



Strategic Plan

As GSA Executives, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our portfolios are in alignment with the GSA's Strategic Plan. The GSA's 3-year strategic plan 2019-2022 can be found [here](#).

Tanille Shandro | President

pres.gsa@ucalgary.ca

Hours

January 15th to February 15th*1.5 weeks on vacation in this timeframe.

Meetings: 63

Events: 0

Other: 39

Total Hours: 102

Average per week: 34

Improving Advocacy

Objective: Have 30% of the GSA advocacy asks be rooted in consultation and communicated to University students year over year by April 30, 2022.

Goal: **Develop a GSA return to campus plan and advocate for an institutional plan that is reflective of graduate student consultation and prioritizes student health and safety.**

Explanation: A GSA operational plan and a University of Calgary institutional plan for return to campus is required to reflect the uncertainty and rapidly changing environment of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through consultation with graduate students, I will form a GSA Operational plan and advocate to the institution the graduate student perspective in the development of their plan that prioritizes the health and safety of the campus community. Details and most recent updates on the GSA's return to campus plan can be found [here](#). All In-person events are postponed until Feb. 19 at the earliest, exceptions can be brought forward to the Board on a case-by-case basis.

Updates:

We also continue to advocate to the University to prioritize student health and safety during these uncertain times. We are in discussions about providing students with higher-quality masks and rapid testing kits but are running into supply issues.

Objective: Achieve 70% of GSA Annual Survey respondents rate their satisfaction of the GSA Advocacy work as moderately satisfied or higher by April 30, 2022

Goal: **Develop a Consultation guideline for institutional consultation with graduate students about important topics**

Explanation: As consultation can be sometimes performative, I will develop clear guidelines that will be discussed with the institution for future consultations when discussing important topics, such as tuition, with the graduate student body and Graduate Representative Council.

Updates: One of our main collaborators, the Students' Union VP External, stepped down from their role, and the role is left vacant for the rest of this semester. Currently, we are in discussion with how to proceed forward but the SU has recommended the project be postponed until Spring/Summer 2022.

Improving Communication

Objective: Increase the GSA Annual Survey response rate to 20% of all enrolled graduate students by April 30, 2022.

Goal: **Prevent the GSA Communications from being filtered by the University's new IT safety software**

Explanation: The University has recently increased its mailing safety software, which has been flagging the GSA email communications as foreign to the system and putting it in junk mail preventing proper communications with our members. I will work with IT to prevent this filtering of emails from occurring

Updates: Completed. We will continue to monitor to ensure the problem is fixed permanently fixed.

Objective: Have 99% of GSA Annual Survey respondents indicate general awareness of the GSA and its services by April 30, 2022

Goal: **Develop a GRC Digest (newsletter) for GRC members to easily communicate the GRC topics with their departments.**

Explanation: Enhancing the communication between the board and the graduate students will be beneficial to the graduate student experience. This will be achieved through strategies that will make it easier for GRC representatives to pass along the information that was discussed at GRC

Updates: Completed after each GRC meeting. Graduate representative council members can continue to expect to receive these on the Friday of the week GRC occurs.

Improving Organization Sustainability

Objective: *No current objective in the strategic plan

Goal: **Develop New GSA Strategic Plan (2023-2025)**

Explanation: The current GSA Strategic Plan is set to expire in 2022. Therefore, we must start the groundwork of creating the new Strategic Plan for 2023-2025. The project will focus on the development of the 2022-25 strategic plan for the GSA to identify strategic directions, goals, and priorities to guide the work of the organization towards its vision, to be recognized as the leader in graduate student advocacy and service delivery across Canada. The desired outcomes of this project are the following: Needs Assessment Report, Stakeholder Consultation Report, 2019-22 Strategic Plan Review, 2022-25 Strategic Plan Implementation, Communication, Accountability, and Monitoring Plan. The timeline of this project runs from November 2021 until August 2022. This will allow the newly elected board for 2022-23 to have input and help develop the future strategic plan.

Updates: Completed evaluations and have chosen the top four companies. We will interview the top companies in February/March and bring our recommendations forward to the Board of directors for a final vote on who

to proceed with. The timeline to complete this project was ambitious given the proposal we received so we have decided to extend this project to be completed in the 2022-23 academic year.

Objective: Receive a satisfactory score in an external EDI audit by April 30, 2022.

Goal: **Complete internal EDI Audit of the GSA**

Explanation: As the GSA continues to strive for best EDI practices we will be bringing in a third-party auditor to evaluate the GSA and identify areas of strength and weaknesses we can improve on.

Updates: EDI Committee members have received the potential options of who we can hire to do this work. At the February committee meeting the committee will discuss and choose the company we will move forward with.

Objective: *No current objective in the strategic plan

Goal: **Remove legal liability of the Federal Advocacy Contingency Fund of 300K to be used for graduate student initiatives.**

Explanation: There is currently a contingency fund that holds funds set aside for a specific legal liability concern. This year I would like to work with our legal team to remove the legal liability, which would then release the funds and they could then be used for other student initiatives.

Updates: As this is highly confidential due to the legal nature of this topic any updates and questions that Graduate Representatives have would need to occur in an in-camera session of the Graduate Representative Council Meeting. Please request this in the meeting if you would like to know more.

Alex Paquette | Vice President Academic

vpa.gsa@ucalgary.ca

Hours

January 15th to February 15th

Meetings: 71.5

Events:

Other: 74.5

Total Hours: 146

Average per week: 36.5

Improving Advocacy

Objective: Increase the number of well-researched Advocacy asks to Institution and all levels of government by 20% year over year by April 30, 2022.

Goal: **Increase Minimum Funding Policy for PhD Students**

Explanation: The current Minimum Funding Policy for PhD students is \$18,000 per year. The goal is to increase this amount to \$24,000 for incoming graduate students. This increase would start in September of 2022.

Updates: The Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) and GSA have developed a proposal for this increase in funding. This proposal was officially passed on December 16th, 2021. New domestic PhD students will now have a minimum funding of \$22,000 per year and international PhD students will have \$24,000 per year. These changes will start in August 2022 for PhD students who are starting in September 2022.

Objective: Increase the number of well-researched Advocacy asks to Institution and all levels of government by 20% year over year by April 30, 2022.

Goal: **Develop a Minimum Funding Policy for Master's Students**

Explanation: At the moment there is no Minimum Funding Policy for thesis-based master's students. This means that programs do not have to pay master's students who are in a thesis-based program. The goal is to create a Minimum Funding Policy for master's students that would start at \$18,000 per year.

Updates: The Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) and GSA have developed a proposal for this increase in funding. This proposal was officially passed on December 16th, 2021. Starting May 2023 all thesis based Master's students will have a minimum funding of \$10,000.

Objective: Increase the number of well-researched Advocacy asks to Institution and all levels of government by 20% year over year by April 30, 2022.

Goal: **Flexible Grading Option Policy for Graduate Students**

Explanation: In 2020 a proposal was developed and passed for undergraduate students to have a flexible grading option called Credit Granted (CG). This option gives undergraduate students the chance to take a grade of "credit granted" for a maximum of 9 units in a degree and use this grade for their

Updates:

GPA. My goal is to work with FGS to create a similar option for graduate students. Although instead of a maximum of 9 units it would be 3 units for graduate students since graduate students take less courses than undergraduate students. This proposal was officially passed in December 2021 by the Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee and the Academic Program Subcommittee. The flexible grading option will start in September 2022.

Improving Service Delivery

Objective: Increase the number of submitted financial support applications including Quality Money, awards, bursaries, and grants by 15% year-over-year by April 30, 2022

Goal: **GSA Awards Platform**

Explanation: Last year's goal was to start developing a new awards website for members of the GSA. The goal this year is to complete that website and begin using the website in August of 2021.

Updates: The new GSA awards website was completed June 30th of 2021 and is now being used as the main website for students to apply for GSA awards, bursaries, and grants. So far over 800 students have used the new website and the feedback has been positive from applicants and reviewers.

Objective: Increase unique event attendees at GSA events and committee events to 12% by April 30, 2022

Goal: **Increase the Number of GSA Academic Workshops and Events**

Explanation: In a typical year the GSA will host 6-8 academic workshops and events. The goal for this year is to double that number to 12-16 events. Graduate students are always looking for opportunities to gain new skills and network. Having more academic workshops and events will increase these opportunities for our GSA members.

Updates: Since September, the GSA Academic Support Committee has run 13 events including Mitacs Workshops (8), Voices on the Margins (2), Road to Success and Academic Horror Stories. The committee has 8 more events planned, including Peer Beyond, for the Winter Semester.

Kirsten Neprily | Vice President External

vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca

Hours

January 15th to February 15th

Meetings: 42

Events: 1

Other: 32

Total: 75

Average per week: 18.75

Improving Advocacy

- Objective:** Increase the number of well-researched Advocacy asks to Institution and all levels of government by 20% year over year by April 30, 2022.
- Goal:** **Adopt a flexible and collaborative approach to providing advocacy asks during decision making at all levels of the government and assert GSA advocacy priorities to strengthen the GSA's collaborative network.**
- Explanation:** By collaborating with student advocacy groups, the GSA can further strengthen their advocacy asks, provide comprehensive research as a foundation for their asks, and ensure these priorities reflect the graduate student voice.
- Updates:** I have meetings scheduled with the Minister of Advanced Education and NDP to discuss the submission to the provincial government's budget 2022-2023. I have been preparing for CASA Supercon Advocacy Week which is February 14th-18th to the federal government. Thus far, I have several meetings with MP's, Ministers, and senators.
- Objective:** Have 30% of the GSA advocacy asks consulted with the UCalgary and 3 levels of government by April 30, 2022.
- Goal:** **Engage in meaningful consultations with all key stakeholders, student advocacy associations, and GSA membership.**
- Explanation:** Ensure the GSA have a voice at the table with the Federal / Provincial / Municipal governments, student advocacy groups, external stakeholders, and university stakeholders. In addition, create a portal to gather student feedback on topical advocacy issues, to increase the number of students consulted in ongoing advocacy efforts.
- Updates:** Through student surveys, I have stayed updated on the top priorities of graduate students at the internal, municipal and provincial level. These priorities have guided the advocacy asks brought to the abGPAC and CASA advocacy week meetings with key city councilors, MLA's, and university stakeholders. With the change in covid-19 safety protocols in Alberta, I put out a survey to gauge student feelings regarding the changes. I had multiple meetings with the President and Provost team to ensure graduate student voices were being heard in these decisions.
- Goal:** **Achieve two advocacy wins on our tuition and fees consultation with the University.**
- Explanation:** The University will be proposing increases in tuition and fees this year. We want to ensure that we are holding them accountable.

Updates:

Many of these goals are ongoing as we continue to advocate on behalf of students with many key stakeholders. As of January, we were able to advocate for a reduction to the UPass since students are not on campus along with a reduction in athletics fees. Moreover, based on our covid-19 survey, we were able to advocate to the University to keep safety protocols on campus until the end of the winter term.

Improving Communication

Objective: Increase the number of advocacy-based communication to our membership by 20% annually / Have 99% of GSA Annual Survey respondents indicate general awareness of the GSA and its services by April 30, 2022.

Goal: **Adopt a communications strategy that targets all GSA membership through various forms of media (e.g., website, blogs, Instagram live, videos).**

Explanation: **Adopt CASA GOTV campaign and 1 abGPAC campaign** Ensure all GSA membership is aware of ongoing advocacy efforts by adopting multiple media formats so there are different ways of gathering advocacy information. Use communications strategy to showcase CASA and abGPAC advocacy to the GSA membership.

Updates: Currently working on a CASA national advocacy campaign. The campaign for February is focused on federal advocacy week. The GSA advocacy team put out a press release around the letter from the Minister of Education regarding the changes in covid-19 measures within Alberta. I have been active on social media with our advocacy updates and posts from meetings with stakeholders. Advocacy blogs are posted monthly and sent to GSA members through the GSA emails.

Example Communication strategy:

- 2 Blogs a month: 1st focusing on advocacy, 2nd overview of the GRC.
- 20-30 min monthly Instagram live with special guests to chat about advocacy.
- 10 second Instagram personal video weekly to highlight current advocacy initiative
- Advocacy survey's more frequently to gather feedback.

Objective: Increase the number of media releases

Goal: **Contact media relations teams to conduct interviews on top GSA advocacy priority issues.**

Explanation: Foster relationships with UToday (internally) and local news stations to increase public awareness and understanding of advocacy efforts that highlight the GSA stance/voice. Media is a critical source of information and "education" to the public that can increase our visibility.

Objective: Increase the number of politicians knowing the GSA and our advocacy priorities, independent of CASA and abGPAC/ Increase the number of advocacy events and meetings that the GSA attends.

Goal: **Meet with municipal and provincial politicians once per semester to discuss the GSA's Advocacy Priorities.**

Explanation: Foster relationships with municipal and provincial politicians to increase their awareness and action on the GSA's advocacy priorities.

Updates: I will be meeting with members of the provincial government (I.e., NDP David Eggen and Minister of Advanced Education Dimitrios Nikolaidis) in February to discuss the letter abGPAC sent on recommendations to the 2022-2023 Provincial budget. Furthermore, I have meetings with over 10 MPs, ministers and senators from the Federal government during CASA advocacy week.

Kabita Baral | Vice President Student Life

vpsl.gsa@ucalgary.ca

Hours

January 15th to February 15th

Meetings: 45 hours

Events:

Other: 80 hours

Total Hours: 125 hours

Average per week: 31.25

Improving Advocacy

Objective: Achieve 70% of GSA Annual Survey respondents rate their satisfaction of the GSA Advocacy work as moderately satisfied or higher by April 30, 2022

Goal: **Complete mental health consultation with 6 visible minority groups on campus**

Explanation: I will work together with campus mental health strategy to consult with five minor groups of graduate students: LGBTQ+, older/parents group, international students, indigenous students and BIPOC and students with disabilities community to ensure proper mental health consultation has been performed as university moves towards bridging the gap in post-secondary mental health strategies.

Updates: **Ongoing.** Initial consultation completed. We are now working on getting more respondents and also working on focus groups. Mental Health subcommittee also has formed a working group and we are meeting with Wellness center to bring some issues that graduate students have faced to bring better resources for students.

Improving Service Delivery

Objective: Achieve 90% of GSA Annual Survey respondents rate their satisfaction of the GSA programs and services as moderately satisfied or higher by April 30, 2022

Goal: **Work with GSA SEEC committees and collaborate with EDI committee to bring more student faced events for graduate students**

Explanation: Right now, we sit at 80.84% satisfaction and from our surveys we have seen that students would like more student front events. So, I will create collaborative spaces internally within SEEC and between GSA committees to bring more student focused events.

Updates: **Ongoing.** Black history month panel series is on Feb 16 and we also published a blog on GSA website and on UToday highlighting the story of our black student to celebrate Black History Month. GSA2 and Mental Health subcommittees are planning for Trans day of visibility panel series for March.

Objective: Increase unique event attendees at GSA events and committee events to 12% by April 30, 2022

Goal: **Plan at least one event per committee and 5 collaborative workshops/panel series events**

- Explanation:** We sit at 8%, excluding committee and Peer Beyond Symposium. I'd like to tie this goal to my first goal and plan more exciting events that students have shown interest in. I will also work with various offices on campus like ISS, MH strategy and FGS to cross promote our events and reach a wide audience.
- Updates:** **Ongoing.** Mental health and GSA2 committees planned 2 events for sex week. We are planning for our first outdoor in-person ski event and have up to 15 events for February.

Improving Communication

- Objective:** Maintain 65% open rate of the GSA weekly News and Views by April 30, 2022
- Goal:** **Review our news and views monthly with Thao to ensure we are catering it towards students' needs.**
- Explanation:** I will work closely with Thao to monitor our news and views open rates and maintain or increase click rates by improving contents of our newsletters as required.
- Updates:** **Ongoing.** Thao and Shannon, our marketing manager and events coordinator, and I meet weekly to plan upcoming newsletters and we also have monthly events newsletter for the past 6 months and it has been running smoothly. We also continuously monitor our open and click rates of social media posts and website visit rates to cater for our contents based on open rates.

Improving Organization Sustainability

- Objective:** Increase operating revenues from sources other than student fees: 5% by 30th Apr 2022
- Goal:** **Diversify GSA revenue source**
- Explanation:** The GSA aims to diversify GSA revenue to ensure that we have sources of revenue other than student funding. For this, I will review the investment performance in GSA, complete the request for proposal process started by our predecessors and update the investment policy based on the result of this project in collaboration with the President. I will also work with the Vice-President Finance and Services on the sponsorship packages started by our predecessors.
- Updates:** **Ongoing.** VPFS and I are continuously working on different potential sponsors.

Mary Zhang | Vice President Finance and Services

vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca

Hours

January 15th to February 15th

Meetings: 33

Events: 3.5

Other: 30

Total Hours: 66.5

Average per week: 16.63

Improving Service Delivery

Objective: Achieve 90% of GSA Annual Survey respondents rate their satisfaction of the GSA Health and Dental Plan as moderately satisfied or higher by April 30, 2022

Goal: **Address graduate students' H&D needs and keep students updated on any changes**

Explanation: A key responsibility in the VP Finance and Services Portfolio is the GSA Health and Dental Plan. I will work towards addressing student feedback on the plan and ensuring that students are aware of any updates.

Updates:

- Discussed GSA H&D fee change with the GSA H&D committee and Studentcare representative.
- Working with Studentcare manager to address student concerns.

Improving Service Delivery

Objective: Increase unique event attendees at GSA events and committee events to 12% by April 30, 2022

Goal: **Create financial literacy workshop series for graduate students**

Explanation: Having a basic understanding of debt management, myths around credit, and knowledge about investing will help graduate students manage their finances and give them peace of mind to allow them to focus on their graduate research. It is also extremely important for international students to learn more about managing their finances in Canada which will enable them to develop healthy financial habits.

Updates:

- Financial workshop on mortgage in Feb was successful with 106 registrants and 61 attendees. Planning another workshop in March with real estate agency,
- Planned a workshop on cryptocurrencies in March
- New GSA blog on RRSP - Four reasons to consider opening or contributing to your RRSP or Group RRSP
<https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/four-reasons-to-consider-opening-or-contributing-to-your-rrsp-or-group-rrsp/>

Improving Communication

Objective: Maintain the trust, transparency, and inclusion score measured in the GSA Annual Survey at 80% by April 30, 2022

Goal: **Ensure financial transparency**

Explanation: I believe that it is important for students to understand where GSA funds are allocated. As such, I will ensure continued transparency in the GSA budget and have FSC Chair communicates to GRC every 6 months on finances.

Updates: Presented GSA budget at the board meeting and FSC meeting. Board members and committee members offered suggestions for budget planning.

Improving Organization Sustainability

Objective: Earn 2% of unrestricted revenues through new revenue streams by April 30, 2022.

Goal: **Diversify GSA revenue sources**

Explanation: I will work to diversify GSA revenue sources and expand benefits for our members through the newly initiated sponsorship program. I will work with the GSA sponsorship team to finalize the sponsor package, including GSA advertisement opportunities for sponsors, sponsor pricing, and sponsor contracts. Meanwhile, I will be continuing business profiling for our potential sponsors to ensure their business goals align with GSA's vision & mission before finalizing sponsorship details.

Updates:

- Offering discounted sunshine lift ticket and Calgary Zoo
- New partnership program - DreamScent Candle Business, 30% off for pickup order. Use code UOFCGRADS
- LDL reopening update – new manager has started the part time term and helped with LDL budget for the upcoming year. We'll start posting other job positions soon.