Photos from 2019 Fall Orientation
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WE ARE THE GSA,
THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF UCALGARY GRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY AND TO ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

2019-22 STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision
To be recognized as the leader in graduate student advocacy and service delivery by our members, stakeholders, and external organizations across Canada.

Mission
The GSA serves all UCalgary graduate students through responsive programs and initiatives to support their success during and after their academic endeavours.

Focuses
1. Student Advocacy
2. Service Delivery
3. Communication
4. Organizational Sustainability
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

“It is not an exaggeration to say that 2019-20 was the most challenging year in the history of the Graduate Students’ Association.”

During the 2019-20 academic year, UCalgary graduate students went through many difficult changes starting with the provincial budget cut in October, tuition negotiation in November through January to provincial budget cut and the introduction of the performance-based funding model in February 2020, and finally COVID-19. These were not all of the challenges the GSA faced, but they can exemplify the difficulties of this year. Although it was tough, it could not stop us, and we had many great achievements that contributed toward the GSA strategic plan such as our advocacy and communication achievements.

We successfully advocated to increase student financial aid (e.g., Emergency Bursary funding was increased from $100,000 to $500,000), and built sustainable relationships with politicians and policymakers at all levels of government. We also became a member of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), a well-established federal advocacy group. We secured graduate scholarships, mental health grants, and renegotiated Quality Money and Collective Agreement contracts with the University of Calgary. The 2019-20 academic year was also a record-breaking year for the GSA. We reached new records in the number of applications in the Professional Development Grant, Quality Money, Emergency Bursary, and GSA Awards. We offered more social events, discounted tickets, and during the COVID-19 quarantine, we continued to introduce new online events to support our members.

These great achievements were impossible without the hard work and dedication of the GSA Executives Team including Mohamed, Marcela, Basem, and Mina; our Senior Leadership Team; and many incredible volunteers. My sincere appreciation and gratitude to each of you for all of your hard work. This has indeed been a rewarding and insightful experience, and I could not successfully finish this journey without you. Thanks everyone for your contribution!

Of course, we would not have accomplished anything without significant support from our fantastic staff. I am deeply grateful to the GSA staff for their outstanding contribution to the GSA during my presidency and prior. Their commitment inspired me!

I would also like to take the opportunity to express my faith in the new Executives Team, led by Tanille Shandro as your new President. I am confident they will pass other milestones and challenges to lead the GSA closer to its vision outlined in our strategic plan.

As you read through this report, I would encourage everyone to think about the impact of the GSA on your life; your impact on the GSA; and, consequently, your impact on other graduate student’s life. Seek your passions outside of your research and pursue them! As a PhD Candidate who is in the last steps of my academic journey, I would like to say that you won’t regret your choice of being a graduate student.

All the best,
Mohammad Mansouri
GSA President, 2019-20
2019-20 was a challenging year for the GSA and post-secondary students. Amid those challenges, the GSA was resilient and dedicated to UCalgary graduate students, which led to many great advocacy wins for our members.
SERVICE & PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

1 REPRESENTATIVE FOR EVERY

60 GRADUATE STUDENTS

$285,149 grants, bursaries, and award money distributed to outstanding & in-need graduate students

5,069 attendees attended 131 CSA-hosted events

$156,673 of GSA Quality Money was distributed to fund 58 graduate student projects

3,000 academic positions were offered to graduate students.

15+ meetings with government officials to discuss graduate student issues

216 STUDENT VOLUNTEERS donated time & talent for GSA committees & events

500 events hosted by 50 Departmental Graduate Associations
10 Graduate Student Groups
2019-20 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ACHIEVEMENTS

Mohammad Mansouri, President
PhD Candidate in Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Advocated to secure graduate scholarships
- Established a Professional Development (PD) program for GSA committees
- Monitored the Health & Dental Plan transition
- Developed a plan to increase other revenues
- Reviewed and revised GSA Bylaws
- Renewed GSA Quality Money contract
- Increased Emergency Bursary fund to $500,000
- Reduced tuition increase by 2% from 7% to 5%; secured $1,500,000 extra need-based financial support and one-time $400 scholarship for international students who are in pre-candidacy
- Completed the Collective Agreement negotiation with the Labour Relations Committee

Mohamed Abdelsamie, VP Academic
PhD Candidate in Environmental Engineering
- Finalized the Graduate Supervision Policy
- Expanded the Annual Graduate Research Symposium
- Established the collaboration between the GSA and the Innovation@UCalgary ecosystem
- Developed the online awards platform workplan and website structure, and acquired the required funds
- Developed the first draft of the Graduate Student Handbook

Basem Halawa, VP Student Life
Master’s Student in Civil Engineering
- Started the GSA Sponsorship Program
- Introduced events insurance support for Departmental Graduate Associations (DGAs) and Graduate Student Groups (GSGs)
- Doubled the number of GSA events during spring and summer
- Sustained and expanded the Building Bridges initiative
- Diversified the GSA’s discounted tickets program
- Doubled the GSA’s departmental orientation participation
- Optimized GSA events and maintained healthy budget practices
- Initiated the conversation with UCalgary’s Active Living to sign a memorandum of understanding
Marcela Lopes, VP External
PhD Candidate in Civil Engineering

- As chair of ab-GPAC: Established an official ab-GPAC advocacy week; hired a part time Executive Director in place for the Fall 2019; maintained strong stakeholders’ relationships; engaged with the new Provincial Government elected in 2019; developed three policies based on graduate students’ needs; engaged with Media Relations in response to budget announcements and introduction of a performance-based funding model for Alberta’s Post-Secondary Institutions.
- Lobbied for streamlining permanent residence processes for international graduate students. The Government of Alberta is developing a new Immigration Strategy.
- Developed relationships with the new government officials
- Developed advocacy documents, policies and research along with the GSA President and the Research and Advocacy Analyst
- Advocated to the provincial government for maintaining the Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship at the same levels
- Successfully ran the Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign from the Canadian Alliance of Students Association (CASA) to promote participation in the federal election in Fall 2019
- In May 2020, the GSA officially became a member of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)

Mina Iskander, VP Finance & Services
PhD Candidate in Civil Engineering

- Completed the Request for Proposal for GSA investments
- Started the GSA Sponsorship program
- Received the highest number of Quality Money applications ever recorded
- Received the highest number of Emergency Bursary applications ever recorded
The GSA hosted our 2020 General Election on March 9 and 10 with nine candidates running for four of the five Executive positions and the AVP Labour position.

This year, UCalgary graduate students elected a brand-new team of Executives for the four contested positions. A total of 718 UCalgary graduate students casted their votes for the Executive election accounting for 10.4% of total eligible voters, a 3.4% increase compared to last year’s turnout.

The GSA would like to congratulate Tanille Shandro, MSc student in Biophysical Chemistry, elected as the incoming President of the GSA. Alex Paquette, PhD candidate in Geoscience, won the Vice President Academic position. The Vice President External position belongs to Christine Cao, MSc student in Electrical and Computer Engineering. Lastly, Mary Zhang, PhD student in Geoscience, was elected as the next Vice President Student Life.

The GSA also hosted the Associate Vice President (AVP) Labour election during the same period and saw a 13.7 percent voter turnout. Brit Paris was elected as the AVP Labour for the second year in a row and is excited to continue her work in advocating for graduate student employees and building capacity for self-advocacy within the student body.

The GSA by-election for the VP Finance and Services was hosted on April 29, 2020.

Kabita Baral, PhD Student in the Department of Comparative Biology and Experimental Medicine, was elected as the GSA’s 2020-21 VP Finance and Services.

GSA Chief Returning Officer (CRO) and Deputy Returning Office (DRO) announcing the results on March 11, 2020
From left to right: Sandra Simeonova (CRO), Jacob Lamb (DRO)
Tanille Shandro, President
MSc Student in Biophysical Chemistry

Portfolio:
- GSA Bylaws & governing documents
- All GSA affairs and operations
- Collective Agreement
- Your voice to the Board of Governors and governments

Goals:
- Improving Advocacy - Increase minimum funding policy with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and actively collect student feedback regarding student experience as a result of the changes due to the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and advocate necessary changes to the University Administration
- Improving Service Delivery - Expand service delivery to select groups using results of the 2019-20 GSA Annual Survey
- Improving Communication - Clearly communicate advocacy accomplishments with GSA members

Committee: Governance Committee
Email: pres.gsa@ucalgary.ca

Alex Paquette, VP Academic
PhD Candidate in Geoscience

Portfolio:
- GSA Awards and Professional Development Grants
- Academic appeals and student issues
- Workshops and professional development

Goals:
- Improving Advocacy - Increase minimum funding policy with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, establish an award for graduate students with disabilities, and advocate for graduate students in all aspects of COVID-19-related situations
- Improving Service Delivery - Improve the application forms, Terms of References, and adjudication criteria for all GSA Awards; improve the process of applying for GSA Awards; create an online awards platform for GSA Awards; and improve the Peer Beyond Symposium
- Improving Communication - Establish a weekly communication piece highlighting the amazing research work graduate students are doing at the University of Calgary

Committees: Academic Support Committee, Awards Committee
Email: vpa.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Mary Zhang, VP Student Life
PhD Student in Geoscience

Portfolio:
- Events and discounted ticket sales
- Departmental Graduate Associations (DGAs) and Graduate Student Groups (GSGs)
- Student experience

Goals:
- Improving Advocacy - Increase participation rate of the Empower Me program to 100 people by a renewed campaign through different communication channels
- Improving Service Delivery - Secure Commedia and event insurance agreements by September 2020 to better support DGAs and GSGs
- Improving Communication - Sustain popular online events after COVID-19 to engage distance learners and graduate students at the Foothills, downtown, Edmonton, and main campuses
- Improving Organization Sustainability - Initiate the GSA Sponsorship Program and start to contact potential sponsors by December 2020

Committees: Student Experience and Events Committee, Mental Health and Wellness Subcommittee, GSA Gender and Sexuality Alliance Subcommittee (or GSA²), Events Subcommittee, Newcomers and International Students Subcommittee, Community Engagement Subcommittee

Email: vpsl.gsa@ucalgary.ca

Christine Cao, VP External
MSc Student in Electrical and Computer Engineering

Portfolio:
- Municipal, provincial, and federal advocacy
- External relations

Goals:
Improving Advocacy:
- Engage in meaningful consultations with key stakeholders and the GSA membership
- Adopt a flexible and resilient approach to provide advocacy inputs during the decision-making process at all levels of government
- Assert GSA advocacy priorities in order to expand the GSA’s external collaborative network
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion - Account for how diverse groups are affected by advocacy priorities and asks
- Adopt a CASA campaign and showcase ab-GPAC’s work to the GSA membership

Committee: Advocacy Working Group
Email: vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Kabita Baral, VP Finance & Services
PhD Student in Comparative Biology and Experimental Medicine

Portfolio:
• Health & Dental Plan (H&D)
• GSA and Emergency Bursaries
• Last Defence Lounge

Goals:
• Improving Advocacy - Increase awareness of Studentcare’s Empower Me service among Wellness Center counselors
• Improving Service Delivery - Collaborate with Studentcare to understand students’ needs and concerns related to COVID-19 and effectively communicate the insurer’s COVID-19 responses to students
• Improving Communication - Ensure the awareness of updated information on the Extended Health and Dental Plan by students, and increase transparency in the GSA’s budget management process through presentations to Graduate Representative Council (GRC) members
• Improving Organization Sustainability - Continue the project initiated by previous Board to diversify GSA revenue sources

Committees: Finance Standing Committee, Sustainability Committee
Email: vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca

THE GSA BOARD OF DIRECTORS WANTS TO REMIND YOU TO FOLLOW COVID-19 GUIDELINES SET OUT BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY AND HEALTH OFFICIALS.

ucalgary.ca/covid-19
albertahealthservices.ca/covid19

STAY SAFE AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING YOU ONLINE!
GSA STAFF

Danielle Abbott  
Executive Director  
With the GSA since 2014  
danielle.decoste@ucalgary.ca  
Oversees all aspects of the GSA’s operations and services, provides guidance and leadership to the GSA and the LDL, and acts in an advisory capacity to the GSA Board of Directors

Daniella Ikurusi  
Finance and Operations Manager  
With the GSA since 2015  
daniella.ikurusi@ucalgary.ca  
Oversees the Last Defence Lounge (LDL) and manages the GSA finances and operations

Lina Girgis  
Human Resources Manager  
With the GSA since 2010  
lginigis@ucalgary.ca  
Oversees the GSA’s human resources, Volunteer Recruitment Program, Collective Agreement, and the Health and Dental Plan

Thao Nguyen  
Marketing and Communications Manager  
With the GSA since 2016  
thao.nguyen1@ucalgary.ca  
Manages the marketing and communication effort for the GSA and the LDL

Crystal Ellis  
Governance and Services Coordinator  
With the GSA since 2017  
governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca  
Manages the GSA’s DGA/GSG Program, Quality Money Program, Awards/Bursaries/Grants, and provides operational support to the GSA Board of Directors

Adelina Gashi  
Marketing and Communications Coordinator  
With the GSA from Sept. 2019 to Mar. 2020  
Managed the marketing and communication effort for the GSA and the LDL

Megan Sawchuk  
Events Coordinator  
With the GSA since 2019  
events.gsa@ucalgary.ca  
Manages GSA events and discounted ticket program

Nancy Wanye  
Research and Advocacy Analyst  
With the GSA since 2019  
nancy.wanye@ucalgary.ca  
Supports the GSA’s strategic goal of engaging in meaningful consultation, research, and policy development to the University and all levels of government on behalf of GSA members.  
*Nancy is on maternity leave starting Sept. 2020

Rachel Duchesne  
Administrative Assistant  
With the GSA since 2018  
admin.gsa@ucalgary.ca  
Manages the GSA front desk, provides guidance and support to the GSA members, staff, Board of Directors, and performs administrative tasks

Mike Brown  
Research and Advocacy Analyst  
With the GSA since 2020  
michael.brown1@ucalgary.ca  
Supports the GSA’s strategic goal of engaging in meaningful consultation, research, and policy development to the University and all levels of government on behalf of GSA members.
LAST DEFENCE Lounge (LDL) STAFF

Chris Schneider
General Manager

Matthew Broughton
Front of House Manager

Carl Stephenson
Kitchen Manager

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON THE GSA OPERATIONS

GSA Office
To eliminate the spread of COVID-19, the GSA’s physical office is closed effectively March 17, 2020 until further notice. The GSA staff is working remotely and maintaining the same level of service to UCalgary graduate students. Some adjustments were made to the service offerings including moving all events online and mailing out physical discounted tickets. The GSA also invests more time and resources into our external communication channels to reach our members virtually. We have introduced more video content from GSA executives, scheduled fun posts on social media, distributed student surveys and polls to collect valuable feedback from UCalgary graduate students.

Last Defence Lounge
Due to COVID-19, the Last Defence Lounge (LDL) is temporarily closed until further notice. We would like to offer our sincere appreciation to our LDL staff who worked hard to ensure the best service and sustainability of the LDL from April 2019 to March 2020. More updates about the LDL can be found on the LDL website: www.lastdefencelounge.ca
The GSA engages in meaningful consultation, research, and policy development in order to relentlessly advocate for the changing needs of UCalgary graduate students to the university and all levels of government.
ADVOCA CY W I N S

At the University:

- Strengthened stakeholder relationships with the UCalgary’s Students’ Union and held numerous engagements with the University Administration at different levels regarding the provincial scholarships, tuition and fees, minimum funding, and professional development for graduate students.
- As a result of Alberta’s 2019 budget cuts, which had a great impact on post-secondary education, the Graduate Representative Council (GRC) mandated the GSA to organize two protests targeting the UCalgary Board of Governors, which focused on students’ concerns regarding tuition increases, and promote province-wide protests. The first protest hosted on December 13, 2019 had an attendance of 120 students and received strong media coverage.

At the Provincial Level:

- Developed relationships with the new government officials: The GSA had 15+ meetings with many Members of Legislative Assembly, including Ministers of Labour and Immigration, Justice and Advanced Education, the opposition critics for these ministries, as well as the Opposition leader.
- Successfully advocated to the provincial government to maintain the Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship at current funding levels, with an award range of $11,000 to $15,000.

The GSA is a member of the Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) that advocates to the provincial government on behalf of Alberta’s graduate students.

At the Federal Level:

- Successfully ran the Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign from the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) to promote participation in the federal election in Fall 2019, with a 97% pledge completion rate towards our goal of collecting 1,000 pledges.
- Advocated through CASA on behalf of post-secondary students across Canada. The federal government committed to three from our six asks, which were the main wins from the last Advocacy Week:
  - Increase of non-repayable grants for low income students from $3,200 to $4,000;
  - Increase of the interest free grace period for graduates from 6 months to 24 months; and
  - Introduction of interest free grace periods for new parents.
- Successfully advocated for emergency funding support for post-secondary students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal government responded by implementing the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB).

The GSA is a member of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) that advocates to the federal government on behalf of post-secondary institution students across Canada.

About ab-GPAC: The Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) is an inclusive, student-led, non-partisan organization that advocates to public, private and plural organizations on behalf of almost 16,000 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Non-STEM graduate students. Its vision and mission is to enable the highest-quality post-secondary graduate education experience for our cohort to position them as the future global leaders to improve society.

About CASA: CASA is a national voice for Canada’s post-secondary students. Established in 1995, CASA is a non-partisan, not-for-profit student organization composed of student associations from across Canada. We represent undergraduate, graduate and polytechnic associations. At its core, CASA advocates on behalf of post-secondary students to the federal government. When Canada’s leaders make decisions affecting our post-secondary education system, they turn to CASA for solutions.
COVID-19 ADVOCACY WINS

At the University:

• Obtained $500,000 extra support for Graduate Teaching Assistants
• Obtained free parking across the University at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic
• Provided technology support for students who did not have a computer to work from home
• Obtained discounted transit tickets as an alternative to the cancelled UPass

At the Provincial Level:

• Paused student loan repayment pause for six months
• Sustained medical coverage for international students

At the Federal Level:

• Paused student loan repayment for six months
• $1,250/month taxable benefit for Canadian post-secondary students (CESB)
• Lifted travel restrictions imposed on international students during the travel ban
• Lifted restrictions on the number of hours an international student could work from 20 hours to 40 hours
• Students were granted the research grant deadlines extension. $291 million is committed to allow extensions of Canada Granting Agency funding for 3 to 4 months for student researchers

ADVOCACY WINS FOR ACADEMICALLY EMPLOYED GRADUATE STUDENTS

Labour Relations Committee

The Labour Relations Committee (LRC), chaired by the CSA’s Associate VP Labour, administers the labour relations of the CSA and our academically employed graduate student members. This includes but is not limited to negotiating the Collective Agreement, handling disputes with employers, and advocating for a high standard of graduate student employment. The LRC exists to represent and support Academically Employed Graduate Students (AEGSs) at the University of Calgary through education and advocacy.

In the 2019-20 academic year, the Committee was focused on educating graduate students while preparing for negotiating a new collective agreement. For the first time, the Committee participated in negotiation training provided by an experienced union negotiator. The lunch and learn sessions were re-developed with feedback from past attendees. The Committee hosted ten lunch and learn sessions and participated in several other Teaching Assistant Orientations across the University, including the one hosted by the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning.

gsa.ucalgary.ca/collective-agreement

Graduate Assistantship Contracts

• In the 2019-20 academic year, the University departments provided over 3,000 Graduate Teaching, Non-Teaching and Research Assistantship positions.
• Compliance for Graduate Teaching, Non-Teaching and Research contracts have increased by 13% for the academic year. This was made possible by ongoing communication between the Labour Relations Committee, the CSA, the University’s HR department, and all the departments at the University.

Collective Agreement

The 2020-22 Collective Agreement (CA) has been ratified. The voter turnout was 24% and 88% voted in favour of the new Collective Agreement.

Some of the changes to the CA were:

• One-twelfth (17 hours) level of appointment was added on a trial basis.
• Graduate Assistants are not responsible for investigating plagiarism or violations of academic integrity.
• One (1) hour of professional development may be included as part of the GAR contract at the discretion of the Researcher if requested by the Graduate Assistant.
May 2019: The GSA became an official member of Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA).

July 2019: The GSA hired the first ever Research and Advocacy Analyst, Nancy Wanye.

July 2019: The GSA Executives met with the Ministry of Advanced Education for the Student Leader Orientation, precursor for many other meetings with government officials to discuss graduate student issues.

September 2020: The GSA carried out the Get Out the Vote campaign to encourage students to vote in the federal elections. A total of 970 pledges were made by UCalgary graduate students.

November 2019 & February 2020: The GSA hosted two student protests to fight against the provincial budget cuts and tuition increases. More than 120 students attended the Nov. 2019 protest.
The GSA is committed to maximizing the impact of our services with the available resources through collaboration and consultation to support the successes of all UCalgary graduate students.
VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT PROGRAM (VRP)

In the 2019-20 academic year and as of June 30, 2020:

- **55** graduate students have joined the Volunteer Recruitment Program;
- **49** graduate students returning to the program from the 2017-18 & 2018-19 academic years;
- **24** graduate students were recruited for **27** GSA volunteer positions: Committee Chair/Vice Chair, Committee Member, and Event Volunteer; and
- **34** GSA members were connected for **11** external volunteer opportunities.

[gsa.ucalgary.ca/volunteer](http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/volunteer)

DEPARTMENTAL GRADUATE ASSOCIATIONS (DGAs) AND GRADUATE STUDENT GROUPS (GSGs)

During the 2019-20 academic year, the GSA had:

- **50** active DGAs;
- **16** active GSGs;
- **400+** events were held by the DGAs; and
- **100+** events were held by GSGs.

[gsa.ucalgary.ca/dgas](http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/dgas)

EXTENDED HEALTH AND DENTAL PLAN

The GSA Health and Dental Plan is completing the first year of a two-year rate guarantee after a competitive review process conducted in early 2019. The rate guarantee has allowed the GSA to keep plan costs stable for two consecutive years.

Following the competitive review process, the GSA formed a permanent Health and Dental Plan Committee to ensure efficient and consistent oversight of the GSA Health and Dental Plan. After completing a test year of the Empower Me program, the GSA will continue to provide this service to Health and Dental Plan members in 2020-21.

Empower Me

Empower Me is available 24/7, 365 days a year and allows students to connect with qualified counsellors, consultants, and life coaches for a variety of issues.

As a student covered by the GSA Health Plan, you’re entitled to sessions delivered in person, by telephone, by video-counselling, or by e-counselling. Empower Me sessions will always be free of charge.

You can always contact an Empower Me professional—no issue is too big or too small. Though Empower Me counsellors are qualified to support students in crisis, you don’t need to be in crisis in order to take advantage of the service. You can get support for issues of any kind, including relationships, family care, depression, anxiety, addictions, stress, work conflicts, and much more.

Empower Me also offers a full suite of academic life services, such as life coaching, financial planning, and nutritional counselling.

About the GSA Health & Dental Plan:

The GSA Health & Dental Plan serves over 8,000 students and is designed to provide all GSA members with accessible and affordable extended health and dental care. The Plan is one of the largest and most complex services provided and managed by the GSA. It is professionally administered by Studentcare. GSA members use the plan personally, and to provide for their families.

[gsa.ucalgary.ca/health-dental-services](http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/health-dental-services)
COMMITTEES & SUBCOMMITTEES

Awards Committee
Chair: Michelle Love, Vice Chair: Haydee Galloso
• Reviewed 400 award, bursary, and grant applications
• Distributed over $190,000 in funding to UCalgary graduate students

Academic Support Committee
Chair: Leanne Dawson, Vice Chair: Kelsey Pennanen
• Held two academic workshops
• Designated roles relating to the adjudication of the Peer Beyond Graduate Research Symposium
• Constructed a draft of the Graduate Student Handbook

Finance Standing Committee
Chair: Emily MacPhail, Vice Chair: Mina Iskander
• Held Finance 101 orientation for committee members
• Updated committee terms of reference
• Identified issues with the LDL’s bottle deposit process
• Reviewed the proposed GSA budgets
• Reviewed the GSA’s financial statements monthly

Sustainability Committee
Chair: Claudia Ladisa, Vice Chair: Evangeline Eldridge
• Received GSA Quality Money funding for the committee’s workshop series
• Hosted four events and initiatives including the Sustainable Valentine’s Day
• Partnered with the Office of Sustainability for the Sustainability Award

Labour Relations Committee
Chair: Brit Paris
• Held negotiation training for the first time
• Successfully negotiated the new 32-month Collective Agreement
• Updated the cross-Canada Collective Agreement information
• Had the budget and honorariums approved by the Finance Standing Committee
• Re-developed committee training
• Re-developed the lunch and learn session
• Presented ten lunch and learn or orientation sessions, almost reached the goal of an average of one session per month

OUR SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS IN HELPING THE GSA MAKE A HUGE IMPACT ON THE UCALGARY GRADUATE STUDENTS THIS 2019-20 ACADEMIC YEAR.

Governance Committee
Chair: Martine Denine, Vice Chair: Jacob Lamb
• Reviewed DGA/GSG Bylaws (8-10 each month)
• Reviewed GSA policies including the GSA Election Policy

Student Engagement and Events Committee
Chair: Dinu Attalage, Vice Chair: Anthonia Anowai
• Organized over 50 events for graduate students
• Fostered tight collaboration between subcommittees, GSA Executives, and the Events Coordinator

SUBCOMMITTEES:
• COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (Chair: Akposeiyifa Ebufegha, Vice Chair: Usama Hussain)
• GENDER AND SEXUALITY ALLIANCE (Chair: Kaylee Rich, Vice Chair: Robyn Paul)
• EVENTS (Chair: Nasia Sheikh, Vice Chair: Ali Mohammadi)
• NEWCOMERS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (Chair: Abdulawadood Al-Ali, Vice Chair: Kirsten Nelson)
• MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS (Chair: Stephana Cherak, Vice Chair: Stephanie Caron-Roy)

GSA 2019-20 Senior Leadership Team
In photo from left to right:
Front row: Kelsey Pennanen, Claudia Ladisa, Evangeline Eldridge, Michelle Love, Marcela Lopes, Danielle Abbott
Back row: Emily Macphail, Martine Dennie, Jacob Lamb, Basem Halawa, Dinu Attalage, Mohammad Mansouri
Missing from photo: Alexander Olm, Haydee Galloso, Anthonia Anowai, Leanne Dawson, Brit Paris, Mina Iskander, Mohamed Abdelsamie

gsa.ucalgary.ca/committees
EVENTS & DISCOUNTED TICKETS

The GSA is committed to building a robust graduate student community through our social events and discounted ticket program.

The GSA hosted many small, medium, and large events throughout the academic year and received amazing reception from the student body.

Event highlights:
- Lake Louise Trip (June 22, 2019 & January 25, 2020)
- Paintball Trip (July 19, 2019)
- Drumheller Trip (August 3, 2019)
- Orientation (September 3, 2019 & January 9, 2020)
- GradFest 9.0 (September 17, 2019)
- Halloween Party (October 31, 2019)
- Soccer Tournament (November 30, 2019)
- De-stress Week (December 9-13, 2019)
- Sunshine Ski Trip (February 22, 2020)
- Curling Tournament (February 29, 2020)
- FGS/GSA Research Image Competition (January-March 2020)

The GSA offers discounted tickets to various attractions in and around Calgary including: Calgary Zoo, TELUS Sparks, Heritage Park, Glenbow Museum, Calgary Tower, Royal Tyrrell Museum, West Edmonton Mall, Cirque de Soleil, and more.

Online Events during COVID-19

Since March 2020, due to COVID-19 and to continue supporting UCalgary graduate students during the pandemic, the GSA has moved many of our in-person events to online events hosted on Zoom, our website, and social media channels.

Online event highlights:
- Trivia Time
- Daily Questions
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Dance Crew
- Yoga
- Strength Training
- Movie Watch Parties

gsa.ucalgary.ca/events

FINANCIAL SUPPORT
BURSARIES, GRANTS

Quality Money

$156,673
58 approved projects

$69,442
Professional Development Grant
100 successful applications

$78,671
GSA Bursary
65 successful applications

$85,036
Emergency Bursary
64 successful applications

gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial
GSA AWARDS

Due to the current COVID-19 crisis, the GSA had to cancel the annual Awards Gala event that was to be hosted in early April. Therefore, the GSA celebrated the excellence of our volunteers, graduate students, research associates, support staff, and administrators virtually as the health and safety of the community and members are the GSA’s top priority.

The GSA greatly appreciates the effort and time our community members had contributed toward the graduate student experience at UCalgary this past academic year. The GSA extends our gratitude to the entire university community for another successful academic year and especially to those who took the time to nominate outstanding graduate students and community supporters, those who were nominated, and award recipients. The GSA would like to thank the members of the Awards Committee, Board of Directors, and the external adjudicators for their difficult work in selecting the winners from a pool of outstanding individuals. Please join the GSA to celebrate the excellence of the following 2019-20 GSA Awards’ recipients and honourable mentions:

**Excellence in Research Award (Graduate Student):**
Negin Saheb Javaher, Department of Sociology
- Honourable Mentions: Marwa Atwa, Department of Chemistry and Isabel Fandino, Department of Sociology

**Excellence in Teaching Award (Graduate Student):**
Janet Aucoin, Department of Community Health Sciences
- Honourable Mentions: Chelsea Klinke, Department of Anthropology and Archaeology and Mohammad Noaeen, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

**Excellence in Supervision Award:**
Dr. Darren Derksen, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry
- Honourable Mentions: Dr. Pallavi Banerjee, Department of Sociology and Dr. Barrie Nault, School of Haskayne

**Leadership Award:**
Rachel Kratofil, Department of Immunology
- Honourable Mentions: Dion Kelly, Department of Neuroscience and Julia Teresa Daun, Department of Exercise & Health Psychology

**Emerging Leader Award:**
Kelsey Pennanen, Department of Anthropology and Archaeology
- Honourable Mentions: Anthonia Anowai, Department of Chemistry and Dana Louise Cramer, Department of Communication, Media and Film

**GSA Champion Award:** Dr. Robin Yates, UCalgary’s Dean and Vice Provost (Graduate Studies)

**Lifetime Achievement Award:**
Claudia Ladisa, Department of Biological Sciences

**Volunteer Excellence Awards:**
- Ali Mohammadi, Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
- Dinu Attalage, Department of Civil Engineering
- Jacob Lamb, Department of Civil Engineering
- Kaylee Rich, Department of Ecosystem & Public Health
- Michelle Elizabeth Love, Department of Physiology and Pharmacology

**Graduate Representative Council Distinguished Service Award:**
Andrew Kemle, Department of Political Science

**Graduate Representative Council Initiative Awards:**
- Spanish Classes Initiative by Chelsea Klinke
- Candidacy Workshops 2019 by Megha Murali, Christopher McCoy, Dustin Pearson, Jasper Greysson-Wong
- Mental Health Workshop Series by Leah Chadwick, Nisha Vashi, Alex Choy, Jessy Cooke, Lorraine Reggin, Danielle Lefebvre
- Coding Workshop for Engineers by Maithree Kurukulasuriya, Hasini Rathnayake
- PHAS Graduate Assistant Orientation by Pamela Freeman, Svetlana Kuznetsova, Anna Ordog, Ayush Mandwal, Davor Curic, Omid Khajehdehi, Carlton Osakwe
- Sustainable Fashion: Clothing Swap Shop by Nouran Habib, Kiana Hampton, Eryl David, Alexa Alleyne

**$52,000 distributed in Award Prizes**

*including the Alberta Graduate Citizenship Awards*
TOP AWARD WINNERS

From left to right, top to bottom:
Negin Saheb Javaher - Excellence in Research Award
Janet Aucoin - Excellence in Teaching Award
Dr. Darren Derksen - Excellence in Supervision Award
Rachel Kratofil - Leadership Award
Kelsey Pennanen - Emerging Leader Award
Claudia Ladisa - Lifetime Achievement Award

From left to right, top to bottom:
GRC Distinguished Service Award Recipient: Andrew Kemle

Dr. Robin Yates - GSA Champion

Graduate Student Sustainability Award
Veronica Briseño Castrejon,
PhD student (Environmental Design),
School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape
The Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) and the GSA would like to thank all of the 30 UCalgary graduate student participants this year with 30 image entries, our largest number of submissions for this competition ever.

The winners of this year’s competition are:

First place: Timothy Choi’s “Light the Icy Seas”

Second place: Pauline Mouches’s “Age Dependent Analysis”

Third place: Davour Curic’s “Discovering Molecules in the Brain” and Alejandro Gutierrez’s “AI and Secret Patterns in Child’s Head”

Honourable mentions: Erin Low’s “The Road Ahead”, Pamela Freeman’s “Spatial Frequencies in Nature”, and Beth Kates’s “The Wren”

People’s Choice Award: Maryam Sharif-Razi’s “In Light of the New Beginning”
Third Place
Davour Curic’s “Discovering Molecules in the Brain”

Honourable Mentions
Beth Kates’s “The Wren”
Erin Low’s “The Road Ahead”

People’s Choice Award
Maryam Sharif-Razi’s “In Light of the New Beginning”

Pamela Freeman’s “Spatial Frequencies in Nature”
**LAST DEFENCE LOUNGE**

**Renovation**
The Last Defence Lounge (LDL) was renovated in July-August 2019 to improve the appearance and safety of the LDL and enhance the dining experience it provides to our graduate students. This included changing the floors, repainting, and replacing the dining chairs.

**Vendor Changes**
In line with the sustainability goals of the GSA, the LDL switched our draught vendor to Common Crown, a Calgary-based brewing company. A number of LDL staff and the Finance and Operations Manager got invited for a brewery tour. It was an amazing experience; they got to see how this locally-sourced beer was made from start to finish.

**Sustainability Report**
The LDL collaborated with the University in preparing its Sustainability and Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) Report by providing our recycling and waste data for the year. This report helps the University demonstrate its continued commitment to advancing sustainability on campus.

**Accreditation**
The LDL was accredited with the Best Bar None accreditation by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission for the 7th year in a row. In October 2019, the LDL had a random health inspection by the Alberta Health Services; and it passed. This speaks volumes of the LDL's maintenance of health and environmental standards required by the provincial government.

**Financial Challenges**
The LDL had a greater loss than expected this year due to various reasons such as assets that needed to be written off rather than depreciated, the decline in sales associated from the University's staff layoffs, the anticipation of increased fees for students, and the early closure of the LDL due to COVID-19.

**OTHER INITIATIVES**
- Initiated the GSA Sponsorship and Advertising Program
- Improved staff support and professional development
- Enhanced the GSA internal and external policies and procedures
- Fostered stronger and effective internal and external communications channels
- Launched the GSA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion education program internally

**IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**
The GSA is committed to fostering a nurturing, professional, and productive environment that empowers innovation and risk taking, while maximizing efficiency and impact.
IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

The GSA is committed to fostering direct and constructive communication between the GSA members, staff, and board to promote transparency, trust, and inclusion.

Communication is vital to the GSA. It adds values to our members by providing relevant information about our programs and services through direct and indirect channels, establishing initiatives to foster inclusion, and collecting feedback to improve our services. Internally, communications connect team members, avoid gaps and inefficiencies, foster collaboration which brings out empowerment and success.

The GSA is actively listening and discussing with UCalgary graduate students to improve our programs and services, and to better advocate on behalf of UCalgary graduate students.

OUR STRATEGIES

1. Build the GSA brand equity;
2. Collect and publish relevant and current feedback and stories from students, staff, and executives;
3. Continuously review and adjust communications channels based on student feedback; and
4. Publish relevant and meaningful content from the GSA Executives, committees, and subcommittees on student advocacy and GSA services.

KEEP UP TO DATE WITH GSA NEWS!

- Website: www.gsa.ucalgary.ca
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/gsacalgary
- LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/gsacalgary
- Instagram & Twitter: @gsacalgary

STATISTICS

- Instagram: 1.4K followers
- Facebook: 1.8K fans
- Twitter: 2.1K followers

LinkedIn: JUST LAUNCHED!

- Website: 264,207 page views
  14% increase
- 47K users
  16.5% increase
  (from May 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020)

Newsletter:

- 63% open rate
  4% increase
- 9% click rate
  (from May 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020)
The GSA administers various surveys throughout the year to collect student feedback. We also run an Annual Survey each March and April to measure student satisfaction with the GSA’s programs and services; and to collect feedback on how to improve them.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**Basic Demographics**

1,070 or 18% UCalgary graduate students completed the 2020 GSA Annual Survey.

- Most of survey respondents are located on the Main Campus. 72% Main Campus
- 95% are in a full-time program.
- There is an equal percentage between male and female. 0.5% not identified as either male or female

- Most of survey respondents are in a Master’s program. 61% Master’s 38% PhD
- Most programs are delivered in-person.

- Most of survey respondents are in your first or second year of your study. 51% 49%

**Satisfaction Ratings**

- On average, each student uses 3.67 GSA programs and services.
- 81% extremely satisfied or satisfied with GSA programs and services.
- 88% internal advocacy
- 86% external advocacy

Top services by usage:
- Health & Dental Plan
- Last Defence Lounge
- Events & Discounted Tickets
- Awards

The GSA administers various surveys throughout the year to collect student feedback. We also run an Annual Survey each March and April to measure student satisfaction with the GSA’s programs and services; and to collect feedback on how to improve them.
Student Concerns and Needs

These concerns represent the concerns of the whole student body.

1. Financial stability & career opportunities remain survey respondents’ top concerns.

2. The most important advocacy matters are tuition, fees, affordable housing, TA/RA support, mental health, and relationship with supervisors.

3. Survey respondents want more fun events and discounted tickets.

4. More awareness on the diversity of the graduate student body and work-life balance is needed.

5. Survey respondents need more funding, award and bursary opportunities with a streamlined process and clear criteria.

6. Survey respondents want clear content on the Extended Health & Dental benefits and how to obtain extra coverage for themselves and family members.

Specific Needs by Groups

Data broken down by specific demographic groups

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
- Funding
- Tuition fee decrease
- Events and connections
- Access to information
- Job opportunities

STUDENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS
- Better coverage
- Better service from Wellness Centre
- Awareness and education
- Funding for mental health
- Active approach to treatment

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS
- Research on Indigenous topics
- Meeting space
- Consultation with elders
- In-person interactions

STUDENTS WITH DEPENDENTS
- Events and discounted tickets
- Childcare
- Jobs & services for dependents
- Access to information
- Health & Dental coverage

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
- Awareness
- Connect opportunities
- Services
- Grants and Bursaries
- Services at different campuses

DISTANCE LEARNERS
- Online services & support
- Events in the evening
- Support eligibility
- Equal opportunities/service

WORKING STUDENTS
- Events/Workshops
- TA/RA compensation
- Jobs/Funding
- More support services from UCalgary
- Study space

LGBTQ2S+
- Awareness
- Safe space
- Connections
- Advocacy
FINANCES

Please see below the GSA's audited financial statements with year ending March 31, 2020, and comparative information for 2019.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
March 31, 2020, with comparative information for 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>$2,157,165</td>
<td>$2,294,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term investments</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>23,422</td>
<td>24,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory</td>
<td>17,889</td>
<td>16,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid expenses and deposits</td>
<td>329,927</td>
<td>314,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments</td>
<td>1,559,563</td>
<td>1,575,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and Equipment</td>
<td>713,834</td>
<td>678,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,028,403</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,650,361</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current liabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable and accrued liabilities</td>
<td>284,477</td>
<td>281,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred revenue (health and dental premiums)</td>
<td>1,108,135</td>
<td>1,009,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Current Liabilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,392,612</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,290,787</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>2,242,331</td>
<td>2,098,924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally restricted</td>
<td>1,666,857</td>
<td>1,514,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,909,188</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,613,653</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic dependence</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitments</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,301,800</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,904,440</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

Year ended March 31, 2020, with comparative information for 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REVENUES</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students’ Centre Lounge</td>
<td>$614,580</td>
<td>$836,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students’ Association</td>
<td>4,348,937</td>
<td>4,052,138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,963,517</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,888,985</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENSES</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of sales</td>
<td>220,741</td>
<td>295,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and administrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students’ Centre Lounge</td>
<td>522,645</td>
<td>567,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students’ Association</td>
<td>3,859,730</td>
<td>3,763,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,382,375</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,330,969</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Realized gain on disposal of investments | 8,659 | 6,917 |
| Unrealized gain (loss) on investments  | (59,492) | 33,922 |
| Loss on disposal of property and equipment | (14,033) | - |

| **EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES** | **$295,535** | **$303,583** |