

# Student Forum

## *Enhancing the Quality of Discussion and Decision Making for Students at the University of Saskatchewan*

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### **Preamble**

Until 2007 there was no forum at the University of Saskatchewan that is dedicated to the broad discussion of student issues and the overall nature of the student experience on our campus. The structure of the university's administrative and council committees has historically been oriented toward specific content areas (e.g., Academic Programs, Scholarships and Awards, Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work, International Activities, Teaching and Learning). This structure has served the university well with respect to the specific concerns and issues but has not fostered a concern for the overall character and quality of student life. The university needs a place where students, faculty members, and administrators with responsibilities associated closely with the student experience can come together on a regular basis to discuss, debate, and develop a consensus regarding a wide range of issues that affect students on our campus. For this reason, it is proposed that the university create a "Student Forum" dedicated to improving student life.

### **Mandate**

The purpose of the Student Forum is to provide a venue in which students can discuss important issues of the day so that university administration, governing bodies, and representatives of the university's key stakeholder groups hear and consider the perspective of students on institution-wide issues that affect the nature and quality of the student experience at the University of Saskatchewan. The Student Forum will provide leadership on behalf of the university community regarding best practices in education, student retention and success, and other aspects of the student experience on our campus. It will also develop recommendations for policy development and the coordinated application of existing policies across the university. Matters for consideration by the forum can be brought forward by any interested group, including student groups, University Council and/or its committees, and colleges and administrative units.

While curricular issues may emerge as objects of discussion, this is not a body that will deliberate on specific academic programs. That responsibility is located with colleges and the Academic Programs Committee of Council. The Student Forum is designed and populated in a manner intended to bring voice and authority to ideas aimed at improving the overall experience of students beyond curricular matters. The quality of teaching, the quality of services, and the policies that bear on the student experience are all subjects in which the forum can and should be engaged. The Student Forum is not intended to be a governance body. It will draw on the authority of its members, many of whom are university officers, to carry recommendations forward into action; the mandates of existing bodies will not be affected until and unless the decision is made to transfer responsibilities to the Student Forum.

## Specific Responsibilities

The Student Forum will discuss issues, consider proposals, and where appropriate, make recommendations to the appropriate decision makers regarding a range of topics that affect student life, including but not limited to the following:

1. *Academic Structures and Processes*
  - The annual academic calendar
  - Timetabling and room scheduling policies and principles
  - Course structures (3 vs. 6 credit courses)
  - Principles and policies re: non-traditional timetabling and course structures (e.g., evening/weekend courses, spring/summer courses, condensed or extended courses, mixed format courses, etc.)
  - Registration-related principles and policies
  - Exam regulations, exam scheduling principles and policies, etc.
  - Articulation agreements, transfer credit policies, principles, goals, and directions
  - Minimum class sizes
  - Distance education and off-campus courses/programs
2. *Academic Standing*
  - Interplay between and coordination of college-specific academic standing policies and principles (probation, RTD, admission/readmission practices, etc.)
  - Admission/readmission principles and policies for probationary/RTD students
3. *Quality and Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning Environments*
  - Innovations in pedagogy, engaging teaching and learning practices, on-line learning, curricular flexibility
  - Principles and policies re: accommodation for students with disabilities
  - Experiential learning issues and initiatives (service learning, volunteerism, leadership programming, undergraduate research)
  - Exchange and study-abroad programs
4. *Student Retention and Success*
  - Transition activities and programs (UStart!, Orientation)
  - First year programming and Learning Communities
  - Career guidance, academic decision-making, academic advising
  - Support practices and programs for at-risk students
  - Development of “early warning” mechanisms
  - Study skills, tutoring, remediation programs
5. *Student Life Issues*
  - Social and cultural programming/relations with USSU & GSA
  - Residence life issues
  - Status and conduct of student groups
  - Student code of conduct: policies and implementation
  - Alcohol policies
  - Campus safety and security relative to student functions

6. *Student Feedback*
  - Principles and mechanisms for hearing student concerns, complaints, and grievances
  - Principles and policies re: ombuds/advocacy services
  - Quality of academic advising and staff interaction
  - Recommendations and actions flowing from student feedback mechanisms (NSSE, CUSC, focus groups)
  
7. *Performance of Campus Services and Facilities*
  - Student Health and Student Counselling Services
  - Student Employment and Career Centre
  - University Learning Centre
  - Bookstore
  - Computer Store
  - Library
  - Technology services (e.g., PAWS)
  - Food services
  - Recreation services
  - Space and facilities (e.g., residences, student social spaces, lounges)
  - Parking services
  - Transportation principles, policies, and practices

## Membership

The Student Forum is intended as a place where student representatives can dialogue with key university officials who have responsibility for developing and implementing policies and practices that affect the student experience. The goal is to create a space in which students feel confident expressing opinions. The membership of the forum is drawn from three groups.

**Students:** Student representation will recognize the formal leadership of the USSU and GSA. Further student involvement is secured by seeking participation of students selected through the USSU appointments process, representatives from the peer assistance program appointed by the PAL Coordinator from the Peer Assisted Learning Program (PAL Peer Mentors), and graduate students appointed by the GSA Course Council; these students will participate not as representatives of particular interest groups, but rather as university citizens. From time to time, the forum may invite additional student input on particular issues, perhaps from a specific subset of the student body who is most affected by the issue at hand (e.g., first-year students, students with disabilities, mature students, Aboriginal students, international students, etc.).

**College academic leaders:** To ensure that the recommendations arising from discussions at the Student Forum result in creative and prompt action, the forum will include faculty representation from each of the colleges. These members are expected to be the Associate or Assistant Deans who have formal responsibilities for student issues within their college.

**Administrative units:** Key university administrators whose work is directly related to the student environment and who have responsibility to develop or implement policies and practices that impact on the student experience will participate in the forum as members. An additional group of individuals have been identified who will be invited to participate on the forum as correspondents. These individuals will receive all correspondence and will participate when the forum is addressing issues that bear directly on their portfolios.

## Members

- Two USSU executive members
- Four undergraduate students, selected through the USSU appointments process
- Four students nominated by the PAL Coordinator from the Peer Assisted Program (PAL Peer Mentors)
- Three representatives of the Association of Constituency Presidents
- Two members of the GSA Executive and two Graduate Course Counsellors appointed by the GSA Course Council
- President of the Indigenous Graduate Students Council
- President of the Indigenous Students Council
- Six Assistant/Associate Deans Academic nominated by the Assistant/Associate Deans Academic Group
- Dean, University Library (or designate)
- Registrar and Director of Student Services, SESD
- Director of Enrolment Services and Student Affairs, SESD
- Director of Support Services, SESD
- Director of Student Academic Services, College of Arts and Science
- Director of Programs and Operations, College of Graduate Studies and Research
- Associate Director, Consumer Services (Culinary Services – Residence)
- Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning
- Team Leader, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Student Success

## Correspondents

- Provost and Vice-President Academic
- University Secretary
- Manager, Student Information Systems
- Director, Distance Education, Off-Campus and Certificate Programs (DOC), , Centre for Continuing and Distance Education
- Program Director, University Learning Centre
- Director, Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness
- Director, Consumer Services
- Director, Capital Planning
- Chair, Academic Programs Committee of Council
- Chair, Teaching, Learning and Academic Resources Committee of Council
- Manager, International Student & Study Abroad Centre
- Manager, Student Health
- Manager, Student Counselling
- Manager, Protective Services
- Manager & Assistant Registrar (Student Central) Special Advisor to the Registrar
- Associate Deans Academic not otherwise nominated to be members in a given year

## **Leadership**

The Student Forum will be supported by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning (VPTL). The first meeting will be chaired by the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, with subsequent meetings being chaired by members of the USSU and GSA Executive. It is the responsibility of the executive to craft an agenda broad enough in its implications and not focused on explicit details so that all members of the forum will find the topics pertinent and most will have views that they wish to convey. Ideas advancing to the forum should be presented in a proposal format that allows members to provide constructive input. Members of the forum

will be encouraged to contribute to the construction of this agenda. The Executive includes: two members of the GSA Executive, two members of the USSU Executive, the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning and the chair of the Associate Deans' Academic group (or designate).

The forum will meet at least twice a term and at the call of the chair.

### **Evaluation of the Forum**

The student forum was created by and responsible to the Provost and Vice-President Academic who may request periodic assessments. Practices regarding agenda creation and the conduct of business should be evaluated. This will also be an opportunity to reconsider the forum's membership and its relationship to other bodies on campus.