportunities for our staff to connect in meaningful ways. February also marks welcoming many students back to campus for classes as we prepare to open the college front office albeit at reduced hours. I expect in the near term to see a return to more face-to-face instruction as well as development of parallel or unique online delivery of courses and programs. A reminder that our affiliation with Western Canadians Deans of Graduate Studies and participation in the Western Deans Agreement (WDA) enables graduate students to take a required course from other universities without paying tuition. Recent work has been done to streamline the administrative processes and provide better resources for students and staff regarding institution-specific requirements and deadlines. The CGPS continues to shift, adapt, and engage in the changing landscape of graduate education.

Graduate Community

The CGPS continues to monitor graduate student compliance to USask's [vaccine declaration requirement](#). The vast majority of students who were not compliant was due to a misunderstanding that those declarations must be made regardless of if they are accessing campus or not. Thank you, Department Heads, Graduate Chairs, and supervisors who have supported us, in tracking down students, especially incoming international students to get their vaccination declarations sorted out. With your help we avoided issuing suspensions apart from two.

I held a townhall style tuition consultation with graduate students on Jan 18th to discuss the proposed standard tuition rates for 2022-23. (240 students registered, 31.25% attended). We ran out of time for discussion – students were invited to submit written comments and questions. Works continues with the Deputy Provost on how funds will be directed for bursaries for continuing international students at all levels for those most impacted by the increases to the international differential.

A working group was created to understand and address concerns raised by graduate students in the fall of 2021 regarding delayed payroll payments. Pinch points and frustrations were illuminated and have since led to a collaboration between CGPS and ConnectionPoint to develop a communication strategy and knowledge transfer workplan that we hope will lead toward transparency and unified processes for all graduate payroll stakeholders.

Enhancing Experiences

The Pandemic Need-Based Bursary started accepting applications on Jan 5. To date 103 applications have been received; minority were PhD students. Many applicants were students who started in 2020 and 2021 with pandemic-related extra expenses (high travel and quarantine costs). Funded 91 students with varying amounts up to \$2500.

In an innovative approach to preparing graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to adapt to a post-pandemic job market, the College of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies has partnered with and is offering free access to the Aurora career-exploration platform. We are launching [Aurora from the Grad Hub on February Feb 21st](#).

Developing Flexibility

Changes to the advisory and examination committee composition were passed last month that increase flexibility for programs. Staged communications on implementation are in the works and our in-house team is capitalizing on the opportunity to do a concurrent procedural review to streamline the process parts of defence.

As Dean, I am committing to in three years assessing to ensure the changes are meeting the needs of faculty and students in supporting quality guidance and positive experiences for thesis examination.