

Dr. Thomas Chase
Interim President
University of Regina

May 26th, 2020

Dear Dr. Tom Chase,

We are writing to you today to call your attention to the issue of COVID-19, and how it is affecting international students at the University of Regina. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone on campus but, with limited options and insufficient support from the federal and provincial governments, international students especially are struggling.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, international students already faced many challenges. Paying three times the tuition of domestic students, many international students face financial difficulties while having to adjust to life in a new country, far away from the support systems of their family and friends. Employment options are also very limited for international students, who are restricted to working mostly on-campus jobs. The pandemic has only exacerbated these issues. International students are having to either return home or stay in Canada, with the latter decision leaving some of them isolated from their families with very limited resources.

We believe the University should be doing all that it can to ensure all international students attending the University of Regina, both currently in Canada and abroad, have the support that they need for the duration of this pandemic. We ask that the University do their best to ensure that international students who are planning on continuing their education online have the proper resources to do so. We also ask that the University provide international students who have remained in Canada with financial aid, either through lobbying the provincial and federal governments for more support, or directly from the University.

We also ask that the University of Regina consider removing the requirement for students to be in good academic standing in order to qualify to receive financial aid through the Student Emergency Fund. As noted, many international students have found themselves unable to return home and struggling financially, ineligible for federal and provincial funding. The fund is a last resort for these students, and they should not be ineligible just because they are also struggling academically. While removing this requirement will not solve all the challenges faced by our international students, it is an equitable solution that will help some of those who need assistance the most.

It would be appreciated if we were made aware of any efforts you are making to inform and assist students in repatriation efforts. Newly arrived students, who are not qualifying for any of the funding from the provincial or federal government are looking to the University for assurance. It is unrealistic to expect that the University will be able to support the financial needs of this group in the long term. The financial aid to date has only bought time and we are

expecting that June will see even more of a crisis. Evictions will happen, the already fragile mental health of some will break, and newly arrived young people as young as 18 and 19 years-old could experience both.

As markets crash worldwide, the funds that some students may be able to access from home are nearly worthless against the Canadian dollar. The families of these students cannot rebuild or maintain their lives during this pandemic and afford to support a child studying abroad.

The University of Regina depends on international students for its success, and they make our University a better, stronger institution. During these uncertain times, international students should be able to depend on the University of Regina. We owe it to these students to make sure that they have the support and resources that they need.

We would be happy to meet with you to further discuss what the University of Regina can do to assist international students during this pandemic. Our Student Advocate would be pleased to sit on any task force created to look at what is being done for this population and how we can assist them.

Sincerely,



Gurjinder Singh Lehal
President
URSU



Sylvain Rheault
President
URFA