



**GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION  
GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING  
Tuesday, January 25, 2025, 5:30 PM**

**Attendees:**

Tanille Shandro, President  
 Alex Paquette, VP Academic  
 Kirsten Neprily, VP External  
 Mary Zhang, VP Finances & Services  
 Kabita Baral, VP Student Life  
 Brett Nelson, Speaker  
 Catherine Swytink-Binnema, Clerk

**Quorum:**

Jasper	Greysson-Wong	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology	Proxy: No
Cynthia	Adjekukor	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology	No
Rishika	Puri	Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association	No
Amy	Du	Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association	No
Sierra	Mitchell	Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association	Yes
Jenny	Shin	Biomedical Engineering GSA	No
Conrad	Mielczarek	Biomedical Engineering GSA	No
Faranak	Afsar	Chemical & Petroleum Engineering Graduate Students' Association	No
Antonio	Garcia	Chemical & Petroleum Engineering Graduate Students' Association	No
Bryan	Zanca	Chemistry Graduate Student Association	No
Justin	Perras	Chemistry Graduate Student Association	No
Duncan	Brownsey	Chemistry Graduate Student Association	No
Saeid	Ghasemalizadeh	Civil Engineering Graduate Society	No
Seyedeh Zakieh	Mohammadi	Civil Engineering Graduate Society	No
Amit	Chaudhari	Civil Engineering Graduate Society	No
Ali	Ebrahimi Emamieh	Civil Engineering Graduate Society	No
Sydney	Burton	Classics and Religion DGA	No
Kellie	Cornforth	Classics and Religion DGA	No
Anastasiia	Gushchina	Communication Media and Film DGA	No
Mina	Fahim	Community Health Sciences Student Executive	No
Kathryn	Blair	Computational Media Design	No
Mohammad Reza	Kianifar	Computer Science Graduate Society	No

Shahryar	Soltanpour	Computer Science Graduate Society	No
Niloufar	Farajpour	Computer Science Graduate Society	No
Mehrsa	Ehsani	Doctoral Association for Students of Haskayne	No
Andishe	Ashjari	Doctoral Association for Students of Haskayne	No
Zack	Moline	Economics Graduate Association	No
Mallika	Sharma	Economics Graduate Association	No
Mahrokh	Namazi	Electrical and Computer Engineering GSA	No
Xen	Virtue	English Department Graduate Association	No
Omar	Ramadan	English Department Graduate Association	No
Shuhua	Li	Gastrointestinal Graduate Students Association	Yes
Sruthi	Rajeev	Gastrointestinal Graduate Students Association	No
Rhiannon	Scott	Geography Graduate Students' Association	No
Genevieve	Dryden	Geography Graduate Students' Association	No
Md. Shohug	Hossain	Geomatics Graduate Group	Yes
Megan	Mah	Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association	No
Allegra	DePasquale	Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association	No
Lukas	Sadownyk	Graduate Association of Geology and Geophysics Students	No
Apoorve	Chokshi	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association	No
Lylia	Jardine	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association	No
Lisa	Taylor	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association	No
Razieh	Alba	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association	No
Pam	Farrell	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association	No
Kristaps	Balodis	Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society	No
Madeline	Ward	Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society	No
James	Steele	Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society	No
Cameron	Armstrong	Haskayne MBA Society	No
Bailey	Harray	History Graduate Students Union	No
Jessica	tannenbaum	History Graduate Students Union	No
Trevor	Low	Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization	No
Brooke	Belanger	Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization	No
Dion	Kelly	Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization	No
Oscar	Tejada	Immunology Graduate Association	No
Robert	Clarke	Immunology Graduate Association	No
Isla	Shill	Kinesiology Graduate Students Association	No
Nicole	Boisvert	Kinesiology Graduate Students Association	No
Julia	Daun	Kinesiology Graduate Students Association	No

Quinn	Goddard	Linguistics Graduate Students' Association	No
Monikka	Sarino	Master of Management Society	No
Peihao	Li	Masters of Pathologists' Assistant GSA	No
Rachelle	Drummond	Masters of Public Policy Students Association	No
Julia	Jachimowicz	Masters of Public Policy Students Association	No
Laura	Rojas	Medical Science Graduate Student Association	No
Deepak	Patel	Microbiology & Infectious Diseases GSA	No
Daniel	Castaneda Mogollon	Microbiology & Infectious Diseases GSA	No
Sandip	Dhaliwal	Nursing Graduate Students' Association	No
Maria	Genova	Philosophy Graduate Students' Association	No
Alexander	Wentzell	Philosophy Graduate Students' Association	No
Pooja	Woosaree	Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association	No
Davor	Curic	Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association	No
Kailyn	Stenhouse	Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association	No
Kailyn	Stenhouse	Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association	No
Laura	Conrad	Political Science Graduate Student Association	No
Zach	Pfeifer	Political Science Graduate Student Association	No
Michael	McLaren-Gradinaru	Psychology Graduate Students Association	No
Jenelle	Morgan	Psychology Graduate Students Association	No
Emily	Kloppenburger	School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape	No
Kayra	Caner	School of Creative and Performing Arts Graduate Society	Yes
Cali	Sproule	School of Creative and Performing Arts Graduate Society	No
Omid	Asayesh	Sociology Graduate Students' Caucus	No
Jordan	Arnold	Strategic Studies Students Consortium	No
Christopher	Verklan	Strategic Studies Students Consortium	No
Lindsey	Arkangel	Veterinary Medicine Grad Students Association	No
Karina	Hincapie	Vox Condiscipulum	No

## January 2022 GRC Meeting Minutes

Meeting began and online sign-in 17h31

Territorial Acknowledgement (Tanille Shandro) 17h32

Approval of the Agenda 17h34

Moved: Rachelle Drummond

Seconded: Apoorve Choksi

Discussion: NA

CARRIED (88% in favour)

Approval of November 2022 Minutes 17h36

Moved: Ali Ebrahimi Emamieh

Seconded: MichaelMG  
Discussion: NA  
CARRIED (85% in favour)

### **Presentation (Ed McCauley, President and Vice-Chancellor University of Calgary) 17h42**

- Acknowledges the impact of Covid on fellowship and friendship in graduate studies
  - It's possible to teach and learn remotely, but hard to bond remotely
- Update: has recently talked to alumni
  - Is it possible for alumni to provide mentoring to undergrads and grads?
- Covid update: The most important things are safety and providing highest quality education
  - We want to keep campuses as open as possible
  - We are aware of the need for mental health support
  - We are considering increasing the mask requirement
- Update: response of university to steep cuts from government
  - There is a funding differential between funding to Edmonton and Calgary
    - about \$1000k/student
    - the reason for this difference is unclear
  - There have been cuts to the Campus Alberta Grant
  - The cuts to the U of C are ~\$100M to operating cuts
    - for scale: entire budget of the Faculty of Science and SSE
  - We are trying to grow revenue in order to offset cuts, and work with the GSA and SU to communicate to the government the impact of the university and post-secondary education
- Commitment to growing research portfolio
  - The U of C is in the top 5 research universities in Canada
  - We never want to set up a dichotomy between research and teaching, because great research, along with the experiential learning is what makes us successful
  - There is an important announcement coming out tomorrow!
- Commitment to make sure students are supported (sits on board of Universities Canada)
  - We are asking for increased federal investment in research, specifically for grad students
    - as the federal budget is being put together, there are early signs of support
  - Canada is falling behind compared to other PhD/Master's students in the G7, G20
  - The U15 schools are advocating very hard
- The Framework for Growth is not a one-year plan, but goes out to 2030
  - We want to increase community engagement/partnerships, increase transdisciplinary scholarships, and provide future-focused learning (soft skills, as well as disciplinary skills; giving students opportunity to be more entrepreneurial)
- Community partnerships, as well as other external revenue sources, are important while moving ahead
- Question: Western is one of many universities providing new medical-grade (ASTM Level 3) masks to their students. This is something the University should implement to protect their students from the highly transmissible omicron variant. Many of us are unable to work from home and are at risk during our studies.
  - Answer: We are working with AHS on this point, and discussing with the Covid response team
  - Note, there is a supply issue

- Question: Could you speak a little bit to the value of the Faculty of Arts in those pillars you just outlined?
  - Answer: This is something that is very important: “I want the best faculty of arts in the country” and the grad students in the faculty play a key role in that goal
  - Re the priorities in Framework of Growth, they are meant to include all faculties
    - Cities and Communities: the Arts are key
    - Democracy and Social Change: the creative and performing arts and the humanities are all part of that
    - Exploring Digital World: the Faculty of Arts can contribute to this priority in so many ways
    - Energy Transition: Faculty of Arts plays a key role (e.g., history of energy)
    - Quality of Life: psychology is involved here
- Question: I have a question about the study "top five research"- I wanted to know what was the criteria to determine the ranking. I feel the mail was vague and it just pointed out to "objective ranking systems". Can you explain?
  - Answer: The ranking is based on an audit system (e.g., total research dollars, funding per grad student, funding per faculty)
  - This method is reliable, objective, and not biased by age of university
    - the “dollars in” is funding for labs, students, etc.
  - There is a currently a national conversation to develop a “research impact index” to rank universities in a non-dollar-based way
- Question: Are there any research areas that are being prioritized under this plan?
  - Answer: We will have groups to discuss transdisciplinary areas, and what problems we want to tackle: This will be a “bottom up” discussion, with faculty and grad students involved, when it comes to deciding priorities
  - Note: these discussions have been delayed because of Covid
- Shout out to GSA exec team, holding the board of governors accountable and looking to the future

### **GSA 2022-2023 General and Health & Dental Fees (Mary Zhang) 18h06**

- The pandemic has impacted the use of the Health & Dental (H&D) plan, which confuses prediction methods for the cost increase
- Health & Dental
  - Graduate Students’ Association
  - Studentcare: 3<sup>rd</sup> party administrator for the plan, and negotiates the plan for us
    - was reselected 3 years ago
    - was able to secure a 2-year fix on fees, so an increase is expected (currently, we are at an artificially low price)
  - Desjardins Insurance: the insurance provider
  - Components of pricing:
    - Plan Fee: amount students pay to GSA (\$579)
    - Premium: Amount GSA pays to Studentcare/Desjardins (\$553)
    - GSA Admin Costs: cost of GSA admin work for H&D plan (\$12.82)
    - Reserve: the extra built up over time to help buffer the impact to students, with plan increases (difference between what students pay and total of what GSA pays = \$13.18)
  - Studentcare Analysis
    - Method #1: based on data from Sept-Dec 2021 (the method used pre-pandemic)
      - provides estimated 39% increase -> inflated and unlikely

- Method #2: based on data from rolling 12-month period Jan-Dec 2021
  - provides estimated 13% increase -> likely accurate
- We will bring more info to the February GRC meeting: likely, there will be a 5-8% increase (\$28.95-\$46.32) to the H&D fee
- There is an estimated total \$1.4M reserve available to reduce impact to students
  - Expected subsidy amount for a given premium increase and a given fee increase:

Premium incr	5% fee incr to \$608	8% fee incr to \$625.32
13% (to \$625.56)	\$145k	\$62k
20% (to \$664.70)	\$332k	\$250k
39% (to 771.72)	\$844k	\$761k

- No increase to GSA General Fees for year 2022-2023
- Question: Will this increase be subsidized by the GSA?
  - Answer: We will subsidize as much as is reasonable, because we also have to consider the impact on reserves
- Question: What about the sports and rec fees?
  - Answer: We are currently negotiating pro-rating the athletic fee, which means a minimum of a 50% reduction in the fee.

### Executive Reports 18h14

- (details in package)
- President
  - Advocacy
    - Return to Campus Plan
      - Work from home order: GSA office still physically closed
      - Campus in-person events: all events, meetings, and gatherings must be paused or be virtual until Feb. 19, 2022
    - Consultation Guideline for Institutional Consultation with Grad Students
      - in collaboration with SU
      - delayed because SU VP External has stepped down
    - We are working with city transit re UPass (because many students aren't coming to campus): We got a 25% discount for UPass (there are many nuances to the plan, but details will go out tomorrow)
  - Communication
    - GSA Email Communications: U of C went to higher security system, and GSA emails were filtered out; working with IT to fix this
    - GRC Digest Newsletter
  - Organization Sustainability
    - Strategic Plan: in development, company will be chosen next month
    - Internal EDI Audit: in development, company will be chosen next month
    - Federal Advocacy Contingency Fund
- VP Academic
  - Advocacy
    - Minimum Funding Policy
      - PhD: for domestic students, minimum funding increases from \$18k to \$22k; for international students, from \$22k to \$24k
      - Master's: starting at \$10k
        - this is our first thesis-based Master's Minimum Funding Policy

- only the 3<sup>rd</sup> university in Canada to have a Master's Minimum Funding Policy
      - starts Aug 2022 for PhD students and May 2023 for Master's students
    - Flexible Grading Option Policy: we are asking for 1 credit for grad students
      - as DGAs, push your faculties and programs to accept this
  - Service Delivery & Organization Sustainability
    - GSA Awards Platform: platform is complete
    - GSA Academic Workshops & Events: these events have increased (there were 9 last year, and there are 12 more planned)
    - Peer Beyond Symposium: DGA competition
      - do social media promotion for the symposium, and send pic of the post, etc. to Alex to get a point: top 6 DGAs will receive monetary prize
- VP External
  - Advocacy
    - Governmental Advocacy (federal/provincial): ab-GPAC
      - provincial recommendations for the 2022 provincial budget: additional funding to post secondary institutions for Covid safety, increased loan limits for grad students, increased access to child-care, a new stream for the immigrant nominee program (specifically to allow more international students to stay in Canada), and more support for indigenous students
      - Federal: meetings coming up in February (topics such as mental health, scholarships, and bursaries)
    - Consultation with Key Stakeholders
      - e.g., with city councillors, MLAs
    - Tuition & Fees Consultations
      - Win: Tuition and fees increase for thesis-based programs stays below CPI at 2% for both domestic and international students
      - Win: Master of Music program fee and tuition increase decreased from 7% to 2% for both domestic and international students
      - Win: Student service fee increase decreased from 10%-7%
      - Win: Athletics fee increase decreased from 7% to CPI (4%)
      - Win: The \$25 Dino credit being re-instated and there is a commitment to consult on any future decision concerning this credit
      - Win: Secure bike storage to be installed for residents of Varsity Courts
      - Win: 20 visitor parking passes per year for each tenant will be given to residents of Varsity Courts (\$80 value, at \$4/day to park)
      - Win: Varsity Courts to be included in pilot program of all-inclusive rate with laundry (\$16-32/month saving)
  - Communication
    - CASA Campaign: Mental health at federal level
    - Showcase ab-GPAC work
    - Media Relations: e.g., Instagram live events
    - Meet with municipal and provincial politicians: We met with the mayor recently, and talked a lot about grad student priorities

- Question: What is the tuition increase for course based programs?
  - Answer: 7% increase
- Question: Will there be a minimum funding policy for capstone-based projects?
  - The faculties have not agreed to fund capstone-based projects. Some will provide funding for research costs, but not to actual students
- VP Student Life
  - Advocacy
    - Mental Health Consultations: make sure U of C's guidelines are in line with guidelines for post-secondary institutions, especially when it comes to minorities, older students, etc.
      - mental health is being considered at multiple levels (e.g., within labs, in supervisory-student relationship)
  - Communication
    - GSA Blog
    - GSA Newsletter: If you have any comments on readability, let Kabita know as they're always trying to improve the communication
  - Service Delivery
    - Popular Online Events
    - SEEC & EDI committee collaborative events: e.g., Black History month events (check website for details)
    - Ticket Program: some have been cancelled because of Covid
  - Organization Sustainability
    - Sponsorship Package
    - Discounted Tickets
- VP Finance & Service Report
  - Service Delivery
    - H&D Q&A session in Winter 2021 orientation: for new students
    - H&D Fees: if you're interested in joining the H&D committee, email [vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca)
    - Working with Wellness Services: working for direct billing and discounts
    - Financial literacy workshops: mortgage, real estate, cryptocurrency, will and estate planning
  - Communication
    - GSA Budget: will be presenting to FSC and GRC
    - FSC Meetings
  - Organization Sustainability
    - Sponsorship Package: see website for info on which locations give discounts
    - LDL Reopening: We have selected a new manager, but the uncertainty of in-person activities is delaying the work
      - The manager's start date is Jan 31<sup>st</sup>, with part-time per hr to start, and the potential to move to salaried later
      - dependent on Covid decision
    - Discounted tickets

### **Question period (Speaker) 18h41**

1. Question: What measures will be taken to protect TAs who will potentially be teaching in person?
  - a. Answer: Part of what Ed said, the risks are known, and so the Covid taskforce is trying to discuss better PPE for instructors and students who have to be on



campus. Once that report is out, hopefully will know better what will be available. According to the labour side of things: The employer must provide the required protective equipment, so reach out to labour relations committee if you have questions on that.

2. Re H&D, what are the proposed increases to people who have a couple and/or family plans?
  - a. The dependent plans are based on cost of individual plans so changes to that will be based on the increase we determine next month. In addition, last year we were making a two-year staged adjustment because couples were previously paying too much and families were paying too little in comparison to the cost of a single plan.
  - b. There will be an additional adjustment to the family plans (2+ dependents) this year. We will have actual numbers next month but we are happy to explain with more detail if you reach out to Mary at [vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca)
- For more questions, reach out to the execs: <https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/gsa-executive-board/>

### **DGA period (DGAs) 18h50**

- The Sociology Graduate Students' Caucus at UCalgary would like to issue a final call for any interested graduate or advanced (honours) undergraduate students from your department to submit a ~250-word proposal for the upcoming (online) Graduate Student Research Symposium (GSRS). The Symposium is scheduled to take place on March 3rd and 4th, 2022. The deadline to submit a proposal has been extended to January 31, 2022. Proposals are to be submitted online: <https://forms.gle/PCP49QhxdLZaV72C7>

### **Announcements (All) 18h51**

- Quality Money
  - Intake #4: Feb 21-Mar 7, 2022 (deadline: Mar 7, 2022 at 11:59 pm MT)
  - <https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/quality-money-program/>
- GSA Emergency Bursary & GSA Support Bursary
  - applications are accepted year-round
  - see [gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/bursaries/](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/bursaries/) for more info
- Peer Beyond GSA Conference: Feb 23-25, 2022 on gather.town
  - Abstract deadline: Jan 26, 2022 at 11:59 pm
  - [gsa.ucalgary.ca/events/peerbeyondsymposium/](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/events/peerbeyondsymposium/) for more info
- 2022 GSA Elections: details at [gsa.ucalgary.ca/elections](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/elections)
  - official announcement coming soon
- Health & Dental Committee
  - GRC Representative Position: one GRC rep needed for the 2021-2022 year
    - learn how the H&D plan works
    - contribute to decision making
    - 2-3 hr/month commitment
    - remote Zoom meetings
- Award application intakes open: deadline Jan 31, 2022
  - Excellence Awards
  - Leadership Awards
  - Emerging Leader Awards
  - Graduate Representative Council Initiative Award
  - Sustainability Award (deadline: Feb 22, 2022)
  - see [gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards/](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards/)

- Anti-Valentine's Day Community Hangout: online; Wed, Feb 16 from 6-7:30 pm MST
- Indoors Gardening Basics with Janet Melrose: Zoom; Feb 17 from 5:30-7 pm MT
- Let's Talk About Black Canadian Mental Health: Zoom; Feb 16 from 5-7 pm MT
- LGBTQ+ Students' Lived Experiences at the University of Calgary: Zoom; Feb 22 from 12-1 pm MT
- for more details, see [gsa.ucalgary.ca/events/](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/events/)

**GRC prize draw 18h54**

Three winners announced, Crystal will email winners tomorrow.

**Other business 18h55**

- NA

**Adjournment 18h56**

MOTION to adjourn January 2022 GRC meeting at 18h56: Nicole Boisvert

Seconded: Mahrokh Namazi

CARRIED (91% in favour)