



**GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
TUESDAY, September 27, 2022, 5:30 PM**

**Attendees:**

Saaka Sulemana Saaka, President  
James Steele, VP Academic  
Cameron Armstrong, VP Finance and Services  
A.C. Cameron, VP External  
Masume Akbarki, VP Student Life  
Keira Gunn, Labour Relations Committee  
Brett Nelson, Speaker  
Quinn Goddard, Clerk

**AGM Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Began 5:30 pm**

**Online Registration 5:30 pm**

**Approval of the Agenda 5:30 pm**

Motioned/seconded

Discussion: N/A

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

CARRIED

**Territorial Acknowledgement (A.C. Cameron) 5:31 pm**

**Welcoming remarks (Saaka Sulemana Saaka) 5:33 pm**

- Welcome to returning and new students and GRC members

**Welcoming remarks (Mary Grantham O'Brien) 5:35 pm**

- Welcome to everyone.
- Record number of graduate students welcomed this year (over 8 000)
- Recent collaborations with GSA
  - New set of funding standards for thesis-based graduate students
  - Clarified language around leave of absence
  - Brought in CG option for graduate students
- Want to make policies more student-centered; contact her if you have comments/concerns
- More engagement through Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and ii' taa'poh'to'p Indigenous Strategy
- Office: Earth Sciences 1010

### **Business arising from past AGM minutes 5:39 pm**

- Speaker asked for business or questions arising from past AGM minutes

### **Approval of past AGM minutes 5:39 pm**

Motioned/seconded

Discussion: None

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

CARRIED

### **GSA 101 (Saaka Sulemana Saaka) 5:40 pm**

- GSA drafted Strategic Plan for 2019-2022
- Need to draft new Strategic Plan
  - Need to hire new external advisor to help formulate Plan
  - Completed consultation phase with key stakeholders: interview FGS, President's Office, GRC, etc.
  - Strategic Plan Working Group
    - Includes members from LRC, Cumming's School of Medicine (historically underrepresented), etc.
    - Role: put all gathered info together into coherent, implementable plan
- Added two committees under VP External
  - Recognize high need for food and housing security among graduate students
  - Created Food and Housing Ad Hoc Working Group
- Committees in GSA
  - Encourages students to join committees

### **Reporting Feedback (James Steele) 5:46 PM**

- Working to increase transparency
  - Annual Report
  - Annual General Meeting
  - GRC Meetings: opportunity for graduate students to tell board what students need, what GSA can do better
    - Last Tuesday of each month (OCT 25, NOV 29, JAN 31, FEB 28, MAR 28, APR 25, MAY 30)
    - Particularly interested in hearing from students in underrepresented departments
  - More documents on website
  - Social media mini-polls, ad-hoc surveys

### **Executive Portfolios 5:49 pm**

- Saaka Sulemana Saaka, President
  - Ensure GSA following bylaws
  - Responsible for all affairs, operations of GSA, accountable to graduate students on how GSA is run
  - Correction: Collective Agreement run by Keira Gunn
    - Portfolio undergoing restructuring

- Sit on Board of Governors
- James Steele, VP Academic
  - Cover all GSA awards and professional grants
  - Deals with all academic appeals and student issues
    - Student/supervisor relations, student ally on appeals board
  - Workshops, professional development
  - Peer Beyond Conference (second weekend of February)
  - Advocacy
    - FGS
    - University
    - Government
- Cameron Armstrong, VP Finance and Services
  - Health and Dental Plan
    - Advocate for increased benefits in term
  - Quality Money (encourages everyone to apply – support for GSA, DSG, student life)
  - GSA Investments (handled by ATB)
  - Last Defence Lounge
    - Extended hours, new menu items
  - GSA Annual Report
    - Over \$800,000 dispursed to students
    - High student engagement: Over 6 400 responses on surveys
  - Audited Process (2022)
    - All financial statements reported were accurate
    - Historical losses in LDL due to closure from COVID
- A.C. Cameron, VP External
  - Advocates outside of the university (e.g. government cutting funding)
  - Seat on UCalgary Senate (amplify grad student concerns to larger community)
  - Student engagement in advocacy
  - Advocacy Priorities Survey
    - Link in newsletter, on GSA website
    - Top priorities that have emerged: Financial Aid (low income of grad students impacts mental health, expand therapy options)
  - Encourages mass student engagement for upcoming provincial election
  - Encourages engagement at Town Hall (October 11<sup>th</sup>)
  - Food-Housing Working Group
    - Cost of living is surpassing graduate student income
    - Upcoming meeting likely October 6th
- Masume Akbarki, VP Student Life
  - Events, discounted tickets
  - More support for DSAs and GSGs
    - Insurance for events (up to \$750 for each event)
    - Increased budget for committee-building, engagement events
  - Volunteer program for mentorship for newcomers and international students
  - Collaborate with GSA Board members for to advocate for issues surrounding mental health, EDI, international students

- Saaka Sulemana Saaka, President
  - Reviewed every two years to ensure operating within provincial laws, etc.
  - A lot of turnover in GSA staff
  - Keira Gunn raised concerns about entire graduate student body voting on LRC issues, as opposed to just academically employed graduate students
    - Concern with way previous bylaw revisions voted on
    - Saaka: shares concerns, wants to maintain bylaws, assures revisions will not affect LRC in any ways
  - **Question:** what is this vote for? When do vote on change?
    - Saaka: vote to maintain current bylaws, will put forward second motion to initiate revision process
  - **Question:** can we get an idea about existing bylaws?
    - Saaka: Concern laws about how committees established, etc.
      - Need to make internal changes (for things about, e.g. if GSA staff can work out of province)
      - Several changes to what GSA expected to do as unit
      - Want to make sure we give ourselves time to fully restructure LRC, need to make sure changes are reflected in bylaws
      - Will later vote on GSA bylaws

### **Maintain current GSA Bylaws**

Motioned

Opposed: 0

Abstain: 1

CARRIED

### **Reintroduce the revision process 6:20 pm**

Motioned

Opposed: 0

CARRIED

Survey - GRC: Online or In-Person?

- Opened floor to questions, concerns from students
- A.C. Cameron: advocates for keeping it in person
  - Easier to relate to one another, converse if in person
  - Better engagement with in-person events
- James Steele: advocates for keeping it in person
  - Better solutions
- **Question:** option should be available for hybrid (accessibility purposes, if GRC reps get sick, etc.)
  - Idea verbally supported by two other audience members

### **Hold GRC with hybrid model (in-person and in zoom) 6:28 pm**

Motioned/seconded

Opposed: 0

CARRIED

**Academically employed graduate students (Keira Gunn, Associate Vice President Labour) 6:30 pm**

- Minority of graduate students are academically employed
- Subset's interests don't always align with larger graduate student body
- As of 2017, Alberta government said that GSA is legally a trade union
  - Didn't give academically employed graduate students to join CUPE, etc.
  - Set to expire in July 2022, but Alberta government insisted that they current union status maintained
- 10 members in committee in Labour Relations Committee
  - All academically employed graduate students
  - Ensure GSA acting as a union, how TAs/RAs treated as workers
  - Ensure workers treated well, advise collective agreement (for instance, nothing in collective agreement in relation to pandemic)
  - Education regarding how unions work, mobilization, rights as employees of graduate students
  - Protect labour rights of academically employed graduate students as outlined in Collective Agreement
- Currently in arbitration with University re: mass hiring of graduate students as TAs outside of Collective Agreement
- Service agreement with PSAC
  - Provides access to professional labour advice
  - Professional negotiator (sit at table to negotiate Collective Agreement)
  - Access to legal service (arbitration is expensive)
- Encourages students to get involved
  - Labour Movement growing in Alberta (historically not union-friendly province)
  - Increasing engagement, Town Hall (OCT 4)
  - Put out call to be trained as stewards (so to have someone in department knowledgeable about labour rights, etc.)
  - Negotiation Outreach and Steering Teams
- Contact [lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca)

**Question period 6:40 pm**

- **Question:** GSA's relationship with Calgary Transit (student sees a lot of issues with transit)
  - Mandatory charge (\$155) more expensive than low income strategy under city of Calgary (\$5.60/month vs \$40/month)
  - Decreased reliability of transit, increased safety issues
  - A.C. Cameron:
    - UPass: part of Calgary Student Alliance, sits on Transit Reform Committee
      - Why are we paying so much when there are low-income options available?
      - Issues being brought to Kourtney Penner (Councillor for Ward 11)
      - Will put in next blog post
    - Safety on transit

- Advocates for harm reduction strategies, reach out to Bear Clan Patrol
  - Safe walk/buddy system
  - No set answer right now, complex discussion
- **Question:** Concern about very limited options in preferred provider network, often very far for students to travel
  - Cameron Armstrong: new list should be announced soon, will have increased options
- **Question:** Dental coverage doesn't cover several items, is there a way to increase budget for higher coverage?
  - Cameron Armstrong: re-negotiation period for benefits is in February, will be something brought to attention then
    - Currently in contract until 2024 with StudentCare, can't switch providers at this time
- **Question:** Does dental coverage roll over until next year?
  - Cameron Armstrong: No, lost if not used in year
- **Question:** Concerns that funding for counselling rarely covers more than a single visit. Wants serious plan of attack to determine where graduate students need more money the most in terms of coverage
  - Cameron Armstrong: survey student body to see where student priorities are before negotiation in
- **Question:** Possible to negotiate with parking around university to reduce costs (if concerns around security on transit, should have affordable option). Could there be negotiation for price of parking?
  - A.C. Cameron: In negotiations with City Council for UPass
    - Petition Calgary Alliance for the Common Good survey – call for more transit funding to help lower costs
    - Stuck in contract with UPass for now, but negotiations coming up
    - Will keep students updated (check blog posts, etc.)
    - GSA doesn't set parking fees, need meeting with Ancilliary Services
      - Not especially receptive to lowering parking
  - James Steele: everyone has to pay for UPass, and that is how we get lower rate for UPass
    - Encourages collective engagement to highlight student issues with income re: price of transit pass - write to city councillor and advocate to FGS and university

### **Announcements 6:59 pm**

- Empower Me: services to connect students with life coaches, etc.
  - Covered by GSA Health Plan
- Awards, Bursaries, and Grants:
  - GSA Bursary (OCT 7), Professional Development Grant (OCT 24), Quality Money (OCT 1), GSA Emergency Bursary (ongoing intake period), GSA Support Bursary (ongoing intake period)
- Last Defence Lounge
  - Owned and operated by GSA
  - lastdefencelounge.ca
- Upcoming GSA Events ([gsa.ucalgary.ca/events](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/events))
  - Canoeing and kayaking trips
  - Discounted tickets (Telus Spark, Calgary Zoo, Calgary Stampede)

### **Adjournment of Open Session 7:02 pm**

Motioned/seconded

Discussion: N/A

Opposed: 0

Abstained: 0

CARRIED

**Meeting adjourned at 7:03 pm**