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VICE PRESIDENT STUDENT AFFAIRS – REZA SAKER HOUSAIN

Students at the University of Winnipeg have overcome many unprecedented challenges this year, and it has been my honor to be by their side to support them in this journey as their elected representative. Starting my term as the Vice President Student Affairs at a time of a global pandemic and distance learning required extensive efforts to ensure the best possible support for our students while working to fulfill my goals for increased and improved services for our students.

One of my major responsibilities as the Vice President Student Affairs is to provide advocacy to our students in academic and non-academic misconduct cases. I met with students to listen to them and provide guidance on different cases. I frequently attended different Departmental Review Committee meetings with students as a support person and attended the Senate Academic Standards and Misconduct Committee to advocate for students. I have also had the honor to represent students' voices at the Senate Student Appeals Committee and the Senate Student Services Committee at our university. In addition to the advocacy at the university level, I and my colleagues have actively advocated for students at the community and government levels on issues that directly impact our student body such as the Bill-33. Throughout the year, we strongly advocated for protecting the post-secondary students' rights and choices. We met with the government officials including the Minister of Advanced Education, Immigration, and Skills to express the concerns of our student body regarding the Bill-33. We are still working tirelessly to ensure that the voices of our student body are effectively presented. Healthcare for international students has also been one of our top priorities throughout the year and we took every opportunity to advocate for reinstatement of provincial healthcare for international students who comprises more than 12% of our entire student body. I was actively involved in the Canadian Federation of Students' Healthcare for All campaign which was a strong advocacy platform for this cause in the province. As I move on to the second year of my term, I am committed to continuing advocating for healthcare for international students.

I have been passionately working since the beginning of my term to make UWSA and its services more accessible to our students. I started to use an online scheduling platform that allows students to easily book one-on-one Zoom meeting with me to talk about any concerns or ideas they have. When campus reopened for partial in-person classes in Fall 2021, I moved a motion for a student outreach campaign to help more students know about the UWSA and the different services that the UWSA provides. As a part of this campaign, executives and directors volunteer to table at different locations around the campus to provide students with information regarding UWSA services. I strongly believe that the key to building a union that successfully represents the students is to listen to students' opinions and act upon them. In January, I took initiative to create a survey to ask for students' opinions on the Fall 2022 Reading week schedule so that we can advocate for the choice made by the students. As a student myself, I know the importance of initiatives that provide students important information about their rights or educate them on different important issues. I organized two

online info sessions on Reasonable Accommodation at UofW and Healthy Relationships respectively in collaboration with the university's Human Rights and Diversity Officer and Sexual Violence Advisor. While we have made significant progress in terms of connecting and reaching more students over the past year, we still have a lot of work to do in this area and I am hopeful that our continued efforts would bring further progress in terms of student outreach.

I am passionate about advocating for affordability for students and have worked on increasing the use of open educational resources at the University of Winnipeg to reduce the rising cost of postsecondary education. I and my colleagues who are equally passionate about this have worked hard over the past year and so far, we have made valuable progress. We worked with the UWFA and university Institutional Analysis Centre to develop and circulate a survey among the faculty members to understand the best possible way to attain our goal of increasing the use of open educational resources at our institution.

When the spread of the new COVID-19 variant exacerbated the pandemic condition in Manitoba causing the university to quickly move to online learning for the Winter 2022 term, we decided to advocate for an alternative grading policy as we saw that as the best way to support our student body at such a difficult time. I moved a motion for an alternative grading policy for Winter 2022 and 6 credit hour Fall/Winter 2021-22 courses at the University of Winnipeg Senate in January and the motion was approved by a majority vote. Approval of this motion bears the sign of successful and effective student advocacy at our institution.

The year has been a challenging one for the students and for our organization, and the resilience and strength that our student body has shown in the face of all those adversaries are truly inspiring. I want to thank our student body for their trust and support that made it possible for us to bring the kind of positive changes that our student body needs today. While we have successfully worked towards various goals this year, there is still a lot more to achieve for our students. As I look forward to entering the second year of my term, I want to continue my work on improving student services and continue advocating for our students.