



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

September 1st - October 15th

Meetings: 149

Events: 3

Other: 100

Total Hours: 252

Average per week: 38.8

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: The GSA put out a survey in August that captured the student voice regarding what they would like to see with an UCalgary institutional return to campus plan. We were then able to use the information from that survey to advocate for the safety measures in place today such as the Thrive app, mandatory masks, vaccination status declarations, rapid testing, and access to Vaccines. I had multiple meetings over the summer months as well as recently as this week to discuss safety precaution implementation and enforcement. The student voice continues to play a large role in the execution of the COVIDsafe campus plan.

The GSA launched a GSA return to campus plan that looked at the various components of our operations and addressed them all individually, prioritizing health and safety with an emphasis on consistency within the plan. Due to the current state of public health emergency within Alberta we are unable to launch this plan as many components involve our staff, who are under a province-wide

mandate to work from home. When the state of public health emergency is lifted, we will move forward to implement this plan, which will allow for the distribution of our mask/hand sanitizer kits and some in-person events. For more details and updates on this plan please visit: <https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/contact/covid-19-impacts-on-gsa-operations/>

- 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 (GRC).
- Updates:** The development of this plan will give a clear outline of expectations for the students and the University when consultation occurs. In the past, students have brought up that when the University comes for consultation with students, they feel that the institution has already made its plan and it is more of a one-way conversation rather than collecting feedback from students and taking it into consideration for their plans. I have met with the Students' Union (undergraduate) and Provost office about developing these key stakeholder consultation guidelines and both parties are interested. More updates to come as we have begun developing a draft.

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:** I have had various meetings with IT leadership and the GSA's Marketing and Communications Manager on this topic. We are working through the issues and are very close to finding a solution that works with the new software safety system the University has in place. This is very important because due to the filter GSA members are unaware of what the GSA is doing for them and it's important for members to be informed.
- 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: As GRC is the bridge between the main body of GSA and the student members, I want to focus on decreasing the barriers of GRC members passing the information along to the students in their department. Therefore, every month by the end of the week that GRC falls in I will complete a “GRC digest” or short report that will be emailed out to all representatives. This report is to be shared with all graduate students as a way to keep students informed about the important things that are going on at the GSA. If and 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: I have met with our Marketing and Communication Manager who will be putting out a request for proposals from companies who specialize in Strategic Plan development. We will collect companies' proposals, evaluate, interview, and choose a lead company by the end of 2021. The work to develop the strategic plan will begin in January 2022

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: The GSA EDI Committee is now established and has begun very important work identifying their top priorities for the 2021-22 year. In November I will begin to look for companies that would be able to do this work and propose the various options to the EDI committee.

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

September 1st - October 15th

Meetings: 62

Events: 4

Other: 58

Total Hours: 124

Average per week: 19.1

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 and FGSC Executive Committee.
- 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 new policy. This proposal has gone through its first round of reviews at the FGS Policy Committee and FGSC Executive Committee.
- 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 passed the first round of reviews at the FGS Policy Committee and will now be reviewed by the FGS Executive Committee.

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.

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: This year the GSA Academic Support Committee has 14 workshops and events planned. Three of those workshops have already happened in the month of September.

Kirsten Nepriily | Vice President External

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Hours

September 1st - October 15th

Meetings: 95

Events: 3

Other: 53

Total: 151

Average per week: 23.2

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.
- 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.
- 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.

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: Adopted CASA GOTV campaign and did two Instagram lives, (1) with Jared from CASA on the federal election and (2) with Dr. Lisa Young on the Municipal Election.

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.

Updates: Conducted 1 CBC interview for the exceptional tuition increases and had 2 UToday articles released for the mayoral forum.

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: Met with the Health Minister Jason Copping to discuss the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Kabita Baral | Vice President Student Life

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Hours

September 1st - October 15th

Meetings: 61

Events: 20

Other: 65

Total Hours: 146

Average per week: 22.5

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 created a survey with questions catered towards course based and thesis-based students and students from different minor groups that is being finalized and will be sent out in the next couple of weeks. This survey response will be used to improve mental health services provided by university to 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: I have collaborated with our Marketing and Communication Manager to highlight two graduate students' experience as part of mental illness awareness week and I am planning to create more student focused events and provide students with platform to share their experience and expertise.

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:** We have planned over 20 events for October, and I led one of them (Origami night). I have also collaborated with EDI, GSA2, and Mental Health and Wellness Subcommittee to bring 5 workshop series, with the first one being held on November 16th. We will have one student panelist per event.

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 the Marketing and Communications Manager to ensure we are catering it towards students' needs.
- Explanation:** I will work closely with the Marketing and Communications Manager 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.

Mary Zhang | Vice President Finance and Services

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Hours

September 1st - October 15th

Meetings: 66

Events: 7

Other: 51

Total Hours: 124

Average per week: 19.1

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:

- Held a GSA Health and Dental Q&A session during Fall 2021 orientation to introduce services to new graduate students and provide them with a platform to ask questions.
- Negotiated with StudentCare to add \$500 coverage every 36 months for hearing aids, with no increase in the H&D fee. StudentCare has confirmed that they are able to process the Hearing Aid claim under the plan since September 2021.
- Worked with Thao to update students on drug formulary change (started in May 2021), special change of coverage period for international students (July 2021) and the regular change of coverage periods.
- A new service – telemedicine, will be added to the GSA H&D plan. This service allows members to communicate with healthcare practitioners via chat, video, or phone simply by using an app. This trial feature will be added at no cost from Nov 2021 to Aug 2022.
- Graduate students over 65 are automatically enrolled in the GSA H&D program, however they cannot use any of the services and need to opt out every year. I have communicated with FGS and the enrollment services about this issue. They have agreed to create a student group that will automatically not assess the Graduate H&D Insurance fees to those students over the age of 65 starting Spring 2022. Unfortunately, Winter 2022 won't be possible as changes like this have to happen as part of the set development cycle for Peoplesoft, and the next round of development isn't happening until Spring.

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:**
- Planned a series of financial workshops for the 2021/2021 academic year, including topics on Investment 101, Investment Fraud, Banking in Canada, DIY Investment, Financial Resources, Wills and Estate, etc.
 - Collaborated with MoneySmart program to design workshops to better fit graduate students' need. Promoted 7 MoneySmart financial workshops on the GSA event page and newsletters.
 - Posted two GSA blogs on investment

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 monthly income statements at the GSA Board meetings. At the Finance Standing Committee (FSC) meeting, committee members have received GSA Finance 101 training and reviewed July income statements.
 - 2020-2021 Audited Statement Review was presented at the Sept Annual General Meeting (AGM) by Finance Standing Committee Chair Mahnaz Booshehrian.

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:

- Owl's Nest Books and Witchcraft Hair Salon are offering 10% for graduate students.
- One free dance class (West African style) was offered for graduate students in collaboration with Decidedly Jazz Danceworks studio.
- SportChek is offering a VIP discount event for up to 70% sale.
- Continuing to reach out to potential businesses.