

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UWSA supports UWinnipeg's new pilot project for reserved gym time for women-identified and non-binary folks

WINNIPEG, MB – The University of Winnipeg Students' Association (UWSA) celebrates and supports the announcement of UWinnipeg's pilot project offering reserved gym time to women-identified and non-binary folks. The pilot project will launch in Sept. 2017.

The announcement comes after the UWSA Board of Directors launched the Inclusive Gym Initiative campaign in May 2016. The campaign was initiated after many women, non-binary people, and other marginalized students expressed they didn't feel comfortable using UWinnipeg's fitness facilities, a facility all students pay to have access to in their tuition fees.

The student-led campaign included classroom presentations, tabling and a survey asking students and community members questions about their experience at the Bill Wedlake Fitness Centre and how accessible it was to them. The survey had over 750 respondents in just under a three-month period.

After analyzing the survey results, the Inclusive Gym Initiative working group met with UWinnipeg and made six recommendations that would make the fitness facilities a more inclusive space to women-identified and non-binary folks. The pilot project is a direct response to one of the six recommendations.

"As a student-led initiative, many students have worked tirelessly towards improving the inclusivity of the university fitness centre and we are very excited to see the university take concrete steps towards making the gym a safer, more comfortable space for all," says UWSA Status of Women Director and part of the Inclusive Gym Initiative working group, Jade DeFehr. "We look forward to the response of the pilot project and hope the hours continue permanently."

The other recommendations were warmly received by the university and the working group continues to consult on the implementation of them.

"We want people to know that we have a commitment to ensure full accessibility to the facilities for people with physical disabilities, as well as working towards getting gender neutral change rooms," says Jacq Pelland, UWSA LGBT* Director and part of the Inclusive Gym Initiative working group. "These changes must be implemented regardless of whether or not the gym hours continue past the pilot project's timeline."

The campaign continues to explore ways to increase accessibility to UWinnipeg's fitness facilities and create more safe, equitable spaces on campus.

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Established in 1972, the University of Winnipeg Students' Association provides advocacy, services, and support to students at the University of Winnipeg. Our vision is to create an accessible, inclusive, democratic post-secondary education system that is of the highest possible quality and value, and in which students can reach their full potential.

**Jade DeFehr will be available for comment after 1 p.m. and Jacq Pelland is available for comment over the phone.*

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