



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

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Hours

October 15th to November 15th

Meetings: 81.5

Events: 0

Other: 49

Total Hours: 130

Average per week: 32.6

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.

Updates: We are currently re-evaluating the return to campus plan to look at what events and the GSA office could look like in Winter 2022. The Board of Directors will have updates very shortly as we know DGA's, GSG's and Committees are eagerly waiting to know what they can begin to plan for the winter semester. The GSA office opening its physical office space largely relies on the State of Public Health Emergency for Alberta to be lifted. Under this emergency state it currently mandates working from home for the GSA staff. We are planning what the office will look like when the work-from-home order is lifted so that we are able to act quickly and implement changes to the current operations of the office. We have also been advocating to the University to increase communications with students about what can be expected for

the Winter 2022 term. Currently, unvaccinated students will not be allowed on campus for any reason and unvaccinated graduate students will not be able to hold a GAT, GANT or GAR for the semester. We are continuing to push for updates on what students can expect in terms of physical distancing, masking and other safety measures and will communicate to students the expectations when they are finalized.

- 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:** The development of this plan is currently well underway in collaboration with the undergraduate Students' Union and outlines the student perspective of what proper consultation between the administrations and students would look like on key student issues. We plan to present our proposed guidelines and discuss them with the University administration once editing of the document is completed.

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:** Over the past few months, the GSA newsletters' open rate dropped dramatically due to that the newsletters are being sent to the Other inbox, and not the Focused inbox, of the graduate students' emails. The GSA met with UCalgary IT representatives to find possible solutions to address this issue. We were asked to have Constant Contact, the email marketing app that we use for sending out the GSA newsletter, approved by UCalgary first. Constant Contact was approved at the end of October 2021. We are in active communication with the UCalgary IT team for discussion of next steps.
- 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:** After October GRC we piloted the 'GRC Digest' a summary document of the council meeting for graduate student representatives to share throughout their departments to ensure students are informed on current topics. We received great feedback and the documents sparked discussion about key graduate student issues that the GSA is addressing. Graduate representative council members can continue to expect to receive these on the Friday of the week GRC occurs. If any GRC members have feedback about what to include/not include please reach out to me at pres.gsa@ucalgary.ca

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.

Updates: This month we have put out a request for proposals for strategic planning services. 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 now until August 2022. This will allow the newly elected board for 2022-23 to have input and help develop the future strategic plan.

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: We are currently exploring different auditors in this space to bring forward to the GSA EDI Committee to determine who should complete this very important work. If any members of the Graduate Representative Council are aware of highly recommended service providers please reach out to me at pres.gsa@ucalgary.ca

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
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Hours

October 15th to November 15th

Meetings: 59.5

Events:

Other: 63

Total Hours: 122.5

Average per week: 30.6

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 has gone through its first round of reviews at the FGS Policy Committee, FGSC Executive Committee and FGS Council. After feedback from FGS Council 3 townhalls were set up to gather more feedback from the programs that could not accept the increase. The feedback from all 3 townhalls has been reviewed and adjustments to the proposed funding amounts are being made.

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 has gone through its first round of reviews at the FGS Policy Committee, FGSC Executive Committee and FGS Council. After feedback from FGS Council 3 townhalls were set up to gather more feedback from the programs that could not accept the increase. The feedback from all 3 townhalls has been reviewed and adjustments to the proposed funding amounts are being made.

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 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.

Updates: The proposal has been approved by the FGS Executive Committee and FGS Council. This proposal will now be reviewed by the Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee and the Academic Program Subcommittee. If the proposal is approved by both committees, then it will come into action starting 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 400 students have used the new website and the feedback has been great 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 8 events including Mitacs Workshops (4), Voices on the Margins (2), Road to Success and Academic Horror Stories. The committee has one more event planned for the Fall semester and seven more for the Winter semester.

Kirsten Neprily | Vice President External

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Hours

October 15th to November 15th

Meetings: 69.5

Events: 0

Other: 54

Total: 123.5 (/4 weeks)

Average per week: 30

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:** Through multiple meetings with federal and provincial advocacy organizations (CASA/abGPAC), I have been working on advocacy week priority documents (including our asks) that will be presented to key stakeholders at upcoming meetings.
- 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:** Apart of abGPAC, we have established our key priority areas and are preparing to bring them forward with key asks at the upcoming abGPAC advocacy week. We are meeting with key MLA's to discuss graduate student needs and how we can secure commitments from the provincial government to begin working with us to support graduate student priorities.
- 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. The University will be presenting the Tuition and Fees increase proposal to the Graduate Representative Council in October followed by our GSA advocacy strategy presented by Tanille and I. As of November 10th, we are still in discussions on the increases for tuition and fees. We have seen some movement based on our advocacy efforts and are hopeful in securing some advocacy wins for students come December.

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: Working on CASA national advocacy campaign. For November-December 2021 we are adopting a campaign focusing on international student needs. The advocacy blog had been sent out through our newsletter in October. Finally, we will be hosting an Instagram live prior to the holidays.

Example Communication strategy:

- 2 Blogs a month: 1st focusing on a hot topic, 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: abGPAC has secured meetings with key MLA's during the upcoming November advocacy week. This will allow us to share our graduate student advocacy priorities and get a commitment to working on these areas.

Kabita Baral | Vice President Student Life

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Hours

October 15th to November 15th

Meetings: 34 hours

Events:

Other: 50

Total Hours: 84

Average per week: 21

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: We have already received survey response and we are meeting in early December to discuss next steps and results from the survey and what can be done to better improve campus mental health strategy.

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: We highlighted our senior leadership members and the amazing work they do.

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:** I worked with EDI, GSA2 and MHWS committees for our first panel series on Intersectionality. On November 16, we had our first panel session on "Trans day of Remembrance" and we are planning second panel session for December on microaggressions.

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:** Thao and I have worked together to change the newsletter format to ensure that its being catered to students' needs. We also send out a monthly event newsletter to ensure students are aware of all events that are happening in next month

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:** We have secured a discount from Sportschek and Atmosphere stores all over Canada and they have agreed to provide discount of up to 70% in in-store purchases all across Canada. We are continuing to reach out to more potential sponsors.

Mary Zhang | Vice President Finance and Services
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Hours

October 15th to November 15th

Meetings: 40 hours

Events: 5

Other: 30

Total Hours: 75

Average per week: 18.75

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:** A new virtual healthcare service has been added to the GSA H&D plan as a free trial service till Aug 2022. Working with Thao on communication materials to increase awareness of this new service. Working with StudentCare representatives to schedule presentations with GRC, GSA committees and campus wellness services to address questions and concerns. Discussing with Campus Student Wellness regarding direct billing service and adding healthcare professionals to StudentCare network list to provide discount for graduate students.

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:** Organized a series of financial workshops for the November, Financial Literacy Month - DIY Investment, Will and Estate Planning, Budget Boot Camp. Will and Estate Planning was the most popular event. Lots of great questions in the Q&A session.

Promoted MoneySmart financial workshops on the GSA event page and newsletters.
Promoted Financial Wellness Fair by Calgary Local Immigration Partnership (CLIP)
Posted two GSA blogs on financial topics

- Financial Literacy Month 2021
- Sticking to your investing goals through the holidays

Planning for winter financial events

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 Income Statement Review was presented at monthly Finance Standing Committee Meeting

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: SportChek offered a VIP sale discount event for up to 70% sale. We sent out more than 500 unique codes for student use. Brentwood Liquor Depot offers discount for LDL manager and Event coordinator for specific events. Offering discounted tickets for Zoo light and a kid-friendly show in Jubilations Dinner Theatre. Working on a discount program with a dance studio Working on Last Defence Lounge (LDL) reopen scenarios