

The findings and recommendations in this report reflect the authors' analysis of material from the consultations and actions that could flow from them. They are not, by their inclusion in the report, endorsed or adopted by the CGPS.

# **CGPS EDI Policy Review Consultations**

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**Prepared by: Andrew Hartman,  
Melissa Kyrejto  
Luis Corredor Duarte**



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

College of Graduate  
and Postdoctoral Studies

GRAD.USASK.CA

## Brief Introduction and Methods Review

To support the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies EDI Policy Review project, an initial round of student consultations was conducted. Three data collection activities were utilized: focus groups (n = 10), key informant interviews (n = 1), and online questionnaires (n = 24). Opportunities to participate in these engagements were promoted through email blasts, social media posts, PAWS announcements, and web promotions. Online questionnaires were administered through SurveyMonkey and were anonymous to allow students to share honestly without fear or repercussion.

Focus groups were arranged around key thematic similarities. Rationale for arranging groups thematically was to create homogenous groupings that allowed space for students to discuss similarities in policy barriers. Further, these groups were also to help establish initial safety amongst participants with similar lived experience. The thematic groups offered were international students and students with religious affiliations (n = 4), 2SLGBTQ+ identified students (n = 2), ableism and neurodivergent students (n = 1), and Caregivers, Parents, Mature, or 1<sup>st</sup> generation students (n = 4). All data from focus groups, key informant interviews, and questionnaires were qualitative in nature and analyzed through a thematic approach (Bruan and Clarke, 2019).

### *Satisfaction*

Students appreciated CGPS efforts to reach out to the full spectrum of students; they were appreciative of the thematic focus group approach and indicated this practice as a reason for participating. There was additional dialogue around students' perceptions that CGPS's priority of EDI was evident from the display of posters and other promotions around campus. Lastly, particular students articulated their perception that USask celebrates the diversity of graduate students (e.g., mothers, Indigenous students, international students, 2SLGBTQ students) through promotions and communications.

### Perspectives and Discourse around EDI

Perspectives around diversity varied across participants. Positive attitudes existed toward CGPS' current EDI work. A newly admitted student commented that the posters promoting diversity and inclusion communicated to them that this work is valued within CGPS. The student added that the awareness was "great", but more communication around the topic needs to occur. Other students described similar appreciation for the work already done by CGPS but described a need to ensure efforts tackle deep systemic issues and avoid focusing on superficial and performative changes.

Constructive feedback was provided by graduate students on steps needed to further EDI efforts. These included providing safe, non-judgmental spaces; faculty and staff that are representative of BIPOC folx, ensuring more opportunity for BIPOC and international students, and diversity represented in leadership positions throughout the institution. Further, students described needs for: 1) development and communication of an EDI statement, 2) the EDI initiative to gather data and identify gaps and disparities amongst diverse graduate students' groups, 3) develop a plan to resolve and reduce gaps amongst these graduate student groups.

Within the realm of Indigeneity multiple comments emerged. Firstly, was the need for stronger Indigenous identification standards for faculty and staff employed in roles responsible for progressing Indigenous rights and issues. Building on this, there is a need for a mechanism or an advocate available to address mediation and conflict within the institution specific to barriers Indigenous students face. Particularly, a comment was made regarding the ethical oversight of Indigenous research and how this delayed students' progress in their program. Lastly, students described the need for student groups and resources that strive to provide equitable access to cultural resources that bring together both Indigenous and Western knowledge systems.

There was a small sample of participants who identified EDI as being of negative impact upon their graduate experience. These participants felt that progression of EDI in policy, procedures, and initiatives, as highlighted by the below quotation:

*Yet I feel my current access to academic jobs is being constricted because of my skin color and my sexual orientation. I can control many things in my life, but I cannot control my skin color or sexual orientation. I am a white heterosexual male. Under the present social pressures, in particular such a strong social pressure to hire anyone but white academic males into academic positions, I feel I may need to find another career path that is accepting to my work ethic, values, skills & knowledge because academia is showing ever-more signals that I am not welcome. (Graduate Student)*

Given these attitudes around EDI, further awareness campaigns around the importance of EDI may be required. Prioritizing equitable access and opportunity may be needed to remind stakeholders that this work is essential in modern academia.

## General Policy Comments

Regarding policy and procedure, one of the main concerns described by graduate students revolved around awareness and accessibility to CGPS policy. Students consistently described difficulties understanding CGPS policy, their rights, and highlighted the importance of CGPS in *“ensuring that graduate students are aware of their rights as students. So much of what we know about our role is disempowering: ensure we know what we have the right to as well”* (Graduate Student). Regarding accessibility, students described difficulties in both finding and understanding institutional policies. One student suggested the creation of *“resources that ensure policies are in plain language, highlight the main points, and are easily accessible”* (Graduate Student). Of particular importance, there were comments around the policy and procedure related to thesis defence and comprehensive exams. Further, students described CGPS policies as *“very 'colonial', regimental. They are inflexible and do not reflect current, modern realities.”* (Graduate Student). In reviewing policy changes, it was suggested that stakeholders be brought together within the review process. A particular student added, *“Graduate students must be voting members of the Board of Governors as much as minority groups must be part of the policy-making process (more than just "consulted") about their struggles”* (Graduate Student).

Related to policy and graduate student engagement, students highlighted the concept of trust. Students mentioned holding distrust with the system due to an imbalance of power within institutional structures and decision making. This lack of trust prevents students from openly sharing opinions or asking for help. This trust was described as needing to be built over time through transparency and continued engagement. Suggestions on how to build and maintain trust included the creation of "trust

guidelines" to guide decision making around procedural and policy changes, consulting with graduate students around relevant changes, and engaging in actions that provide further transparency in decision making,

## Thematic Policy Discourse

Below we have arranged the consultation discourse around the thematic policy revision groups. This decision aimed to filter dialogue to related policies that can support the revision process by providing narratives, experiences, and suggestions to help improve graduate student pain points in policy and procedure.

### Student Life Cycle (Recruitment, Holistic Admissions & Retention)

#### 2. Admission Decisions

There was consistent discussion around the need for improving communication procedures regarding admission decisions. Suggested improvements involved communication of the admissions process, providing anticipated timelines after all applications requirements have been satisfied and including estimated dates students can expect to receive communication on the results of their application. Incidents of delayed responses regarding admission decisions were described by students as creating difficulties in both instances of acceptance and rejection. These difficulties are heightened for international students who are also applying for immigration documents (e.g., VISAs and study permits) and organizing travel and accommodation.

Students shared examples of barriers experienced based on their race and "status as immigrants". For example, *"insisting that someone who has lived and worked in Canada for many years needs to take an English language test to be admitted to a USask graduate program"* (Graduate Student). Students also asked for more transparency around the specific requirements for funding and how this may impact their acceptance: *"my admission experience to the Master's program was terrible. I was told in early April that I would not be admitted as I had not received a Dean's scholarship and would only receive admittance if I was granted SSHRC funding"* (Graduate Student). A separate student, who already secured funding, described the application process as being *"excessive in length... It took months, and I was told in the application that I didn't have anything left to submit. However, when I followed up with my supervisor, I needed to submit another form but was never notified. This was a massive pain point."* (Graduate Student).

However, there were also compliments to the admissions processes from a participant who was admitted through the College of Nursing's Holistic admission process. The student felt this provided an opportunity not available to them at other institutions; *"I feel like my life experience counted more at USASK.... I felt like USASK saw my potential"* (Graduate Student).

#### **Diversity in programs**

Given the responses from students it would appear there are differences in representation amongst programs. Students praised and appreciated when their program included representation from students from around the world. Others articulated the way diversity enhances their perspectives and enriches classroom discussion. However, there were international students who commented on a desire for more representation of Black students and Canadian students in their program, with a specific desire for Indigenous students and other students from Saskatchewan. To support this, it was suggested that

CGPS collect and use disaggregated data to understand which groups are most underrepresented in different programs, colleges, and CGPS.

#### 4. Student Life Cycle

Time in program was identified as a stressor for graduate students. Communication from departments was noted as a source of confusion, *“I have been told by my department that you used to be able to extend your time in program – have now been told that you can only extend it once and if you don’t finish you are out”* (Graduate Student). Students articulated difficulty in identifying a single source that contributed to delays in program progress. Rather, multiple interwoven contributing factors were shared: heavy program requirements, overwhelmed with starting thesis, financial stress, and mental health concerns. Many students praised and appreciated the increased dialogue around mental health while also stating there needs to be mechanisms to reduce stressors and provide resources to students on navigating these stressors.

Further on extensions, there was meaningful conversation around the need to change the narrative regarding time in program. The current narrative around masters’ students needing to complete their program within two-years was described as *“damaging to motivation”*, particularly in programs with more extensive requirements. Students described a desire for departments to assess if programs were feasible to complete in a two-year time frame. Students articulated stigma around asking for an extension and the fears that *“something must be wrong with them”* or students being *“that person”* (e.g., a troubled student needing assistance). There was a desire for the process to be more supportive and less punitive.

#### 7. Registration

Students described having difficulties around registration. Some students were unsure regarding the best course of action in situations where the required courses were not offered by the program. In these cases, there was conversation around the need to provide more support to students using this time to make initial progress on their thesis, but this can be overwhelming at the very start of one’s program. Further, in cases where students need to audit courses that are recommended by their committee, students were lost in how to enroll as an audit student in the course without incurring possible tuition implications. There was a desire for this process to be more clearly articulated to students. Lastly, students identified confusion around knowing when spring/summer classes are compulsory.

#### 8. Defence

Regarding the recent advisory and thesis defence policy changes, students stated appreciation for the specificity in changes within the policy’s language. However, students shared difficulties in understanding the policy changes and indicated that efforts are needed to ensure communication of policy changes are accessible. Students also expressed mild frustration around the lack of dialogue or feedback loops to discuss these changes; *“would have been great to have an opportunity to ask questions to help me understand the changes”* (Graduate Student).

## Awards and Scholarships

#### 10. Graduate Student Funding

There were varied conversations on the topics of student funding and scholarships. One main theme was scholarship criteria within an EDI lens. For example, it was mentioned that some scholarships

focused exclusively on both Black and Indigenous students which excluded other races and ethnicities. Students also described barriers of available funding opportunities for those without high averages and who are unable to volunteer (due to financial or family obligations). The combination of these two barriers often made students ineligible for scholarships and bursaries. Other comments were associated with the use of gendered terms in scholarship criteria. AFAB<sup>1</sup> individuals who identify as non-binary or trans men are unsure of how to navigate gendered criteria and/or lack access to appropriate scholarships. These individuals often experience similar patriarchal oppression and barriers but lack appropriate financial supports. Another demographic group that felt underrepresented in available scholarships were first generation students, specifically those who have a significant period between their previous and current education. International students also commented on the lack of available scholarships for them.

Another consistent theme discussed across thematic groups was on graduate student stipend rates. Students commented that stipend rates have not increased with inflation, which results in graduate students being underpaid and undercompensated given their educational level and contribution to the university. One student shared *“Even if students have savings, you cannot cover increased tuition, increased housing, increased bills, etc. I have known students who drop out of their programs because they cannot afford it.”* (Graduate student). Further, another student articulated that *“the stipend amount hasn’t changed and fails to match inflation. We’re at a point it’s no longer feasible to afford food, pay tuition, and obtain stable housing, even within the university’s own Grad Housing. For PhDs, a stipend should at least provide a living wage”* (Graduate student). Financial pains were a common contributor to student stress and mental health concerns.

Comments around administrative functions of funding included highlighting a need for improvements to financial forms, updating and streamlining the scholarship web search functions, demographic tracking, and clarifying the overall scholarship process. Students described financial forms as needing improvements to allow the complexities of students’ circumstances to be captured:

*I will note that when applying for scholarships and bursaries, it is often unclear how to communicate and discern a spouse's/partner's income from my own. At times, I have felt that my financial situation was misrepresented because an application process asked for some but not all info (e.g., asked for my partner's income, but not about child support that they provided). People's lives are complicated and as such, more 'open space' to communicate such complexities would be appreciated. (Graduate Student)*

Further, mature students described difficulties in navigating USask’s scholarship database. It was suggested to provide a video tutorial on the scholarship site and ensure that students can search for keywords relevant to them, such as, “mature student, work experience, lone parent, low income, etc.” They suggested consultation with students in identifying and creating search terms that reflect language most likely used by students, as opposed to what administration thinks students would search by.

To ensure scholarships and bursaries are distributed equitably to diverse groups, students stated that the recipient’s demographic should be tracked, and this information shared publicly. This would allow for transparency, and would help improve student trust around the scholarship adjudication process. Students described the many forms and diverging requirements of varying scholarships as being overwhelming and a barrier when also navigating other non-academic

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<sup>1</sup> Assigned Female at Birth

responsibilities (e.g., children, caring for elderly parents). Further, one participant identified a specific scholarship's (i.e., Global Engagement Scholarship) as being "overly bureaucratic". The student described receiving 'vague information' around the application steps and experienced difficulties conversing with ISSAC, which resulted in requiring reapplication. Perception of financial need was commented on needing to be adjusted depending on a student's circumstances, "*financial need is quite subjective! When you have children, an annual income of \$60,000 might be seen as high-income for a single person, but it does not go very far for a family of 4 or more. I would love to see more support for parents.*" (Graduate Student). Overall, there was a strong desire for improvements to be made throughout all stages of the scholarship application process.

### *11. Graduate Student Employment*

Employment was identified as a barrier for many graduate students, specifically international students and students whose enrollment was part-time. International students described difficulties in locating on-campus employment, which may be their only option for employment. Students who were qualified for positions mentioned not receiving an interview or other communications, which lead to students feeling unmotivated to continue applying, and frustrated with not receiving feedback. Other students noted that many student employment opportunities were limited to full-time students which disproportionately impacts students who are unable to study full-time due to life circumstances or learning exceptionalities. Difficulty securing employment and limitations of allowed work hours (e.g., max at 20 hours per week) contribute to financial stress that was further exacerbated by inflation and rising costs. Students described not being able to work enough hours to support oneself in Canada, and thus, could not focus on their studies.

Regarding employment, one student shared high praise for the impact Career Services had in supporting them in understanding how to frame their experiences. They highlighted that there needs to be further support for students who are international, have immigrant status, or other demographics that may not have inherited the social capital needed to be successful in the job market. It may be helpful that CGPS and Career Services partner to offer workshops that support graduate students in securing employment. Further, unpaid internships and volunteering were identified as not being an accessible option for everyone to build their portfolio.

Graduate student employment is an important factor to resolve as it addresses multiple pain points in a graduate student journey. Obtaining employment during one's graduate studies provides Canadian work experience that is important and often desired by employers, and thus, providing access to resources can facilitate students obtaining employment after their time at USASK.

### *12. Tuition & Fees*

Tuition and financial stress were a constant topic of discussion amongst the thematic groups. These comments were consistent across domestic and international students. For international students there are additional factors and barriers. Students who come from countries with unstable economies experience greater impact from tuition increases and shifts in exchange rates. Students commented that considerations should be made regarding fluctuations in exchange rates of countries and how throughout a program this can impact international students. For example, tuition can almost double between a student's start time and the end of their program just from fluctuation in exchange rates alone.

## **Holistic Student Approach (Student Support, Gender-diversity, Leaves)**

### 3. Supervision

Many positive comments and experiences between graduate students and their supervisors were shared, even in moments of complex situations. For example, one student shared an experience when their initial supervisor took an appointment at another institution. The student commented that although their supervisor leaving was stressful, their experience was quite seamless from the supervisors' efforts of arranging a new supervisor; *"I cannot thank her enough for sorting that out for me, so my transition was smooth. It was hard, because I feel like she was one of the reasons I came to Canada. But her doing that work made me feel like I was still taken care of"* (Graduate Student). This example led to a conversation that raised questions for students in other circumstances, such as what happens when a supervisor goes on sabbatical. What supports are available to students when supervisors are on sabbaticals? Who is responsible for helping the student during these periods?

When life circumstances negatively impacted their studies, students mentioned not knowing how or where to ask for help. Students observed supervisors struggling with navigating what to do, and learning about available resources, and institutional processes, especially when there were mental health concerns. While sympathetic, there was an expressed desire for supervisors to take a more active role in connecting with CGPS to explore possibilities and communicate these to the student. This was particularly important for international students that have less social capital and must navigate additional processes and circumstances (e.g., student visas, racism) compared to their domestic peers.

A potential solution identified was a resource that guides supervisors through potential situations and lists available supports they could connect graduate students with. The resource should assist supervisors in accessing available resources, processes, or possibilities. This was noted as particularly important when graduate students are in moments of crisis that overwhelm the student while reducing their available cognitive resources and abilities to identify and express their needs.

On the topic of switching supervisors, students raised a need for further information available around managing supervisor conflict and the procedure for switching supervisors. One student commented on how helpful meeting with the Associate Dean at CGPS was in exploring options, possibilities, and steps they could take (e.g., maintaining a record of events). However, there were comments around the need to be clearer regarding the availability of support and how to engage with them.

When communicating this information, it's important to clearly articulate there is safety to discuss supervisor conflict. The issue of safety is important as students suggested many do not speak out due to small department sizes and fear of retaliation. Again, for international students, there may be cultural perspectives regarding respecting and adhering to authority. Students observed a need to change the narrative around switching supervisors/supervisor conflict to change the optics of the process away from appearing "official, scary, or threatening".

### 13. Student Accommodations & Supports

Discussion of student accommodation was a prevalent conversation amongst several thematic groups. Several concerns regarding barriers were raised by students. An initial concern relates to the promotion of AES services, and the perceived focus of this resource on undergraduate students. Graduate students also noted a combination of confusion and lack of available information around how approved accommodations are applied within the graduate student context. For example, *"what does dealing with 'time and a half' look like when looking at a thesis or a qualifying or comprehensive exam?"*



*My supervisor just took the statement "time and a half" and used a literal interpretation. (Graduate Student). Moreover, when accommodations are related to non-medical circumstances, how these accommodations should be utilized is unclear:*

*My only suggestion here would be to communicate to parent/caregiving students some examples of how accommodations would work. For example, could I ask for an extension for a paper? Can I withdraw without penalty? What's fair, what are my options, and what would it 'cost' me to take advantage of these options? (Graduate Student)*

Based on students' comments, there appears to be a lack of awareness of the graduate student accommodations policy between CGPS and AES amongst students, supervisors, and committee members.

Regarding leaves, students indicated that several process improvements needed to take place. Firstly, students in complex circumstances may require a combination of supports and a temporary leave:

*I wish my program college had better information and long-term plans. I struggled to stay in class during a family crisis. At the outset of the program, we were told that "we understand that life happens, but if you have to withdraw, we don't know when you will be able to start back in the program." Not re-assuring. I certainly questioned why I registered. (Graduate Student)*

However, as graduate students can lack access to income that cover their cost-of-living, they are often in particularly vulnerable positions. When students are requesting bereavement (i.e., compassionate) leaves, the process should be designed to permit leaves regardless of the assumed closeness and relationship between the student and the bereaved member (e.g., biological family). Lastly, there exists disparities regarding the practices of parental leaves between international and domestic students. International students were reported having less than a 1/3 of the parental leave based on the IRCC:

*International students who become parents are not allowed the same leave period (5 months instead of 20 months) per IRCC. The university (CGPS, Colleges, ISSAC) were unaware of such differences put in jeopardy students' legal status. A few friends were forced by their departments to "choose to put their studies on hold" to not be kicked out. Supervisors' responsibility is rarely mentioned, and many students (especially international) suffer from unprofessional supervisors. No office on campus has come to help such students.*

Such an issue requires both improvements to communication with graduate students around IRCC policies and engaging in discourse with this body to create more equitable parental opportunities for international students.

Students were unsure of resources, services and events available to them during a period of leave (e.g., student wellness, pastoral services). This continued connection to campus is important, particularly for international students whose community and support system may be limited to those within the institution. Students available access to campus while on leave should be clearly articulated to students through CGPSs website and the entire process.

Further, there lacks a re-onboarding process for graduate students returning from leaves to support them in navigating the institutional, programmatic, and individual changes that may have transpired during their absence. For example, students may require new accommodations to continue their studies, especially in the context of students returning from medical or mental health leaves. Supporting students in this re-entry can ensure graduate students are successful by connecting them with the appropriate supports to assist them as they complete their program.

Lastly, there needs to be more information around students who decide to withdraw from their program but may wish to re-engage in a future date. Allowing students to make informed choices regarding exiting their program and the options for their future return, can support students who may want to take a break from their studies.

## Other Notes

### Online Learning

Students admitted into professional programs (e.g., nurse practitioner, educational administration) articulated barriers within online learning. As these programs core learnings are through lectures, students shared the importance of recording lectures. There were various rationales for this desire; some students from other provinces stated early morning classes were difficult from the combination of the time change and other life responsibilities (e.g., dropping child off at school, nursing shift the night before).

Students who were parents described barriers to mandatory classes in their programs. Students requested accommodations in situation when parents need to be home to care for a sick child. A particular student noted that due to virtual offerings from COVID-19 they were not experiencing any issues, but if mandatory classes shifted to in-person they would be unable to attend

Students also commented on dissatisfaction towards assessment methods within these programs. The nursing practitioner program was limited to multiple choice exams, which were identified as barriers for mature students where memory retrieval within an exam context isn't as strong as younger, more recent graduates. To close, students described programs offered entirely online created difficulties in cultivating a sense of belonging at USASK. It should be noted that these programs tend to have higher admissions rates and larger programs, which may contribute to difficulties in developing relationships.

## Recommendations & Considerations

Based on the student consultations and data analysis we have synthesized the information into recommendations and considerations for the College of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies. These recommendations have been separated into two categories: short-term and long-term. Short-term recommendations are more immediate actions that can be taken by the college which are more attainable, require shorter implementation time, and do not require further research into devising a strategy for the changes. Longer-term recommendations have larger systemic impacts and will either

require further research or consultations with graduate students in devising the most appropriate changes.

### **Short-time Actionable Recommendations**

- Create an EDI statement to be housed on the CGPS website
- Continue consultation efforts with graduate students around policy changes, and providing follow up engagements to support relationship and trust building.
- Develop a communication strategy to ensure students are aware of their rights and relevant policies they need to operate within.
- Revise policy to ensure inclusivity (i.e., gendered language) and accessibility when engaging with policy. Noting that students may be required to navigate policy in troubled contexts (e.g., grieving, ill, crisis).

### **Admissions**

- Collect admissions data to identify groups that are most underrepresented in different programs and colleges and develop a strategy to address this issue.
- Implement clearer communication around admissions process, procedures, expected dates of decisions, and requirements for funding to be admitted.
- Adjust admission decision dates to support international students between admission decision and travel and immigration timelines.
- Develop procedures that ensure graduate students are updated on the status of their applications and alerted when there are missing forms.

### **Communication**

- Improve messaging regarding how graduate student support systems work. Students describe confusion around who to approach with issues during their studies. Efforts are required to improve this messaging at multiple institutional levels.
- Develop a communications campaign to increase awareness of CGPS, CGPS' role, and distinguish CGPS oversight from other campus supports (i.e., student central, GSA, department).
- Improve awareness of Grad HUB – students mentioned their appreciation for how information was communicated within the GradHUB. However, other students were unfamiliar with the platform and requested resources that already existed within the GradHUB.
- Facilitate discourse around mental wellness in the context of academia and nurturing one's mental health throughout their graduate student's program. Normalize help-seeking behavior and engaging with available campus support. Resources may require promotional campaigns to ensure graduate students are aware of the services available to them.
- Adjust policy, procedures, and communications around taking leaves and extending time in program to promote wellness and remove punitive narratives.
- Improve communication around aspects governing the academic lifecycle. For example, when spring/summer classes are compulsory or the process for auditing classes required by committees.
- Develop a communication strategy and steps that ensure students are aware of policy and other relevant institutional changes through multiple channels that are accessible knowledge transfers (i.e., department emails, infographics, forums, PAWS announcements). Important information should be communicated through multiple channels.

- Work with departments to create coordinated messaging regarding time in program, encouraging students to begin their thesis early if courses are not offered in a given academic year, and clearly describing non-course program requirements (i.e., internship).
- Raising awareness of exchange rates and their implications on graduate students' abilities to cover tuition and living expenses; particularly for students originating from countries with unstable economies. Students may want to exchange larger amounts of funds at advantageous moments in their program. Options should be explored through collaborations with ISSAAC and graduate students.

### **Scholarships**

- Assess scholarship criteria through an EDI lens (non-Black and Indigenous inclusive scholarships). Provide communication around how AFAB gender expansive individuals navigate criteria and ensure funding opportunities for queer individuals, individuals who do not have competitive grades/unable to volunteer, first generation students, and international students.
- Audit for improvements throughout all stages of the scholarship application process, from searching (i.e., using colloquial search words) to applying (i.e., improving financial forms) for awards.
- Develop resources to support students in navigating the USask scholarship web search and application process through development of video tutorials.
- Explore ways to ensure equitable distribution of scholarships and funding across student groups, through recording, tracking, and reporting student recipients' demographic. Or distributing publicly a list of larger award recipients.

### **Student Accommodations & Supports**

- Collaborate with AES to develop a communication strategy for graduate student accommodations (i.e., time and half with comprehensive exams)
- Improve awareness of the CGPS accommodation policy and procedures amongst students, supervisors, and committee members.
- Provide information and processes available for managing supervisor conflict, switching supervisors, and when to begin engaging with the Associate Dean of CGPS.

### **Supervision**

- Developing policy and processes that articulates who's responsible for a student supervision when a supervisor is on sabbatical.

### **Leaves**

- Ensure policies and practices for bereavement leaves can be accommodated regardless of assumed relationship and/or impact of loss.
- Improve communication around students' access to campus resources when on leaves, ensuring policy reflects what is permitted.
- Create a re-onboarding process for students returning from leaves that identifies necessary accommodations for successful return, communicates relevant programmatic and institution changes, and sets the student up for success.
- Develop further instructions and information for students who decide to withdraw from their program but have an interest to potentially re-engage their studies at a future date. This will allow

students to make informed choices regarding exiting and options for re-entering their program, if they ever desired to do so.

- Research the inequalities around parental leaves for international students and advocate for similar permitted leaves between domestic (up to 20 months) and international students (5 months).

## **Longer-term Actionable Recommendations**

- Conduct future consultations and assess the viability of having a graduate student sit as a voting member on the institution's Board of Governors.

## **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

- Collect data around EDI to identify gaps and develop a plan that aims to address identified gaps and resolve systemic barriers.
- Communicate and promote statistics on diversity within CGPS to increase awareness around progress.
- Support the recruitment and training of faculty and leadership at all levels throughout the institution that are representative of BIPOC folx and other diverse/equitable identities.
- Advocating for stronger Indigenous identification declaration standards for individuals with faculty and employment positions within the institution.
- Improve the advocacy process/mediation for graduate students within the institution – including Indigenous diverse advocacy groups and mediation for institutional processes.

## **Employment & Funding**

- Consult with the graduate student union around MA and PhD PSAC hourly rates. Students should be appropriately compensated for the additional years of experience and education between these levels of study.
- Provide programming to support international students in locating, applying, and obtaining on campus employment.
- Support more on campus employment and funding opportunities to BIPOC and international students.
- Conduct an analysis of graduate student stipend rates against expected work hours and inflation to ensure a living wage is obtainable.

## **Supervision**

- Develop a student supervisor handbook of scenarios, available resources, and institutional processes for high crisis situations (e.g., losses, health). The resource should help supervisors in being aware of available resources, processes, or possibilities to equip them in supporting students navigating their circumstances.

## **GradHUB**

Based on the results from the focus groups and surveys, we have provided recommendations for additions to CGPS's Grad HUB platform.

- Finding your pack – a section of the GradHUB that supports students from common backgrounds (i.e., AES, International students, Indigenous students, parents, 2SLGBTQ+) in navigating information that is representative of unique components of a graduate student journey related to their demographics. For example, with international students they already

begin with smaller communities here creating additional difficulties in locating supports and resources, “we have a lower threshold for impact to our wellbeing.” (Graduate Student)

- Program mapping – developing resources that supports students in planning their program holistically, facilitating awareness and completion of various program elements.
- Comprehensive Exams – developing a resource that supports students in preparing for comprehensive exams and guiding them on how to acquire information from their department.
- System navigation - Information around navigating supervisor conflict, program extensions, and the available resources and supports to these issues.
- Building social connection and belonging by supporting students in meeting new students, developing student groups, and facilitating ‘meetup’, orientation, or learning community type events.