The beauty and diversity of Saskatchewan is profound.

Under our province’s endless sky, and situated on Treaty 6 territory by its swiftly flowing river (Kisiskatchewani Sipi) in Saskatoon, we, at the College of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies are proud to call this place home.

We are grateful to share this space with you, the Homeland of the Métis and pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

Design & layout by
Momo Tanaka and the Grad Hub team
The Imagine Magazine is truly a great opportunity to recognize and celebrate the successes of our graduate community.

USask’s graduate students and postdoc scholars serve as role models, inspiring us all to commit to quality and excellence in all that they do. They are marvellously diverse and contribute to the university and the community in so many ways. They are professionals gaining new advanced credentials, researchers dedicated to creating new understanding and finding innovative solutions to problems, and creative spirits that push us to examine our experience as individuals and as a collective.

By drawing attention to and celebrating excellence in community service, leadership, research, teaching, and more it is no surprise that these attributes are highly valued by the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and USask’s graduate committee.

Scholars, continue to be bold & ambitious.
Megan Wasden is currently studying at USask to obtain a Master of Science in Animal Science. Throughout her research and course work, she is specializing in ruminant nutrition and grazing and is studying under the supervision of Dr. H.A. (Bart) Lardner. Her thesis project consists of studying the effects of annual and perennial forage systems on forage biomass and quality, grazing animal performance, enteric emissions, and system economics. Megan has a strong background in beef cattle production as she was raised on her family’s beef cattle operation near Spiritwood, Saskatchewan. Megan has been involved in many organizations and extracurricular activities throughout her life such as various sports, 4-H, the APS Graduate Students Association, and the Canadian Beef Expert Network, just to name a few. She is also involved in her Metis community back home and is part of an indigenous student mentorship program. Megan has been extremely grateful to receive two scholarships during her studies, the Indigenous Graduate Leadership Award, and the Keith Gilmore Foundation Prize for Beef Cattle Innovation. Upon completion of her degree, Megan plans to begin her career in the agriculture industry focusing on ruminant nutrition and grazing management and hopes to return home to continue growing her beef cattle herd.
The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe topful
Of direst cruelty!

Macbeth Act 1, scene 5, 38–43

Emily Pickett (she/her) received her Double BA (Hons.) degree in Drama and English in 2020 and completed her MA in English in 2022. During her undergraduate studies, she had the privilege of appearing in five productions at Greystone theatre, and she was honored to receive the 2020 Walter Mills Award for the most distinguished graduate in Drama. She carried her love of theatre forward into her Masters program, where her SSHRC-funded project paper, “I Dare Do All That May Become a Man: Establishing a Textual Case for an All-female Macbeth,” examined the feminist potential of staging gender-bent, all-female productions of Shakespeare’s plays. After receiving the incredible opportunity to put her theories on genderbending into practice as the Assistant Director for Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan’s 2022 production of Cymbeline, she plans to continue her research on Shakespeare, feminism, and gender-bending with a PhD in English at Queen’s University. As she sets out on this new stage of her academic journey, Emily is extremely grateful to all her friends and teachers at the U of S who helped her discover her love of drama and supported her development as a scholar and an artist.
Gilbert Adum is a new Vanier Scholar at the School of Environment and Sustainability Science (SENS). He is also the Founder and Board President of Save Ghana Frogs, an award-winning West African conservation non-profit, which since September 2011 has been consistently working with Indigenous communities to improve their livelihoods, conserve forests and save endangered frogs. The German Deutsche Welle (DW News) has listed Gilbert’s conservation work among its 3000 Global Ideas. His work has also been featured in numerous news outlets such as Scientific American, Humboldt Kosmos, and Mongabay. He is one of few Africans to date to win the highly acclaimed Green Oscar: The Whitley Award. Gilbert’s holds MPhil degrees in Wildlife Management and Conservation Leadership from KNUST (Ghana) and University of Cambridge (England) respectively.

Gilbert’s Vanier Scholarship (Ph.D.) research seeks to involve Indigenous Peoples in the Redberry Lake Biosphere Region and traditional territories of Mistawasis Nêhiyawak to find better approaches of balancing nature conservation and development. He says it is due to unsustainable development that nature has been in crisis since the 1980s, with at least a million animals and plants on the brink of disappearing. Yet Indigenous Peoples and local communities who live in biodiverse areas and are often the right-holders continue to get poorer and poorer. Gilbert’s research will hopefully contribute to a world where these Indigenous peoples and local communities will once again command the centre stage, living in harmony with nature.

Living in harmony with nature

1 saveghanafrogs.org
2 youtube.com/watch?v=UCAgYm4uWv0&fs=141s
3 mongbay.com
Alvin Alvarado is a PhD student in the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan, under the supervision of Dr. Bernardo Predicala and Dr. Denise Beaulieu. During his doctoral studies, Alvin was awarded the Dean’s Scholarship and the prestigious Canada Graduate Scholarship for his high academic performance, outstanding research and achievements. His current research focuses on investigating the application of nanotechnology for the remediation of deoxynivalenol (DON) and masked mycotoxins in wheat grains and animal feeds. Findings of his study will provide additional information on the properties and effects of masked mycotoxins on raw grains, animal feed, or when grains are utilized in other industries (e.g., brewing industry). Mitigating contamination of DON and masked mycotoxins will increase utilization of contaminated grains. This can also open up options for the grain industry to remediate their low-value grains and utilize them for feed or any other use, as well as mitigate the adverse impact of feeding contaminated grains to livestock.

Alvin has over ten years of research experience. He has published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals, technical reports, and conference proceedings, and delivered presentations at national and international conferences. Before starting his PhD studies, he worked for nearly three years as a scientist in a consulting and mining company.

Originally from the Philippines, Alvin received his bachelor’s degree from the Visayas State University. He earned his master’s degree from the University of Saskatchewan, where his thesis work looked into the use of nanotechnology to address the long-standing issue of gas and odour emissions from swine barns. He won first place in the R.O. Ball Young Scientist competition at the Banff Pork Seminar, and his MSc thesis was recognized as the Best Graduate Thesis by the Canadian Society for Bioengineering. Apart from research and studies, Alvin likes to travel and explore new places.
Alexandria R. Pavelich (BA, YorkU ’19; MA, USask ’21) is a current PhD student in the Department of Sociology working in the One Health & Wellness Office under the supervision of Dr. Colleen Dell. Her Master’s work on the topic of “mattering” garnered international attention after her research showed that service dogs can be a catalyst in reducing suicidality among Canadian Veterans living with PTSD. Outside of academia, Alexandria volunteers with the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog program, and sits on the board of directors for the Saskatchewan Pain Society where she is a patient advocate for trauma-informed care policies for individuals living with chronic pain. Her doctoral work will continue to explore the benefits of animal-assisted intervention and the human-animal bond, but in the context of emotional and physical pain. She feels very gracious to be able to conduct innovative research in her home province given its presence of exceptional female critical health scholars, many of whom have provided Alexandria strong mentorship throughout her graduate studies.

Pezhman Zolfaghari Didani is a current PhD student in Chemical Engineering at the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering, USask. Originally from Urmia, Iran, he has obtained his bachelor and MSc. degrees in chemical engineering from Urmia University of Technology and University of Tabriz, respectively. He has a strong research background in wastewater and air treatment processes and has published several peer-reviewed articles in leading scientific journals. Studying under the supervision of Dr. Jafar Soltan from the College of Engineering and Dr. Shelley Kirychuk from the College of Medicine, he will focus on an interdisciplinary research project targeting airborne pathogens such as SARS-CoV-2. Combining his engineering background with the health sciences, Pezhman is working on the development of a high-performance air disinfection technique that can eliminate a wide range of airborne pathogens and organic pollutants in the indoor spaces, providing a healthy air to the residents.
Clean air.
Healthy people.
The Social Innovation Lab on Gender and Sexuality (SIL) is a community-university laboratory that brings together community organizations, students, and faculty to collaborate on inter-sectoral projects ranging from community evaluation, social analysis, policy review, to advocacy work, and much more. SIL comprises socially engaged scholars in gender and sexualities studies, community-based participatory research, human rights law, and social justice.

Academic team members take responsibility for training and supervising the next generation of social innovators, while community organizations lead and determine the scope, timelines, and goals of the projects. SIL amplifies the resiliencies of gender and sexually diverse communities by including and empowering their tremendous creativity and capacity for innovation.

**Natasha (Nash) Steinback** (BA Hons Sociology, MA Public Policy, PhD Public Policy in progress) explored collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) to understand how Canadian provincial public services recognize and support employment equity. In partnership with the Government of Saskatchewan, this exploration identified best practices and recommendations to apply more inclusive language within CBAs. The project helped situate the importance of taking equity seriously in the workplace.

“SIL is an opportunity to move the needle and work alongside people who are passionate about systems change. Inclusive language might seem like a small step forward, but I am thankful for every opportunity to make my community the tiniest bit better.”

**Isabelle MacLean** (BA Hons International Studies and Modern Languages, Juris Doctorate, Master of Laws in progress) worked with The Enchanté Network on highlighting available funding opportunities for 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations. This project involved an environmental scan and drafting a report to identify how funding practices can be reformed to better accommodate the particular needs and limits of 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations.

“I have benefitted so much from my time with SIL. The work I have done has highlighted the importance of academic skills in furthering goals of social justice, illustrating the ways in which post-secondary students of all levels can assist community organizations.”
**John Malyk** (BSc Psychology, BSc Natural Science, MA Applied Social Psychology in progress) is evaluating a Trans ID Clinic facilitated through a partnership with CLASSIC, TRANS Project, and UR Pride Centre. This collaborative clinic supports trans and gender diverse people in navigating the process of changing their legal name and/or gender marker. John’s project is evaluating the impacts of the clinic and providing recommendations to the province to improve the process of changing one’s ID for queer folx.

“Through this experience I have gained a better understanding and appreciation of how research and evaluation can be mobilized to help improve the lives of marginalized people.”

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**Momo Tanaka** (BA Hons Sociology, MA Sociology in progress) is working on a legal needs assessment for JusticeTrans. This project seeks to understand barriers 2STNBGN communities in Canada face when confronting legal issues and accessing justice. Momo conducted the statistical analysis of survey data and is currently mobilizing the findings through visual representations of the research findings. The knowledge from this project will help inform the 2STNBGN+ community and policy creators in reducing barriers within the legal system.

“Working on such an ambitious project with really passionate community members has been amazing. I’m really proud to help share the research findings with the people who need it the most: the 2STNBGN+ community and people creating policy that impacts the community.”

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**Morgana Machea** (BA Hons. International Relations, MA Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies) worked with OUTSaskatoon on a realist evaluation of common practices in 2SLGBTQ+ youth housing programs. Through an environmental scan, Morgana interviewed and analyzed data from service providers operating queer youth housing programs across North America. These findings supported the development of an evidence-based blueprint to support the creation of future 2SLGBTQ+ youth housing.

“I gained knowledge of how housing fails 2SLGBTQ+ youth, but I also gained hope, meeting wonderful people passionate about addressing gaps in services. This learning has impacted how I see my own research and will influence my future PhD research.”
Amanda Mitchell is a MSc student studying under the supervision of Dr. Bobbi Helgason in Soil Science. Amanda grew up on a grain farm in Southwestern Saskatchewan and completed her BSc in Agronomy with a minor in Soil Science at the University of Saskatchewan in the spring of 2021.

Amanda’s current research investigates microbial contributions to soil carbon sequestration in Saskatchewan croplands by examining carbon dynamics in buried surface horizons. Buried surface horizons formed when soil eroding from the knolls of hills accumulated in the depressions of the hillslope typically when the fields were being managed with conventional tillage. These buried surface horizons are rich in stable organic matter making them a key area to understanding carbon sequestration in soils. This past year Amanda was Academic Vice President on the Soil Science Graduate Students Association and student representative on the College of Agriculture and Bioresources Graduate Advisory Committee. Amanda enjoys curling, hockey, hiking, riding horses, and helping on her family’s farm in her spare time.
Kayla Lindenback is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Plant Sciences. Her research interests are in plant genetics and plant breeding to develop and improve agricultural crops to benefit the environment and to improve the nutritional value of the food that we all eat. Her current thesis work is regarding improving a new type of canola (Brassica napus) that is engineered to have oil containing EPA and DHA. EPA and DHA are omega 3 essential fatty acids that aren’t synthesized by the human body but are necessary for our cardiovascular, skin, brain and eye health. Canola contains a biosynthetic pathway that creates precursory fatty acids but omega 3 canola has been bioengineered with algal and microalgal genes to complete to the pathway to synthesize EPA and DHA. This omega 3 canola is a sustainable terrestrial source of EPA and DHA which we would only otherwise get from mining the ocean of fish.
Dr. Zoe Gillespie graduated from USask this summer (2022) with a PhD in Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology. Originally from England, Gillespie moved to Saskatoon in 2014 to complete her MSc under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Eskiw (Food and Bioproduct Sciences). Aligned research interests, and an excellent laboratory environment, encouraged Gillespie to further pursue her PhD in the same lab. Here, Zoe studied how to manipulate nutrient intake to treat cellular defects associated with Hutchinson-Gilford Progeria Syndrome, a condition in which children age at an accelerated rate and have a limited lifespan (~14 years).

During her time at USask, Gillespie received around 35 scholarships, awards and commendations, including a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship. She is now a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Toronto, investigating the genomic regulation of pre-term and term labour, having ranked first nationally in the CIHR 2020/21 fellowship competition. Despite a change in scenery, Zoe hopes to maintain the positive relationships and collaborations developed during her studies. In the next five years, the goal is to start her own research group, focusing on genomic regulation of orphan and rare diseases. The hope is to bridge lab research and clinical treatments to help those with rare and orphan diseases more rapidly.

Gillespie believes that work-life balance is incredibly important for graduate students and should be encouraged by faculty. She accredits her own extracurricular activities to her success in research and funding competitions. Gillespie particularly enjoys participating in scientific outreach activities with students of all ages. While she found one of the best parts of graduate studies was introducing undergraduate students to research; her favourite memories are of running science workshops for children at SWITCH, a student led community clinic, proving to others that science is possible at all ages. Zoe believes that as a researcher, one of the greatest and lasting impacts one can have is to inspire future scientists.
Dr. Colleen Dell (PhD), a faculty member in the Department of Sociology in USask’s College of Arts and Science, is the 2021 recipient of the Distinguished Graduate Mentorship Award, presented by the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Dell’s nominators stated that “Dr. Dell encourages us to incorporate inclusive and strength-based approaches, Indigenous worldviews, patient-oriented frameworks, community-engaged approaches, animal welfare and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action in our work.”

Dell’s students and trainees are involved in numerous projects under her leadership. “I try to make sure my students have opportunities to take initiative and lead on projects, with me working beside them, to increase their confidence and boldness,” Dell said. “Nearly everything we do together involves the community we are working with, which means lots of attention to translating and mobilizing the knowledge we have gathered into tangible and useful community products.”

When asked about her mentorship philosophy, Dell replied that “I think what I can say is that I just do as I was taught. I also learn from colleagues around me today, and initially was mentored by Dr. Cathy Fillmore when I was an undergraduate student, as her teaching assistant.” Dell said. “I was mentored to just be myself, no matter what role I am in. She believed in me, and still does to this day, and that means the world to me. I believe in each of my students, and I try to make sure they know that, so that they can carry that and the strength it can offer them.”

“I have made sure that my mentors have known over the years how important they have been to me—and I look at this recognition in the same way. I am super grateful. It makes my heart feel full.”
Penelope Sanz is the 2022 winner of the Illinois Distinguished Qualitative Dissertation Award. This award is given for excellence in qualitative research presented in a doctoral dissertation. Applications are judged for clarity of writing; willingness to experiment with new and traditional writing forms; advocacy, promotion, development, and use of qualitative research methodologies and practices in new fields of study, and in policy arenas involving issues of social justice. Penny has earned international recognition of excellence in qualitative research presented in her doctoral dissertation. Her dissertation represents original contributions to qualitative research in “fielding” and in “consequential autoethnography,” conducted in post-conflict areas. This research contributed to the furtherance of human rights assessment and Indigenous land claims, and restoration of Indigenous people’s way of life disrupted by foreign mining operations. Drawing on her sustained participant observation over seven years of ‘fielding,’ Penny’s dissertation aimed to give a voice to ‘the voiceless’ by documenting exploitation of the Subanos of Zamboanga Peninsula, Mindanao. Dr. Norman Denzin, Emeritus Professor Sociology, University of Illinois, Urbana, wrote of Penny’s accomplishment: “an amazing, inspiring journey!”
Tyler Mohart was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He completed a BSc (Hons.) in Chemistry with a minor in Mathematics at USask in 2014. He was named Most Outstanding Graduate in Chemistry and received multiple scholarships, including the Thorvaldson Undergraduate Scholarship. In 2015, Tyler began graduate school at USask in the Department of Chemistry, supervised by Dr. Ian Burgess. He convocated in 2021 with his dissertation, Surface-Enhanced Spectroelectrochemistry Using Synchrotron Infrared Radiation. He was awarded the Governor General’s Gold Medal and Taube Medal in 2022. Tyler has presented at three conferences, published 10 papers, and spent two weeks at Synchrotron SOLEIL in France. He co-founded Jackfish SEC Manufacturing Ltd, a science hardware company which sells accessories for academic labs studying surface electrochemical reactions. Tyler currently works at the Synchrotron Laboratory for Micro and Nano Devices (SyLMAND) beamline, a microfabrication lab primarily devoted to x-ray lithography and ultraviolet lithography. He is responsible for all aspects of the SyLMAND beamline, including maintenance and upkeep, technical development and upgrades, and is involved with all scientific projects. His research interests are in the design and fabrication of microfluidic devices for use with synchrotron imaging, diffraction, and spectroscopy techniques.
Antonia Powell works as a member of Dr. Vladimir Vujanovic’s lab in the Food and Bioproduct Sciences (FABS) department of AgBio, with her research centering on Fusarium Head Blight (FHB), one of the most widespread and serious diseases affecting wheat. Earlier this year, Antonia was feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic taking a toll on her studies. Feeling burnt out and in need of a new challenge, Antonia received an email from the College of Agriculture and Bioresources (AgBio) advertising a college-wide Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition. She signed up, believing it would be an interesting opportunity to share her knowledge with her grad school community.

The 3MT Competition is a global competition that challenges students to communicate their research in a new way. The purpose of the competition is for grad students to communicate their research to a panel of non-specialist judges in three minutes or less, giving researchers the opportunity to explain the significance of their work to a wider audience. Antonia’s 3MT presentation utilized a unique perspective on parasitic fungi and the ‘battle’ between FHB and fungal biocontrol. After earning the top spot in the AgBio 3MT competition, Antonia went on to win the Graduate Student Association’s 3MT competition as well, earning her the opportunity to represent USask in the Western Regional competition at the University of Winnipeg. She emerged as USask’s first-ever winner of the Western Regional 3MT competition, with her presentation titled, “Conquering a Cereal Killer”. As a result of Antonia’s success in her college, local, and regional competitions, Antonia represented USask at the National 3MT competition held in November 2022. This showcase will serve as a unique opportunity to share and celebrate her research with the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies and her grad school community.

“My experience in the 3MT has given me a renewed passion and drive for my current research,” says Antonia, “Seeing people’s reactions and hearing their feedback has given me a newfound drive to push through obstacles, whether in research or other areas of work or life.”
Pay graduate students & post-doctoral scholars a living wage.

Too many graduate students and postdoctoral scholars are living below the poverty line. Scholarships and fellowships provide inadequate support and incentive to continue to do important academic work in Canada. You can learn more about the #SOS movement, read more stories like the ones below, and share your own story at supportourscience.ca

I never knew that to do science in Canada would mean living in poverty. Canada has some unique research areas and programs which we couldn’t find elsewhere […] but who would come here, stay here, and live here?

-Graduate student

Since I want to focus on my PhD (work 50-60 hours per week in the lab) I don’t have a second job. However it’s impossible to live with this income, so often I need to participate in clinical trials, so I can have enough money to cover all my expenses (rent, food, and tuition). I barely have social life, because I simply can’t afford it. I’m strongly committed with my career but […] I’m seriously considering giving up on academia and look for another job. […] Canadian academia can no longer compete with industry or other jobs. This must change otherwise […] all the talented researchers will leave academia before even starting their careers.

-Graduate student

I was invited to a celebration for an award I won and my advisor was embarrassed by my wardrobe. She lent me a cardigan so I would not be a disgrace. I was told I was valuable and lauded for my academic accomplishments, but I was expected to live in shameful poverty and be grateful for an inadequate stipend.

-Postdoctoral scholar

I love my research and my position. But I also feel exploited and undervalued as a graduate student […] Our government and our institutions are sending us the message that they do not value us or our work, even though we are the ones driving research and innovation in Canada. They are also sending the message that if you don’t have the resources to make it through school on this stipend, then you don’t deserve to be in graduate school, which just perpetuates systemic barriers that exclude many people from academia and research.

-Graduate student
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