



We continue to adapt to the ever-shifting pandemic situation. I'm in agreement with President Meric Gertler (University of Toronto) when he asked us to ... "reflect on the role universities can and should play in Canada's and the world's recovery in 2022 and beyond" in his [inaugural speech](#) as Chair of Board of Universities Canada titled "What do universities owe Canadians?" I have been reflecting on my own growth and change agenda for CGPS and the impact and opportunities provided by our changed way of working. With profound impacts on higher education in a constantly evolving and disruptive world, we need to more than ever consider how to establish predictability, stability and opportunity while modernizing the student experience in response to the ever-shifting needs of our graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

Graduate Community

On January 5th the CGPS will start accepting applications for the [Pandemic Need-Based Bursary](#) to support students who are facing financial difficulties because of the pandemic. The first review of applications begins January 15, 2022. The bursaries will be allocated until the funding set aside in 2021 has been exhausted.

On Dec 23rd the Pandemic Response Team issued a [delayed start to classes](#) (Jan 10th) as a precautionary measure and many courses are moved online until January 24th. Anyone attending in-person learning or working (or involved in research) at a USask location for the winter term is required to be [fully vaccinated](#). We continue to monitor graduate student compliance.

Enhancing Experiences

It is my pleasure to announce [Dr. Steven Rayan](#) as the inaugural interim Director of Interdisciplinary. This position was created to align with the goal of the University Plan 2025 [embracing interdisciplinarity](#). In addition to overseeing CGPS' individualized Interdisciplinary Program, Dr. Rayan will provide vision for interdisciplinary training encompassing existing programs, provide support and facilitate the development of new interdisciplinary initiatives, and in collaboration with campus partners, develop a strategy and activities to elevate interdisciplinary training and research across USask's graduate programs.

Through a unique partnership between the CGPS and GMCTL, and in collaboration with the First Nations University of Canada, the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation course was developed. Students learn about the many truths that are driving Canada's need for social justice, equality, healing, and reconciliation as embedded members of a learning community; combining independent learning with group discussion; incorporating engaging

materials like Indigenous stories, teachings, and conversations. Since the initial pilot, nearly 500 USask graduate students have completed, or are currently enrolled in the course. We invite all students who want to embrace the teachings of manacihitowin (...*translates to both Cree and Michif to "let us respect each other"*) [to enroll in the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation course](#). It will be both a personal and professional development opportunity to learn about the Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

I am pleased to participate in the newly formed Indigenous Identity Advisory Circle convened by the Vice Provost Indigenous Engagement.

Developing Flexibility

CGPS begins implementation of a pilot admissions blackout period beginning in the Spring 2022 term. For 15 days leading up to the start of a term, CGPS will only be processing admissions for students who are either current USask students or already located near Saskatoon and who have applied to begin in that term. This process change enables international students time to ensure study permits can be issued and avoid unexpected program start delays.

The [Reimagining graduate funding project](#) is uniquely positioned to compliment several of the Provincial Government's [growth plan initiatives](#) and consultations on the resulting proposal are ongoing. The proposed greater flexibility, funding allocated to academic programs administered by the CGPS will enable schools/colleges to develop competitive funding packages to recruit top students and provide multiyear guarantees. We are collaborating with college leaders and fine-tuning allocation formulas. Subject to necessary approvals, implementation planning will get underway in the spring of 2022.