

KINNECTION

**Jacqueline Lavallee (BSKI'02)
is a Canada West Hall of Fame Inductee.**



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Dr. Dani Brittain

2025

Reflections on a Year of Purpose, Connection, and Momentum

As we step into a new academic year, I find myself reflecting on the journey we've shared over the past twelve months - one marked by introductions, accomplishments, innovation, and the kind of moments that remind us why we do what we do. Each season brought opportunities to meet new people, reconnect with others, and celebrate the incredible work of our students, faculty, and staff. Through it all, I have been in awe of the people - past and present - who make our College of Kinesiology what it is today.

This year also gave me the chance to learn Saskatoon more deeply: its people, its spirit, and the important place our college holds within the community. Our legacy is shaped not only by current faculty, staff, and students, but also by those who came before us. Over the past year, I have listened to and learned from alumni, retired faculty and deans who still share their wisdom, and the spouses and families who have been part of our journey. I am deeply thankful for the time they have shared with me—their stories, encouragement, and reflections have helped me understand more fully the foundation on which we now stand.

My travels this year have also taken me across Canada—from the lush greens of New Brunswick for the Canadian Council of University Physical Education and Kinesiology Administrators (CCUPEKA) annual meeting, to the ocean and mountains of Vancouver, where I had the privilege of cheering on our Huskies women's basketball team as they captured a national championship under the inspiring leadership of 27-year coach Lisa Thomaidis. Along the way, I listened to stories from alumni across the country and into the United States - each one evidence of the breadth of impact our graduates have in the world and the ways the College shaped their journeys.

A significant milestone this year was the CCUPEKA reaccreditation of our Bachelor of Science program for another seven years - a reflection of the excellence and dedication of our faculty, staff, and students. This achievement reaffirms our place as a leader in kinesiology education and scholarship, and it sets the stage for our important work ahead.

Across my journeys this year, a theme of our college became clear to me: access creates opportunity, and opportunity leads to success. Through our commitment to teaching, research, recreation, and community partnerships, together we have opened doors that have elevated success.

Deans Message

We see this success affirmed in the distinguished awards for teaching, research, and scholarly and athletic achievements, earned over the past year, by our students, faculty, and alumni. We have every reason to be proud, and I invite you to be inspired by the stories shared in this newest edition of KINNECTION.

As we look ahead, I see an academic year full of possibility. With a new President and Provost joining the University in 2026, we are well positioned to align our work with the institution's evolving priorities. Together, we will continue to affirm our values, sharpen our goals, and expand our impact - always with both purpose and heart. In the months ahead, our collective efforts will focus on:

- Strengthening our identity and strategic direction – affirming who we are as a college, clarifying our values, and ensuring our goals align with the changing landscape of kinesiology and the University.
- Elevating our research profile – building infrastructure, increasing research support, and fostering collaboration to support scholarship that changes lives and communities.

- Renewing our curriculum – ensuring our academic programs not only prepare students for a career, but also to be inspired professionals who lead with integrity and compassion.
- Deepening community partnerships – expanding our role as a bridge between campus and community, particularly in sport, health, wellness, and work with Indigenous communities.

What excites me most about the year ahead is that these goals are not abstract - they are rooted in the strengths of the people who make up this College. Every conversation, every collaboration, every small act of mentorship and encouragement adds to the culture we continue to create together. The reality is simple, the College has opened doors, created opportunities and shaped lives – let's keep that momentum going!

With gratitude,

Dani Brittain

Dean, College of Kinesiology



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BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

Lavallee's legacy enshrined in Canada West Hall of Fame

Jacqueline Lavallee continues to etch her name in the Huskies history books, this time as a Canada West Hall of Fame Inductee.



The University of Saskatchewan (USask) women's basketball assistant coach and former Huskies all-star is a member of this year's class of Canada West conference Hall of Fame inductees, a remarkable group of eight individuals in four categories.

"I feel extremely honoured, and it has had me reflecting on my time as an athlete in Canada West and how much sport has impacted my life," said Lavallee, who was a standout in both basketball and soccer as a Huskie student-athlete, while earning a double degree in kinesiology and education at USask.

"I have immense gratitude for my family and all the other people who supported me

throughout my career, such as my amazing teammates and coaches. It is humbling and emotional because I know that awards like this are never achieved alone, and I was fortunate to be surrounded by so many great mentors and people who never stopped believing in me."

Lavallee, a 2002 graduate of the College of Kinesiology and College of Education, was a dual sport athlete, playing five years of basketball and soccer for the Huskies from 1997-2002. During that time, she was named a Canada West all-star midfielder twice (1999 and 2001) and an All-Canadian in 1999.

In addition to her exploits on the soccer pitch, Lavallee also added to her trophy case on the court where she was a three-time Canada West all-star point guard (1997, 2000 and 2002) and an All-Canadian in the 2001/02 season with the Huskie women's basketball team.

"Being a two-sport athlete was a dream come true," said Lavallee, who was honoured for her achievements by Huskie Athletics at the Nov. 16 game versus the Alberta Golden Bears. "I loved both sports equally and I had no idea which one I could go further with beyond university. There was always that pressure to have to choose one or the other at some point, but I took the risk and passed up other opportunities to do what I loved. I absolutely loved to train and of course I felt overwhelmed at times, but it never felt like a burden ... I always wanted to get better."

Lavallee successfully balanced athletics and academics, with her classes always her No.1 priority. Lavallee was a successful two-college student, enrolled in the College of Kinesiology's combined education program. Her dedication to her studies was reinforced in her third year when Lisa Thomaidis took over as the Huskie women's basketball coach and encouraged her to focus on her studies first.

"Balancing both was challenging but when you're that passionate and dedicated to something you find a way to make it all work," said Lavallee. "I'm not going to lie, I wasn't always the best student but when Lisa took over the program in my third year, she really challenged me to focus more on my academics. I was determined to prove that I could do both at a high level. I also can't answer this question without acknowledging the tremendous amount of support that I had throughout my career and my family that helped me get through it all."

As Lavallee took care of her academics off the court, she was also able to excel on the court in her final year. As a senior, she had an incredible season, finishing second in Canada West scoring and ranked third nationally.



As a result of her efforts, Lavallee received the Tom Longboat Award in 2000, recognizing outstanding Indigenous ability. She was also awarded the National Sylvia Sweeney award in 2002 and named a national Top 8 Academic All-Canadian.

In addition to a great career with the Huskies, Lavallee had the opportunity to play internationally for Canada in three tournaments and twice at the World University Games in 1999 and 2001. She also was a member of the Canadian national women's basketball team from 2002-04.

After graduation, Lavallee took her two degrees and began teaching. She is currently the school counsellor at Oskāyak High School in Saskatoon and remains a part of the Huskies women's basketball program as a long-time assistant coach for Thomaidis.



"Coaching was a natural transition for me as I was always a student of the game," Lavallee said. "As a point guard and centre midfielder, you are forced to look at the game differently. There is so much strategy and tactics involved in basketball, which is a huge draw for me."

"It is a really rewarding experience to work with student-athletes at the university level and be a part of helping them pursue their goals as well as watch them grow into such amazing young women," she added. "I am very passionate about coaching. However, I'd be lying if I didn't admit that I still miss the competitiveness and grit of playing."

These days, Lavallee continues to use her kinesiology degree in her work. Whether it's teaching physical education, coaching, personal training, cleaning wounds or assessing injuries, she is constantly accessing prior knowledge from kinesiology classes and putting it into practice in real-life situations.

"Lavallee has continued her journey in lifelong learning by recently completing her master's degree in counselling psychology and in the future hopes to continue working with youth with mental health struggles, using movement as a form of therapy.

"I absolutely love what I do and just like pursuing basketball and soccer, there will always be critics who will tell you that you can't do it," she said. "However, I have found a way to balance the demands of teaching and coaching at the university level and having a family. Pursue what you love and find a way to make it happen, which sometimes means having to take some risks."



The leaders behind the Future Fit Foundation

Three brothers with ties to the University of Saskatchewan (USask) College of Kinesiology are leading the way to help create a more inclusive environment where every individual, regardless of their background or abilities, can participate in physical activity and succeed.

Omar Badawi is a third-year Kinesiology student along with his brothers, Acem (fourth-year) and Osman (third-year medical student), who are current and former kinesiology students have come together to launch the Future Fit Foundation.

“The Future Fit Foundation was started after witnessing first-hand how crucial physical activity is and recognizing the financial barriers that prevent many youths from being active,” said Omar Badawi, a third-year kinesiology student from Saskatoon, SK.

The foundation was started in 2023 with the purpose of raising funds to support those who lack the resources to participate in physical activities. The three brothers grew up with a shared passion for sports, a love that guided them to pursue and study kinesiology.

Recognizing the vital role of physical activity, they shared the enthusiasm many young people have for sports. But with sports, typically comes a hefty cost. Their goal is to remove the financial barriers of sport and enabling others to pursue their passions in sports.

“Growing up privileged to participate in various sports helped shape my personality and motivated me to help others experience the benefits of physical activity from the physical aspects to the psychological and social aspects as well,” said Omar.

Acem had a similar response stating that he and his brothers grew up with a deep interest in sports. They played hockey, soccer, basketball and their childhoods revolved around physical activity.

“My brothers and I were fortunate to have our parents support us,” said Acem. “Now as both a coach for youth and someone who runs my own teams (both competitive and recreational), over time I started to understand how significant of a barrier price could be when it comes to participation. Equipment, registration, and other associated fees can really deter people from engaging in physical activity.”

Not only do they offer financial assistance to individuals, but low-income sports teams are also able apply to their foundation for sponsorships to help cover registration fees, uniforms, and other expenses.

“Anyone can access the services our foundation provides. Applicants need to visit our website, share their story, and specify what they need help with, whether it’s direct financial assistance, transportation services, or sports equipment. We strive to meet their needs to the best of our abilities.”

Registration fees are just the beginning of the cost to participate in sports. Depending on the sport, equipment fees can reach into the thousands of dollars for a single season. The foundation supplies high-quality sports equipment to individuals who otherwise lack access, ensuring everyone can participate, compete, and enjoy their sport.

“I want people to know that we are deeply committed to the Future Fit Foundation. Every bit of help counts, and we aim to continue growing and expanding our reach. Our long-term goal is to become a global force that assists youth worldwide in overcoming barriers to sports participation.”



People can support the foundation by monetary donations, athletic equipment donations, promoting the cause online, and spreading awareness through social media and word of mouth. The long-term goal is to become a global force that will assist youth worldwide in overcoming barriers to sports participation.

Kinesiology student leads startup of Black Students Mentorship Association at USask

University of Saskatchewan (USask) fourth-year kinesiology student Sophia Abiara has taken the lead on launching a brand-new association on campus dedicated to providing a space for Black students to meet with Black mentors.

The Black Students Mentorship Association started in January 2024 with Abiara leading the charge. She had immediate support from USask students Oluwatomi Akinwuntan, Peter Laosebikan, Fehintolu Laosebikan, Yetunde Ige, David Emmanuel, Oluwatoni Akinwuntan and Adesewa Ige, who make up the association's executive team.

The association's main purpose is to create a sense of community by allowing one-on-one interactions with professionals such as doctors, lawyers, professors, and accountants, and learning how they've thrived in specific industries despite being marginalized.

"Being a minority, the odds often seem to stack against you. Having professionals to guide the way is an important step to reinforcing the fact that being Black is not a weakness but a strength," said Sophia Abiara.

"Feeling lost is common in university so the mentorship aspect also helps with creating exposure to the plethora of careers that are out there, and the various routes that exist to reaching them. Engaging with Black mentors is important for taking a strength-based approach to empower the Black staff and students at the university."

Abiara was born in Lagos, Nigeria and moved to Toronto before settling in Tisdale, Sask.

"When I moved to Tisdale, I was the only Black female in my high school. This naturally came with cliché questions about my hair. While some people were respectful and intentional with the way they inquired about my heritage, others were not polite."

Members of the association are tasked with the duties that are involved with running the daily demands of an association, this helps them develop skills that can then be taken into the workforce and professional colleges.

As an example, one of the events was conducted in collaboration with the Engineering Students' Association and Dr. Akindele Odeshi (PhD), the associate dean academic and professor of mechanical engineering, who is committed to student mentorship. This provided an opportunity for members to develop professional collaboration skills as well as financial responsibility that can be applied in other professional spaces.



“Collaboration between experienced professionals and students is crucial in carving a future that includes a diverse group of leaders,” Abiara said.

When Abiara founded the association, she not only used her own observations as a Black woman on campus, but also through research. She found data from a 2020 Toronto Metropolitan University’s diversity leads report that the Black representation on corporate boards was only 0.3 per cent. She noted that improvements have been made since then, but are still bleak.

“My hope for the association is to develop well-rounded Black students who can transfer these skills into the workforce. Not just to be employees but to lead and be actively involved in outreach efforts for racialized individuals and marginalized communities. My hope for the University of Saskatchewan is to see more BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of colour) women in leadership roles such as university governance and within each college.”

The association is currently working on organizing events for the second semester, especially during Black History Month. They are focused on highlighting Black women in the community with the goal to increase the amount of direct contact that students have with the women the community is bringing in.

They have partnered with a network of Black professionals in rural and urban Saskatchewan as well as the Black Faculty and Staff Caucus at USask.

“Overall, being a Black woman in Canada comes with a wide range of battles,” she said. “While I cannot change the outlook of the ignorant people in this province, I can create change and create awareness in my immediate community.”

Abiara has been conducting research in the College of Kinesiology since her second year and has a strong interest in pursuing research throughout the remainder of her undergraduate degree and into post-graduate students.



As a final message to everyone, Abiara would like to remind people to be true to themselves in an ever-evolving world.

“I would also like to remind all Black women, girls and gender diverse individuals that they will always be more than enough.”



USask researchers investigating benefits of pea-based milk versus dairy

We've all been told that milk makes your bones stronger, but a new University of Saskatchewan (USask) research project is exploring whether some kinds of milk could be better for bone strength than others.

Dr. Phil Chilibeck

Led by Dr. Phil Chilibeck (PhD), a professor at USask's College of Kinesiology, a new study will examine whether the benefits of pea protein – ingested as pea milk – could be more beneficial for your bones than dairy.

If this project can confirm pea protein has distinct bone health benefits, it could be used as a supplement for those suffering from osteoporosis.

"We were surprised to find the pea protein, for some reason, had just as good or even superior benefits sometimes when compared to dairy milk," Chilibeck said. "Pulses (like peas) are good for everyone ... If we can show that they're beneficial for bone health, it opens up a new market for pulses."

The project received funding in part from the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF), a provincial and federal government-supported program to provide resources to innovative agriculture and agri-foods research.

Chilibeck said the inspiration for this research came from a previous project he and his team had conducted into the effectiveness of proteins from different milks – dairy, pea and almond – for young athletes.

Knowing that animal-based proteins are typically marketed as nutritionally superior to plant-based alternatives, Chilibeck was expecting to find superior results from the dairy protein in their initial research.

During that experiment, while Chilibeck noted the gains from protein between dairy and pea milk were quite similar, there was a marked increase in bone geometric measures which are predictive of bone strength – especially in the hip bone – for those who drank pea milk after their workouts.

his newest project will focus on the older population. Researchers will prepare a workout plan for men and women aged 50 and up, and after each workout the



participants will be given one of three types of milk – dairy for the control group, and then almond and pea milk respectively – to see which has the most overall benefits to bone health.

As Chilibeck puts it, this could be one more "weapon in the war chest" for the battle to slow osteoporosis.

"We do a lot of research in the area of osteoporosis prevention," Chilibeck said. "We're excited to engage that population and give them the benefit of a supervised exercise program along with a nutritional supplement that could enhance the effects of that program for improving their bone health."

Making a surprising discovery, and one that could have tangible health benefits for those living with a difficult disease, is the best part for Chilibeck.

"That's the most exciting thing for me – when you find something that's unexpected and then you can have a new recommendation for improving health," he said.

RECREATIONAL INCLUSIVITY AT USASK REC

USask Rec is the focal point for recreation and physical activity on campus and has continued to create more inclusive programs each year.

But there is one program that has been around since 1992: the Physical Activity for Active Learning (PAAL).



“The PAAL program got Jessica to start moving more. It is now a part of her fitness routines,” said Denise Skuce, PAAL parent. “She doesn’t necessarily like going for walks or to the gym, but if it’s to go to PAAL she’s up bright and early on a Saturday morning to go volunteer.”

PAAL is a program designed for individuals of all ages who are experiencing physical and/or intellectual disabilities. Its mission is to provide quality physical activity with an emphasis on fun, skill development, and social interaction.

The program began as a summer sport camp which involved aquatics, dance and gymnastics in 1992 at the hands of Linda James, Jim McClements, Keith Russell, and Joan Krohn. The initial activities for participants were chosen because of the spaces available in the College of Physical Education at the time.

As the years progressed and the Physical Activity Complex was opened in 2002 on the USask campus, the PAAL program evolved into Saturday morning programs for children and



teenagers, Wednesday afternoon programs for teenagers and adults, and lastly, the PAAL Fitness program on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

PAAL became a hub for participants experiencing physical and/or intellectual disabilities to come be active, push their limits, and breakdown barriers. Jessica Skuce has been a participant of the PAAL program since 2005 and her mother, Denise, says that the program has given her daughter a new perspective on doing things she didn't think she could do.

A program like PAAL does not operate under one staff member alone. The program relies heavily on volunteers and at the beginning, high school students were the perfect fit as they were required to earn volunteer hours as a part of their curriculum. Many of those students chose the PAAL program to earn those hours and give back to their community. In recent years, that requirement has changed and the PAAL program has shifted its volunteer recruitment to university students.

"Those volunteers were our summer saviours," said Kim Jones, current Aquatics Coordinator with USask Rec and PAAL coordinator.

"Without them, the program would have never been a success. To see the way students interact with the participants is rewarding and gives perspective to the way they live their lives."

Many participants begin with PAAL at a young age and return each year to be a part of a program that values them, pushes them, and encourages them to be active.

"Jessica started when she was about 9 or 10 with child PAAL and moved on to teen and adult PAAL," said Skuce. "When she was about 18-19, the student program coordinator recommended that Jessica just come to volunteer as she was very helpful with the other younger participants in the groups. This was a huge confidence boost for her. She loves to be around the other participants and volunteers. She is now 30 and loves going every week."

PAAL has also brought benefit to the College of Kinesiology from a research perspective. Over the years research has been conducted on Cerebral Palsy and Bone Health. It has also provided student research and presentation opportunities at conferences such as the Physical Health and Education Saskatchewan and National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association.

Currently, researchers in the college are looking at Bone Health and Physical Activity in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The research is focused on optimizing bone strength, particularly in children and youth who are at elevated risk of fracture lifelong (i.e., children with ASD or type 1 diabetes).

"Our research has revealed poorer bone health and lower physical activity in children and youth with ASD. We anticipate that children do not get sufficient exercise stimulus for optimal bone strength development," said Dr. Saija Kontulainen, Associate Dean, Research and Grad Students in the College of Kinesiology.

“Thus, we are co-designing tailored exercise intervention to optimize bone strength in children with ASD in the near future.”

In the past, the College of Kinesiology has also held fundraisers such as KIN Spin, a run, walk and roll 1KM or 5KM event that was put on for 10 years. This event generated over \$150,000 to the College of Kinesiology Adapted Physical Activity Fund to help off-set costs of running the PAAL program each year.

A program such as PAAL with over 33 years of history is invaluable to the USask campus and Saskatoon community. It highlights what the campus and community can do for all people when we work together to create inclusive spaces and opportunities for everyone.

“It’s an amazing program where children with diverse needs can play sports and be active with other children with diverse needs. It allows children to be able to see others, just like them and know they are not alone. The PAAL program isn’t just about physical activity, it’s about belonging. Getting active and having fun is a bonus,” said Skuce.



MAJOR KINESIOLOGY 2025 GRAD AWARDS: ROBERTSON AND DMYTRUK



Most Outstanding Graduate award winner Kirstyn Robertson and Dean's Medal award winner Spencer Dmytruk. (photo submitted)

Each year at the University of Saskatchewan's (USask) Spring Convocation ceremony, the College of Kinesiology recognizes its Most Outstanding Graduate and Dean's Medal Recipient. This year, the college is proud to award the Most Outstanding Graduate to Kirstyn Robertson and the Dean's Medal to Spencer Dmytruk.

The most outstanding graduate recipient must demonstrate leadership and participation within the college, on campus, and in their community, with academic performance also taken into consideration. Making a difference in all areas, has earned **Kirstyn Robertson** the honour for 2025.

"It is an honour to be named the top graduate from the College of Kinesiology. I am deeply grateful to be recognized by a community that has supported my growth and shaped my university journey in such meaningful ways," said Robertson.

Robertson was born and raised in Saskatoon, SK, and chose to pursue a degree in Kinesiology because academics have always been a priority for her. The decision to pursue her undergraduate degree in kinesiology was equally driven by her passion for exercise and sports.

"Movement has always been central to my life; thus, I sought a college that emphasized holistic health and offered multidisciplinary courses relating to physical activity," said Robertson. "Upon entering the College of Kinesiology, I was particularly drawn to the extensive opportunities available beyond the classroom, including practicums, hands-on learning opportunities, and volunteer roles within both the college and broader community."

Throughout her time spent in the college, Robertson was involved in many extracurricular experiences as an undergraduate student. She served as vice-president of

Kinesiology Students' Society, volunteered as a research assistant, and worked as a lifeguard and swim instructor for USask Rec and the City of Saskatoon, as well as a dance instructor for a small dance school.

"My time as a student has been filled with a plethora of cherished memories, from collaborating with peers on labs to laughing with friends at the PAC tables. It's hard to narrow it down to just one memory, but I will never forget the excitement of finishing a final and celebrating with a group of friends. The friendships, camaraderie, and sense of community the College of Kinesiology has fostered shape most of my memories, and I know I will forever treasure these experiences."

Next fall, Roberston will be taking a year away from school to travel, maintain her involvement in volunteer initiatives and continue her role as a research assistant in the College of Kinesiology.

If she could tell incoming freshman one thing it would be, "make the most of both academic and extracurricular opportunities. While academics are important, some of my most meaningful experiences came from joining campus activities, getting involved, and connecting with new people."

The second kinesiology award presented at Spring Convocation is the Dean's Medal, awarded to the graduating student with the highest grade-point average. The recipient of the 2025 Dean's Medal is **Spencer Dmytruk**.

"Being awarded the 2025 Dean's Medal is an incredible honour, and I feel truly fortunate to have been part of such a supportive and inspiring academic community. My time in the College of Kinesiology was shaped by excellent instructors, engaging coursework, and applied learning experiences that helped me grow as a student," said Dmytruk.

Dmytruk is from Prince Albert, SK and graduated from Ecole St. Mary High School with the intentions of finding a university that had a well-rounded experience and excellent opportunities in health care. He quickly discovered the College of Kinesiology, drawn by its

hands-on learning opportunities, the close-knit college environment that fostered meaningful connections with classmates, faculty, and staff, and a strong sense of community that supported both personal and academic growth.

"What stood out most during my time in the College of Kinesiology was the strong sense of community. Whether it was classmates, faculty, or staff, I always felt supported and surrounded by people who genuinely wanted to see each other succeed. Being able to learn in an environment like that was truly a privilege, and it shaped my university experience in the best way possible."

Dmytruk described one of his best memories as being a part of the student-athlete training practicum in the college. This practicum allowed him to spend two seasons as an athletic trainer with the Huskie Wrestling teams, building relationships, travelling the country, and collaborating with healthcare professionals.

"It was not only a great hands-on learning experience, but also a chance to be part of a tight-knit team and see the impact of my work firsthand. Those moments on the sidelines and on the road are memories I'll carry with me for a long time."

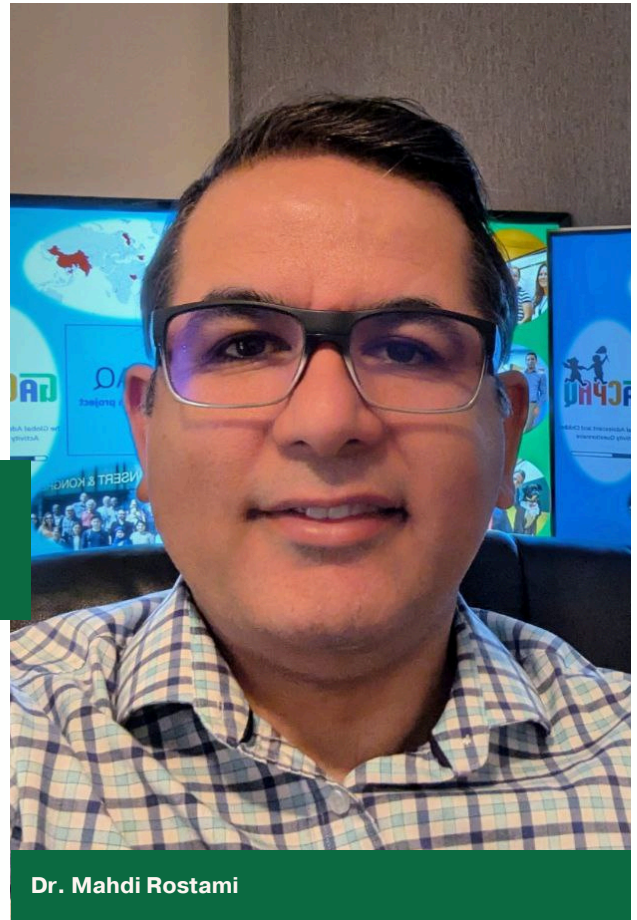
His words of advice to incoming students, "Get involved! University offers so many incredible opportunities, and it's the perfect time to step outside your comfort zone. Even if you're feeling nervous or unsure, take the chance to explore your interests. You never know what experiences, friendships, or opportunities might come from simply saying yes."

And to his fellow graduates, "We should all be proud of how far we have come, and I hope you take a moment to breathe and truly appreciate everything you have accomplished. No matter what comes next, I hope you carry forward the same curiosity, dedication, and perseverance that brought you here. Wishing you all the best in the journey ahead."

After graduating in June, Dmytruk will begin his studies at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine in the fall of 2025, having already been accepted into the program.

Q&A

WITH DR. MAHDI ROSTAMI (PHD'22) →



Dr. Mahdi Rostami

Dr. Rostami is managing an international research project to develop and validate a new physical activity questionnaire for children and adolescents. We invite you to learn more about him:

Q

How has your PhD degree in Kinesiology contributed to your professional success?

My doctoral degree in Kinesiology has significantly contributed to my professional success in several ways. It has provided me with a deep understanding of the role of physical activity in children's health, especially bone health, and how it impacts health later in life. This knowledge has been invaluable in my role as a researcher in the field of physical activity. Additionally, it has allowed me to contribute to advancing knowledge in the field through my research and publications. Furthermore, it has opened doors to opportunities for collaboration and networking within the academic and professional community. Most importantly, it has equipped me with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in my career, instilled deep confidence in my abilities, and enabled me to make meaningful contributions to the field.

Q

How did your PhD in Kinesiology prepare you for the challenges you've faced in your profession?

As a PhD student/candidate, I had the opportunity to practice most of the challenges you may face in the future as a researcher. The support and guidance from my supervisor, other mentors on my PhD committee, and even my student fellows provided a robust support system. This system not only allowed me to practice how to tackle the challenges I was facing during my PhD program but also prepared me for future professional challenges. It equipped me with the skills and knowledge needed for time management, learning new skills or expertise, expressing my point of view, negotiating, working under pressure, etc.

Q

Looking back, what aspects of your PhD program do you feel were most valuable for your professional development?

As I reflect on my PhD program, I find that one of the most valuable aspects of my PhD program was working in a new field of research, which was completely different from my master's program and research. It helped me develop a new set of skills that have been beneficial for my career, including working effectively under pressure and developing self-learning strategies.

Q

What advice would you give to current students pursuing a PhD or MSc in Kinesiology?

Remember to enjoy the journey but try to have a timeline and stick to it. You're not just a student but also a proactive learner. Seek support and guidance but remember to take charge of your own learning. While respecting other people's time, being a little pushy may save you not just months but a year.

GOLDEN: LEARNING THROUGH SERVICE FOR HEALTHY AGING

Recent graduate, Kit Stern (BSKI'25) and mentors earned the recognition through her practicum project called GOLDEN.



RCE- SK is a United Nations University-designated Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development. The awards recognize education initiatives that take action toward the UN Sustainability Goals and create impact within community.

The GOLDEN program promoted healthy aging in an often-underserved demographic and represents a model of experiential learning in action—providing quality education through hands-on planning, delivery, and evaluation by students.

Over the past academic year, Stern – under the guidance of mentors Jason Weber (HPC Coordinator – Usask Rec), Shannon Forrester, and Bart Arnold (both faculty members in the College of Kinesiology) — designed and implemented a free-weight resistance training program tailored specifically for older adults in Saskatoon.

“I started thinking about this project while working in Dr. Chilibeck’s lab with older adults on the FORTIFY bones study. As participants were finishing up, they were asking how they could continue resistance training,” said Stern.

They had found participating increased their ease of completing daily tasks and improved their confidence in movement. I found few resources focused specifically towards older adults and resistance training which prompted my desire to try and produce a program with USask Rec. The pilot program has been completed as a proof of concept. Jason and I are working to produce a regular program that can be attended by our USask community."

Supported in both scientific research and community input, the project aimed to create accessible, safe, and effective fitness options for aging populations. Her initiative followed a full program planning cycle, culminating in a pilot phase that included 14 participants across two sessions: a four-week and an eight-week program.

The training sessions were designed with two distinct focus areas: one for individuals with no prior experience in free weight resistance training, and another for those with previous experience. The pilot intended to explore how customized fitness programming could support strength, health, and overall wellness among older adults.

"We recruited participants through word of mouth and via outreach to various older adult networks," said Shannon Forrester, a faculty member in the College of Kinesiology. "Each participant was recognized through active collaboration fostering a positive and productive learning environment. In each class, Kit received feedback and incorporated that feedback into future sessions."

Forrester added that the project yielded many unexpected insights.

"Firstly, scheduling proved to be particularly challenging. Contrary to our initial assumption that many potential participants would be retired, this was not necessarily the case. Interestingly, all our participants were women, which is notable given the demographic's potential influence by social constructs around physical activity, especially weight training. Additionally, all participants were of Caucasian ancestry, highlighting the need for greater outreach and consideration to ensure demographic diversity in future programming."



This programming is significant because resistance training reduces the risk of falls, fractures, and age-related chronic diseases—key factors linked to premature death. By promoting longevity and reducing preventable health issues, it supports Canada's goal of lowering premature mortality.

Integrating free weight resistance training into the daily lives of older adults not only enhances their personal health but also advances national public health objectives. It aligns with Canada's commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 3: ensuring health and well-being for all at all ages.

Resistance training helps older adults preserve muscle mass, strength, and physical function—critical components of healthy aging. It also supports mental well-being, lowers the risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes, and improves cognitive function.

The success and solid foundation of the GOLDEN initiative provides momentum for ongoing growth and broader impact. As a pilot program, it seeks to expand its reach through future offerings by USask Rec, enabling more older adults to access these valuable services.

“I know it’s been said before, but our college really does have excellent practicums that can provide creative education opportunities. It means a lot to me that a space exists that I could try my program with the support of other professionals,” said Stern.

Furthermore, older adult programming through USask Rec presents potential opportunities for student employment or volunteer involvement—particularly for students in courses like KIN 424 (Physical Activity and Aging) and HPC USask Rec staff. These opportunities offer students meaningful, hands-on experience working with older adults, enriching their education while advancing the College of Kinesiology’s mission to promote active and healthy lifestyles.

“I know that gym/fitness facility settings can be intimidating to those starting out with resistance training no matter the age. I want to emphasize to our community that USask Rec aims to be welcoming no matter your experience level, movement background or age,” said Stern.



Fuel your brain. Move your body.

USask Rec offers members a facility with 80+ pieces of cardio equipment, a fit studio, free weights, weight machines and a 40 ft climbing wall.

We provide an opportunity for you to improve and maintain your health by creating a fun, friendly, and invigorating atmosphere.



DR. FERGUSON AWARDED THE KING CHARLES III CORONATION MEDAL

Dr. Leah Ferguson is one of 30,000 individuals in the country to receive the King Charles III Coronation Medal as a renowned and committed researcher who has advanced the knowledge and evidence-base for the promotion of physical activity in Canada.

The government's intention of the medal is to recognize outstanding individuals of all ages and from all walks of life who have made significant contributions to the country, province, territory, region or community, or an achievement abroad that brings benefit or honour to Canada.

"I was very surprised to receive this medal and am deeply honoured by the recognition. It was probably the most unexpected recognition I've received," said Dr. Ferguson. "It's difficult to find the words to articulate the impact of the recognition, both professionally and personally. Everyone is working so incredibly hard to make a difference in the sport and physical activity sectors."

As a Professor in the College of Kinesiology, Dr. Ferguson has been a leader in research focused on sport psychology and Indigenous Peoples' wellness and holds the Chair position for ParticipACTION's Research Advisory Group, a committee she joined in 2020.

ParticipACTION's Research Advisory Group provides input and advise on the direction that should be pursued with respect to knowledge generation, research, and evaluation, in the context of ParticipACTION's strategic and project plans.



Dr. Leah Ferguson

“ParticipACTION plays a vital role in encouraging everyone living in Canada to get healthier by being more active. They are globally recognized for their quality work and innovative initiatives that remove barriers and create opportunities for physical activity.”

“As leaders in the field, they inform policy and advance the importance and impact of physical activity. I have confidence in ParticipACTION as leaders in the physical activity and sport sectors and take comfort in their evidence-based approach.”

Dr. Ferguson is widely recognized for her professionalism, loyalty, and dedication to her roles as a professor and researcher, all while maintaining a remarkable sense of humility. When asked what the award meant to her, she was quick to acknowledge the great work of her colleagues that she continues to work with and learn from.

“While I try to do my part to make a meaningful difference through my research (and hope I am moving the dial in a good direction), this work is never a solo endeavour. I am so incredibly fortunate to work with – and continue to learn from! – so many amazing colleagues, students, communities, organizations, and partners. Receiving this medal is a direct reflection of our collective efforts, and it serves as a reminder of the impact we can have when we work together.”

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Indigenous Achievement Award

DESTINY FIDDLER

Each year, the University of Saskatchewan (USask) recognizes the achievements of Métis, First Nations and Inuit students, staff, faculty, and alumni during Indigenous Achievement Week (IAW).

This year, Destiny Fiddler of the College of Kinesiology is one of the proud recipients of an Indigenous Achievement Award for research. Fiddler is originally from Meadow Lake, Sask., which is 45 minutes south of her home community. She is a proud nēhiyaw iskwēw (Plains Cree woman) from Waterhen Lake First Nation.

"I am grateful to be given this award for the College of Kinesiology," said Fiddler. "It showcases the research that I have been doing and the need for Indigenous people to be included in research done on Indigenous people. I can confidently say I am the only First Nation person working on this project with Dr. Leah Ferguson researching Indigenous women and girls' participation in sport and physical activity for an SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) grant."

Fiddler aspired to continue her education after high school and chose USask because she had experience living away from home with playing sports as a teenager.

"I knew going into university I wanted to be close to home and my family," said Fiddler. "I was always interested in Indigenous health and being in a position where I could educate myself because my ancestors were never given the chance to, which is why I chose to apply to the College of Kinesiology."

Fiddler, entering her final year of studies, praised having supportive teachers growing up and being able to draw inspiration from her parents in helping her be successful in her studies. Kinesiology was a natural fit for her as she has a passion for Indigenous sports, the decolonizing of sports and Indigenous research, and Indigenous wellness.

"My family has inspired me as I grew up the youngest sibling of five. I grew up privileged and very fortunate to play high-level organized sports in a supportive home where my mom pushed me to not only succeed in sports, but that my education comes first."



As a proud Indigenous woman raised with the values and teachings of the nehiyaw way of life, I believe this award is not for me alone, but for the generations before me and those to come. It represents the strength of our collective spirit, the resilience to discover our gifts, and the determination to carry them forward on our paths.

Her grandparents and mother are both residential school survivors, and the loss of her grandmother in 2022 created inspiration for her to continue her post-secondary education journey for not only herself, but her grandmother.

"I did not only want to do this for myself but for my grandmother and ancestors that did not get this privilege, and I am grateful I get to be in this position for them. I come from a big family, and I spend a lot of my free time with my nieces and nephews. They inspired me to graduate and lead by example by showing them that they can achieve anything they put their mind to."

Fiddler will be the first of her family to graduate from university and she wants to use her experience to help the younger generations feel comfortable coming to her for support and to ask questions they may have about post-secondary education.

She was accepted to begin a Master of Science in Kinesiology at USask under the supervision of Dr. Leah Ferguson (PhD). She is also waiting to hear back from other universities for a Master of Occupational Therapy. If successful with any of her applications, she plans to begin a Master of Occupational Therapy at one of the respective universities and be a voice and advocate for Indigenous peoples in the health care system.



Teaching Excellence & Innovation

The University of Saskatchewan (USask) is recognizing 18 faculty and staff members with 19 awards for excellence and innovation in teaching at this year's USask Faculty and Staff Awards event.

These awards are presented each year to faculty and staff members from across colleges, schools and units who exemplify USask's commitment to be the university the world needs through their teaching and leadership activities.

Recipients are awarded in the following adjudicated categories: Provost's Outstanding Teacher Award, Provost's New Teacher Award, Provost's Graduate Student Teacher Award, Provost's Support of Teaching and Learning Award, and the Sylvia Wallace Sessional Lecturer Award. Awards are also presented at the college level through the Provost's College Awards for Outstanding Teaching.

Provost's Themed Awards for Teaching Excellence: Matthew Chapelski

"My favorite teaching moment is watching a student connect a complex theory to their personal experience. I choose to teach because I'm passionate about helping students make those connections and value what they're learning. It's a powerful reminder that learning is most meaningful when it feels relevant. My teaching philosophy centres on curiosity, communication, and compassion, which creates an environment where students feel safe to explore ideas, challenge assumptions, and grow as learners."

Provost's College Awards for Teaching Excellence: Dr. Lee Schaefer (PhD), Associate Professor

"Some of my most powerful learning moments began outside the classroom, planting in the garden with my grandmother or fishing with my family. These experiences taught me that learning is rooted in relationships, reflection, and the land. In my teaching, I invite students to explore how their own stories and passions for movement and health can shape equitable, compassionate futures. Together, we learn not just content, but how to live, lead, and listen."



CULTURAL SPACE AND HEALTH AMONG MÉTIS WOMEN AND TWO-SPIRIT PEOPLE

University of Saskatchewan (USask) researcher, Dr. Heather Foulds is the Co-Investigator on a CIHR-funded (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) project led by Dr. Lucy Delgado and Dr. Laura Forsythe, alongside Dr. Michelle Driedger.

The group has received just over \$1 million in CIHR funding for a multi-year study will explore the impact of Métis-specific spaces on the health and wellness of Métis women and Two-Spirit/Indigiqueer People.

As universities across Canada Indigenize and decolonize spaces, processes, and policies, they are finding that little attention is paid to the impacts that these changes have on the health and wellness of Métis students, faculty, and staff.

“In my previous research, and my personal experience, finding community among Indigenous scholars is important in academia. As Métis scholars, we “walk in two worlds”, working in Western, colonized academic spaces built on European knowledge systems, and prioritize and uphold our responsibilities to our Indigenous communities. Indigenous Peoples in academia, including students and scholars, carry this additional responsibility and challenges of navigating and translating two very different knowledge and education systems, and worldviews,” said Heart and Stroke/CIHR Early Career Indigenous Women’s Heart and Brain Health Chair Associate Professor, Dr. Heather Foulds.

“Having spaces to support Métis students and scholars specifically is an important endeavour. Further, marginalization of 2-Spirit/Indigiqueer Peoples and Indigenous women in Western, colonized worlds places, highlights supporting Métis 2-Spirit/Indigiqueer and women as paramount.”

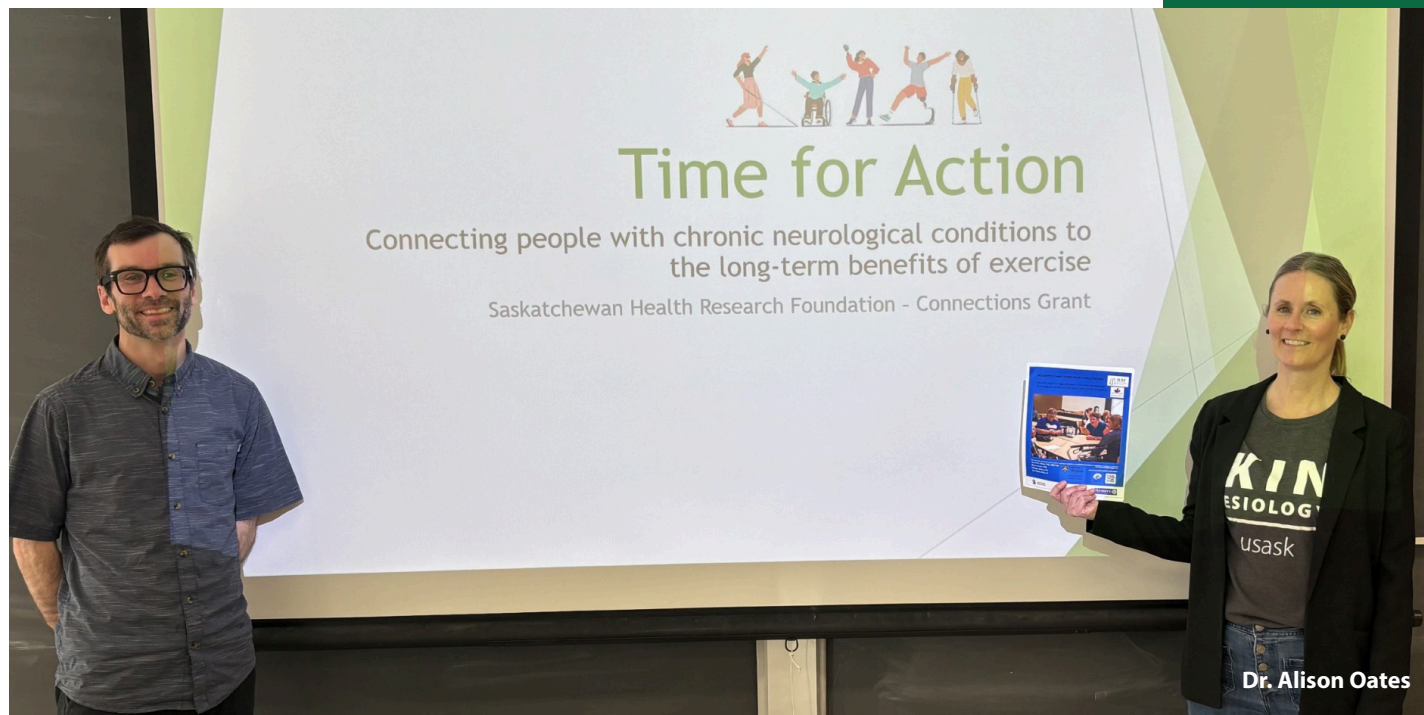
The project aims to develop a Framework of Métis Gathering Design (FMGD) and implement it through three gatherings across the Métis homeland—Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton—in partnership with Métis educational institutions such as the Louis Riel Institute and Rupertsland Institute.

“I think the biggest outcome of this grant will be to establish Métis spaces and communities among Métis students and scholars across the Homeland. This work strives develop a framework for creating gathering spaces attentive to Métis epistemologies, axiologies, and ontologie,” said Dr. Foulds.

The research will utilize data collected as part of a series of gatherings, interviews, and qualitative surveys and is expected to extend into 2028.

IMPROVING EXERCISE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH CHRONIC NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS IN SASKATCHEWAN

With over 100,000 people in Saskatchewan living with chronic neurological conditions, five researchers connected with community members to promote opportunities for regular exercise to help people manage symptoms, support recovery and improve their quality of life.



Dr. Alison Oates

The team hosted community round table meetings in Prince Albert, Yorkton, Regina, Saskatoon, and Swift Current with people who currently live with chronic neurological conditions. These roundtables also included exercise professionals and health care providers to discuss accessibility and quality of exercise services across Saskatchewan.

During these meetings, their conversations focused on sharing research evidence of the benefits of long-term exercise, defining the gap between evidence and current practice, and exploring what services can be created, better supported, or enhanced to support people living with neurological conditions in engaging in exercise.

University of Saskatchewan associate professor, Alison Oates is part of that team looking to improve exercise opportunities for people in Saskatchewan living with chronic neurological conditions.

“This research captures and highlights the voices of both people living with chronic neurological conditions and health care providers in Saskatchewan,” said Alison Oates.

“The resulting recommendations provide ways to move forward including increasing experiential learning opportunities for students in Kinesiology and other Health Science disciplines to support people living with chronic neurological conditions within an exercise and rehabilitation setting.”

From these round tables, the expert panel made five recommendations related to;

1. Practical training of students/professionals
2. Information-sharing and partnership
3. Accessible transportation
4. Accountability for services
5. Diverse perspectives

With the recommendations in hand, the team looks to inform communities on ways they can take initiative to increase delivery and use of exercise services for people in Saskatchewan living with chronic neurological conditions.

Team lead, Cameron Mang from the University of Regina, is excited to see these recommendations be put into action.

"A tremendous amount of research has demonstrated benefits of exercise for people living with the long-term effects of neurological conditions like stroke, brain injury, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, and spinal cord injury," said Cameron Mang.

"These recommendations were generated to help cultivate a future in which Saskatchewan residents living with neurological conditions can better access high-quality exercise services that meet their needs in their communities. Our hope is that the recommendations can be used to guide and support advocacy efforts and initiatives that connect people living with neurological conditions in Saskatchewan to the well-known benefits of exercise."

With the recommendations being shared across Saskatchewan, they believe that this work will inspire communities to improve access to, and quality of, exercise services for people living with chronic neurological conditions in Saskatchewan.

This project was funded by a Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) Research Connections Grant, with matched funds provided through an anonymous donor and in-kind support from First Steps Wellness Centre, Regina.



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RESEARCH, SCHOLARLY, AND ARTISTIC WORKS IN KIN

A new faculty award has been created in the College of Kinesiology that aims to annually recognize and celebrate the outstanding research, scholarly achievements, and community-based impact.

This year's award recipient of the College of Kinesiology Faculty RSAW Excellence Award is **Dr. Heather Foulds**.

Dr. Foulds holds the prestigious Heart and Stroke/CIHR Research Chair, focusing on the health and well-being of Métis People. Her research initiative is notable for its focus on health determinants specific to the Métis community, with particular attention to the significance of cultural activities, social connectedness, and support networks.

"Dr. Foulds has consistently highlighted the need for more Métis-specific health research in her work. For instance, she has emphasized the importance of cultural connectedness in the health of Métis women and she specifically addresses the health impacts of Métis dancing," said colleague, nominator, and Associate Professor, Dr. Leah Ferguson.

Dr. Foulds' efforts consistently promote the integration of health considerations specific to the Métis community within the wider context of Indigenous health research, emphasizing the distinct cultural and social factors that influence the Métis population. She has shown an exceptional capacity to obtain funding from various sources, including grants from CIHR, SSHRC, and SHRF.



“

"I pursue the work I do to support the communities I partner with. The support of the communities and my peers through this award is a meaningful indicator that I am on the right path.

- Dr. Foulds

Her achievements don't stop there as she has an outstanding record of publications. She has written and collaborated on a significant number of peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference presentations, showcasing her expertise and leadership in the field of research. Her extensive publications focus on issues pertaining to the health and physical activity of Indigenous Peoples.

"Her research is significant, innovative, and impactful, addressing critical health issues within Métis and other Indigenous communities through culturally relevant and community-engaged approaches," said Dr. Leah Ferguson. "As someone who frequently has the privilege of collaborating with Dr. Foulds, I never pass up the opportunity to work alongside someone of her exceptional research calibre, her inspiring spirit, and her unwavering commitment to community."

The College of Kinesiology Faculty RSAW Excellence Award will be presented annually during College of Kinesiology Research Showcase in March.



Shannon Forrester

Heightening Student Experiences

College of Kinesiology professor, Shannon Forrester was recognized with a Lieutenant Governor's Post-Secondary Teaching Award.

What is the Lieutenant Governor's Post-Secondary Teaching Award?

This award recognizes post-secondary educators who have displayed excellence in teaching and learning through a commitment to high-quality student learning experiences and a demonstrated record of innovation, leadership, and commitment to student learning and success. The award, established in 2023, recognizes post-secondary educators in Saskatchewan who have displayed excellence in teaching, primarily at the undergraduate level.

What does winning this award mean to you?

Winning the Lieutenant Governor's Distinguished Teaching Award is a profound honour. It is an acknowledgement of my dedication to teaching and validates my commitment to ignite curiosity and foster a love of learning. This recognition inspires me to continue to strive for excellence in teaching and to empower students not only as learners, but as advocates for personal and societal health and well-being.

How does student success influence the way you teach?

Student success is at the heart of my teaching philosophy. Seeing students gain confidence and achieve their goals motivates me to continuously improve my methods and to create an inclusive, supportive environment where every student can thrive. It's amazing how moments of student success can reignite my passion and remind me of the impact I can have as a teacher.

How do you continue to grow and enhance your teaching methods?

The two pillars that guide my growth as an educator are a commitment to self-reflection and embracing the mindset of a lifelong learner. Reflecting on student feedback and the day-to-day classroom experience helps inform the evolution of my teaching strategies. I am always looking to incorporate new knowledge, skills, or technology in the classroom. By staying current and incorporating best teaching practices, I ensure that my teaching remains effective and relevant. Throughout my career, from starting as a sessional lecturer to my current faculty position as a lecturer, the College of Kinesiology has always supported my desire to continually develop as a teacher. They have encouraged my ongoing work with the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning as well as collaborations with colleagues throughout the university. This has provided diverse perspective, fresh ideas, and has been a highlight of my teaching journey.



USask team wins first National College Ethics Bowl

**Eight top teams from across Canada
grappled with ethical issues at the
Toronto event.**

A team of four University of Saskatchewan (USask) undergraduate students won first place at Canada's first-ever national College Ethics Bowl in Toronto.

The USask team—College of Arts and Science students Isabelle Monsman and Will Shevkenek, and College of Kinesiology students Abdullah Amin and Gurleen Kaur—beat out seven other teams from across Canada to bring home gold from the event at George Brown College on June 1–2, 2025.

"It was very exciting!" said Shevkenek, a first-year political studies student. "Not many people get the chance to participate in the ... inaugural event of a competition, let alone win it, and so we feel very grateful to have gotten the chance at this opportunity and will definitely be back to future nationals."

An ethics bowl is an event in which teams go head-to-head in discussions of ethical topics connected to current social issues. Matches are structured similarly to debates, but with a greater emphasis on cooperation and collaboration. While Ethics Bowl Canada has organized ethics bowls at the high school level for nearly a decade, this was the first year an event was offered for university students.

"Everyone was very friendly, and it was a great experience to meet like-minded students from other universities across Canada. The matches themselves were very enjoyable. It was interesting to see the ethical approaches that other teams took towards the same cases that we had prepared for," said Shevkenek.

Topics—or cases—discussed at the College Ethics Bowl included the risks and benefits of online political memes, the authenticity of AI-generated art, and the fairness of diversity-based hiring practices.

Dr. Pierre-François Noppen (PhD), a faculty member in the Department of Philosophy, said he was thrilled to see a USask team come in first place at

College of Arts and Science students Hayley Allen and Hamza Saghir, along with College of Education student Blake Kemmer, made up the second team.

Noppen helped the USask teams prepare for the event and secure funding. Stipends from the Arts and Science Scholarship Enhancement Trust and the USask President's Office helped pay for the students' travel to Toronto.



the national competition. The assistant professor, who has been a driving force behind the Saskatchewan High School Ethics Bowl, sits on the Ethics Bowl Canada board of governors and helped initiate the university-level competition.

“(Ethics bowls) are an exceptional way for students to work very actively on developing their critical thinking skills,” Noppen said. “This is an opportunity for students to learn how to grapple with some of the challenges that they will face in their lives and that we collectively face.”

With help from the USask Philosophy Students' Society, several USask teams formed this winter and participated in a virtual qualifier in January. Two USask teams attended the national event.

Noppen said he wasn't surprised to see the USask students excel at the national competition, as their arguments were “very, very sophisticated.”

But strong arguments alone are not enough to win an ethics bowl match. Participants are expected to genuinely listen to the opposing team's presentation and alter their viewpoints in response.

Shevkenek said his team's flexibility and humility in their perspective helped give them the edge. “This is likely one of the hardest things to do well consistently in ethics bowls and also what helps you to win rounds that are extremely close otherwise.”

The national College Ethics Bowl will return next year. Noppen believes participation in the event benefits students and society at large.

“(In our society) we cannot expect agreement. Agreement is the exception. And so we have to become comfortable living within disagreement and with people who disagree with our views, and find constructive and productive ways to move forward,” he said.



ONE TO WATCH AWARD

DR. KEELY SHAW

(BSKI'16, MSC'20, PHD'24)

The University of Saskatchewan (USask) has announced the 2025 recipients of the Alumni Achievement Awards, one of the university's highest honours.

The One To Watch Award recognizes a young alumnus/alumna who is making significant personal and professional contributions in society, resulting in a demonstrable betterment of their community, and setting an example for fellow and future alumni to follow.

Dr. Keely Shaw (BSKI'16, MSc'20, PhD'24) is a scientist and elite Para athlete who has demonstrated excellence in her academic and athletic pursuits. She has inspired others through her journey as an award-winning Paralympian and six-time World Championship medalist, and through her interdisciplinary research that has the potential to significantly impact human health.

Shaw grew up in Midale, Sask., where she experienced a life-changing horse-riding accident on the family farm at the age of 15 that resulted in partial paralysis on her left side. Prior to the accident, Shaw was a high-level hockey player who aspired to compete in the Olympics; after the accident, she struggled with the realization that her body had changed. Shaw's Paralympic career began when she was working out at the Physical Activity Complex on the University of Saskatchewan campus and a classmate connected her with a sports scientist, who told Shaw that she would be a classifiable Para athlete and to "pick a sport." At the time, Shaw had been commuting by bike to USask and decided to try Para cycling as a result. Upon completing her Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology degree at USask in 2016, Shaw entered her first competition in Moose Jaw, Sask.—and the rest is history. Realizing that she had found the right sport for her, she emailed every person she could from the Canadian Paralympic website to let them know that she was interested in competing. The Paralympic team put her in touch with a Cycling Canada NexGen coach, and Shaw competed at her first National Championship in August 2017 and at her first World Championship in March 2018.

Since then, Shaw has medaled at multiple world competitions, including earning two Paralympic bronze medals. While participating in high-level cycling competitions, she also remained focused on her USask education and her scientific research, completing a Master of Science degree in 2020 and a PhD in 2024, co-supervised by faculty in the College of Kinesiology and the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition. Shaw's outstanding interdisciplinary PhD dissertation, "Biofortification of Plant-Based Food Products and Applications to the Athlete," was recognized with the Governor General's Gold Medal, the highest academic honour a graduate student at USask can receive.

As a Paralympian, Shaw competed at the 2020 Tokyo Games and at the 2024 Paris Games, winning bronze medals in the women's C4 3000m individual pursuit at each. In 2020, she was the only athlete from Saskatchewan to win either an Olympic or Paralympic medal. She is a six-time World Championship medalist. In 2019 and 2021 she was named Saskatchewan Sport's Female Athlete of the Year, and she was again nominated in 2025.

Currently, Shaw is a postdoctoral scholar in the Faculty of Kinesiology and the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary. Her research is at the intersection of kinesiology, nutrition, and agriculture, focusing on exercise physiology and nutrition, particularly examining iron levels in female athletes. She has published more than 20 peer-reviewed papers on this and other topics related to exercise physiology. As a female Paralympic athlete, she brings a unique perspective and understanding to her academic work. Shaw's research has the potential to have a significant impact on human health, while her resilience, dedication, and commitment to excellence continue to inspire many in both the academic and athletic worlds.



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