

Welcome Address

To students: Health Sciences Graduate Program

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Director, Health Sciences Graduate Program
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As we gather here today, we acknowledge we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

For those of you who are new, my name is Kiven Erique Lukong. I serve as the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies in the College of Medicine, Director of the Health Sciences Graduate Program (HSGP), faculty in the Department of Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology, and breast cancer researcher in the Cancer Cluster.

It is my pleasure to welcome all new Health Sciences graduate students and post-doctoral fellows to the University of Saskatchewan. To our returning students, welcome back—I encourage you to mentor those who are beginning their graduate journey. Graduate studies can be demanding, but they are equally rewarding. Du courage!

Over the past year, we have introduced important changes that directly benefit our students. Minimum stipends have been raised across most departments, and College of Medicine scholarships now provide \$25,000 for Master's students and \$30,000 for PhD students. The Health Sciences Graduate Scholarship (HSGS) and the 75th Anniversary Recruitment Scholarship remain vital supports, with adjustments to reflect higher stipend levels.

The Commitment of Financial Support form, signed at the beginning of your program, now requires the signature of not only the supervisor but also the

Department Head. This additional layer of oversight increases accountability, ensuring that each student is supported for the full stipulated duration of their studies.

The 2025 Graduate Studies Manual includes key revisions: expanded Teaching Assistant opportunities, increased scholarship awards, clearer Travel Award policies, enhanced Professional Development provisions, updates to the HSC 990 Symposium Series, stronger guidance for RAC meetings, a formal Conflict Resolution process, the replacement of the Comprehensive Examination with the Candidacy Assessment, and a revised Leaves of Absence policy.

Dr. Steve Milosavljevic continues to serve as Co-Chair of the HSGP, overseeing HSC 990 Symposiums, class building, and academic issue resolution, while I remain responsible for admissions, scholarships, and non-academic student support. The HSGP Committee Terms of Reference were updated in April 2025, confirming the committee's role in admissions, RAC oversight, scholarship administration, program review, and policy development. Importantly, the Committee includes student representatives to ensure that graduate student voices are heard in governance.

Work is underway to revamp our website and to consider a renaming of the program to reduce confusion and enhance visibility. Significant updates have also been made to the MD-PhD pathway, ensuring clearer requirements and stronger integration with graduate programs in the college.

Looking ahead, our goals include expanding funding opportunities through scholarships, partnerships, and donor support; enhancing career development resources through workshops and mentorship; supporting interdisciplinary collaboration; fostering an inclusive academic ecosystem where wellness and equity are prioritized; and preparing for a revitalized online presence.

To our new students: I encourage you to engage fully—present your research at the HSC 990 Symposiums, participate actively in RAC meetings, and seek mentorship opportunities. To our returning students: your progress is inspiring, and you play a vital role in mentoring your peers. You are helping shape the reputation and strength of this program.

Graduate studies are not only about coursework and research, but also about growth, leadership, and impact. The discoveries you make here will contribute to advancing health sciences in Saskatchewan, Canada, and beyond.

I strongly encourage every graduate student to join the College of Medicine Graduate Student Society (CMGSS), which provides academic, social, and cultural opportunities, and serves as the voice of graduate students in our College.

Finally, I want to stress that I operate with an open-door policy. Please feel free to reach out whenever you need advice, support, or simply to share your experiences.

Together, let us make 2025–2026 a year of excellence, collaboration, and discovery in the Health Sciences Graduate Program.

Thank you, and I wish you all success in the coming year.

Sincerely,



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