



**GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION  
GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING  
Tuesday, April 28, 2020, 17:30  
Zoom Call**

**Attendees:**

Mohammad Mansouri, President  
 Mohamed Abdelsamie, VP Academic  
 Marcela Lopes, VP External  
 Basem Halawa, VP Student Life  
 Mina Iskander, VP Finances & Services  
 Leanne Dawson, Speaker  
 Kristina Miller, Clerk

**Quorum**

First Name	Last Name	DGA
Jasper	Greysson-Wong	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Lamees	Mohammad	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Anthonia	A	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Lauren	McMillan	Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association
Joey	Lockhart	Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association
Ryan	Toth	Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association
Karamjot (Kara)	Sidhu	Biomedical Engineering GSA
Sydney	Toutant	Biomedical Technology GSA
Loryn	Bohne	Cardiovascular & Respiratory Students' Association
Tristan	Dorey	Cardiovascular & Respiratory Students' Association
Calin	Lencar	Chemical & Petroleum Engineering Graduate Students' Association
Hector	Bonilla	Chemical & Petroleum Engineering Graduate Students' Association
Duncan	Brownsey	Chemistry Graduate Student Association
Madison	Timmons	Chemistry Graduate Student Association
Milanpreet	Kaur	Chemistry Graduate Student Association
Rasoul	Sheikhmali	Civil Engineering Graduate Society
Masoomah	Faghihinia	Civil Engineering Graduate Society
Justin	Nadeau	Classics and Religion DGA
Gregory	Ramsey	Classics and Religion DGA
Drew	Thomas	Communication Media and Film DGA

Kathryn	Blair	Computational Media Design
Sogand	Sadrhaghi	Computer Science Graduate Society
Madalynn	Thompson	Council of Foothills
Philip	Piercey	Doctoral Association for Students of Haskayne
Zhanna	Lyubykh	Doctoral Association for Students of Haskayne
Christine	Cao	Electrical and Computer Engineering GSA
Parnia	Shokri	Electrical and Computer Engineering GSA
Nima	Sarajpoor	Electrical and Computer Engineering GSA
Laura	Brooks	English Department Graduate Association
Holly	Szczepanski	Gastrointestinal Graduate Students Association
Ramsha	Mahmood	Gastrointestinal Graduate Students Association
Kristina	Miller	Geography Graduate Students' Association
Hugh	Alvarez	Geography Graduate Students' Association
Yizhi	Huang	Geomatics Graduate Group
Bahareh	Yekkehkhany	Geomatics Graduate Group
Pamela	Narvaez	Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association
Hasinala	Ramangason	Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association
Annamaris	Olmo	Graduate Engineering Students Consortium
Harrison	Campbell	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association
Kirsten	Neprily	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association
Keira	Gunn	Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society
Sarath Kumar	Jayaraman	Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society
Trevor	Low	Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization
Brandon	Craig	Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization
Faizan	Malik	Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization
Robert Kenneth	Clarke	Immunology Graduate Association
Kyle	McCallum	Kinesiology Graduate Students Association
Emily	Macphail	Kinesiology Graduate Students Association
Merion	Hodgson	Linguistics Graduate Students' Association
Alicia	Ussling	Masters of Pathologists' Assistant GSA
Mahwash	Waqar	MBA
Keith	Lau	Microbiology & Infectious Diseases GSA
Daniel	Castaneda Mogollon	Microbiology & Infectious Diseases GSA
Margaret	Currie	Nursing

Chloe	Stephenson	Philosophy Graduate Students' Association
Eric	Bohner	Philosophy Graduate Students' Association
davor	curic	Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association
CJ	Osakwe	Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association
Andrew	Kemle	Political Science Graduate Student Association
Raj	Lakhan	Political Science Graduate Student Association
Jaimie	Beveridge	Psychology Graduate Students Association
Chelsie	Hart	Psychology Graduate Students Association
Lilit	Houlder	School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape School of Creative and Performing Arts Graduate Society
Melike	Ceylan	
Chene	Redwood	Sociology Graduate Students' Caucus
Shay	Grover	Strategic Studies Students Consortium
Roberto	Salegio	Strategic Studies Students Consortium
Jin Lun	Du	Sustainable Energy Development
Brendan	Cooke	Sustainable Energy Development
Ellen	de Jong	Veterinary Medicine Grad Students Association
Abigail	Williams	Vox Condiscipulum

## **GRC Meeting Minutes**

### **Meeting Began 17:30**

- Territorial Acknowledgement

### **Roll Call (Speaker) 17:31**

### **Approval of the Agenda 17:35**

Motioned/seconded

Discussion: N/A

Opposed:0

Abstained:0

CARRIED

### **Approval of the March 2020 Minutes 17:36**

Motioned/seconded

Discussion: N/A

Opposed:0

Abstained:0

CARRIED

### **By-Election VPFS (Sandra Simeonova and Jacob Lamb CRO and DRO) 17:38**

- Kabita Baral

- First year PhD student from Foothills campus in veterinary medicine; transparency is a priority; focus on health and dental plan; scholarship and awards – will ensure students are aware of external awards; bring activities to both campuses; prior experience during Masters – has experience working with people.
- Nima Sarajpoor
  - Grad student in engineering; Has been VP of communications in the department for the last two years; member of Finance Standing Committee – monitored GSA's performance on finances (has insight into how finances work in the GSA); don't have specific plans b/c doesn't know the challenges, will communicate with the board and assess the issues that need to be solved
- Vincent Yong
  - First year Masters student in architecture; first generation Canadian, has been GRC rep for the last semester and volunteer within GSA; has BBA and MBA in finance; has been in industry for 25 years as project manager ; three pillars: 1) prioritize student engagement at all levels, 2) grad students working together with undergrads 3) transparency
- Questions:
  - If elected how do you plan to hear voices of all students?
    - Nima: was VP communications in dept last two years, communication is a strength, knows a lot of people on campus and will reach out to DGA's through surveys
    - Vincent: will reach out to all students, all students were happy for GSA to be at protests; have to help students feel like they are part of the GSA
    - Kabita: will have email available to all students, being at Foothills helps reach both campuses; being a woman might be more approachable.
  - What plans do you have in mind for boosting health and dental plan?
    - Vincent: should extend coverage into COVID area; negotiate for better terms and conditions with same fees
    - Kabita: make everyone aware of benefits; offer workshops; extend coverage for COVID; try to make sure everyone is aware
    - Nima: will negotiate with insurance to mitigate fee for students
  - In line with COVID-19, what are your thoughts on fee reductions and better coverage?
    - Kabita: fees should be reduced b/c it is inconvenient for everyone; better ideas to communicate with students
    - Nima: students lose campus use; partial refund/reduce fees for next year

- Vincent: b/c of transition to online learning and closing facilities, it changes the way we study; tuition fees should be reduced; need students to come together
- What are your thoughts on financial transparency – checks and balances you can suggest?
  - Vincent: most important is that there are auditors, most important that you can see, transparency leads to financial success
  - Nima: has learned technical terms related to finances – difficult for students to understand, will come up with visualization and simplify things for students to find ways to receive constructive feedback
  - Kabita: make sure that they are as clear as possible presenting - define acronyms
- What are your plans to diversify GSA sources of income?
  - Vincent: students need stationaries and would be good to sell them at cost, maintain LDL, food
  - Kabita: fundraising activities – entrance fees for events; promotion of workshops to all campuses
  - Nima: doesn't know what options GSA already has that are legal, but knows that GSA is involved in investment, working on investment packages, should be more careful on investments and needs a good bank to increase income
- For Kabita: what are strategies to inform students of health and dental
  - Workshops across all three campuses
  - Communicate at orientations
  - Include more on the website
- For Nima: what is your experience with the Finance Standing Committee, why should I vote if you have no plan?
  - One of the major issues GSA is handling is LDL, it has cost not revenue; need to mitigate cost – learned this from FSC
- For Vincent: from platform it's clear you're passionate about student advocacy, what is your goal for the committee?
  - Second pillar is financial portfolio transparency – decrease GSA reliance on student fees, student ideas – form a student think tank
- For Kabita: how will you inform students about scholarships differently from what is happening now?
  - There is a part on the website – should make handbook and post on website about external awards
- For Nima: you mentioned that you don't know challenges you are facing, due to challenge of quarantine, how do you address communication issues?

- First time it's happening, try to do best that everyone is available at the same time for meetings
- Vincent: how will you ensure productive relationships with university administration
  - Platform is for the students, have to be tactful, have to make clear and remember who we are fighting for, can't just be polite all the time; if students don't get the benefit, what is the point of students
- Have you had a chance to discuss the role with the previous VPFS and what did you take away from conversation?
  - Kabita: has had conversation with Mina over email, communication has been harder, has looked at GSA rules and responsibilities, ensure competency is maintained
  - Nima: yes, has wanted to talk to VPFS, experience from previous roles is good enough now and can get info later
  - Vincent: Mina has commended transparency, wants to maintain the integrity; doors would be open at all hours
- Vote results:
  - 68 votes, 4 abstentions
  - Winner is Kabita Baral (uncertified results)

#### **May GRC Meeting (Speaker) 18:17**

- Be it resolved that the Graduate Representative Council (GRC) approves a GRC meeting to be held on May 26, 2020.
- Motioned/seconded
- Discussion: N/A
  - Mohamed: Need a motion to hold a May meeting because we had an extra meeting in December, and this will be in addition to the 7 meetings over the course of the year.
  - Q: What is the purpose of the meeting?
    - Good chance for new board to have an introduction to the GRC
- Vote:
  - In favour: 55
  - Against: 5
  - Abstentions: 6
- CARRIED

#### **Roles elected by GRC (Speaker) 18:28**

- **Speaker** – chairs the GRC, AGM and any SGM following Robert's Rules of Order; serves as Chair of the Judicial Review Board; Liaison b/w the Board and GRC

- **Clerk** – records all minutes at GRC, AGM, SGM meetings; provides content for GRC Digest within 2 weeks of GRC
- **CRO** -- Responsible for electoral processes, with support from the ED; Administer the general election, by-elections, and any referenda
- **Chair, Finance Standing Committee** -- Schedule FSC meetings, record and file meeting minutes; Prepare FSC agenda; Make a minimum of two oral reports to GRC every year on the financial status of the Association
- All -- Participate in the Senior Leadership Team; Monthly meetings and additional consultations
- Election for Speaker:
  - Kirsten Neprily
    - President of graduate programs in Education Student Association; has good projection, clear, concise, able to stay on track, knows the Roberts Rules, would like to take on a larger role on GRC
- Election for Clerk:
  - Kristina Miller
- Election for CRO:
  - Marcela Lopes
- Election for Chair, FSC
  - Emily Macphail – been chair for this year, sat on committee for two years prior to that, good understanding of the position; reported at AGM and will report again; has engaged committee
  - Nima Sarajpoor – only experience is that was volunteer for the committee; VP Communications in department; strong communication skills to bridge gap between students and VP Finance
  - Election winner: Emily Macphail

### **Swearing in of incoming Board of Directors 18:50**

### **Finance Standing Committee Report (Emily Macphail, Chair FSC) 18:54**

- Updated Terms of Reference to align with GSA Bylaws
- Information session
- Monthly statements
- Issue with LDL bottle deposit process – as of January LDL has a new process for recycling and tracking bottle deposit revenue
- Reviewed 2020-2021 proposed budgets that presented at GRC
- GSA operating budget – well within budget this year, higher operating revenue, expenses were lower, net income was higher than predicted, after consolidation with LDL, came to net profit of \$21,7930 compared to expected net income of \$314.
  - Non-profit organization, need to aim for 0 net, anything over goes to reserve

- LDL budget
  - Net loss – expected; was greater than predicted; due to sales and COVID-19
  - Several circumstances – bar stools needed to be updated, had to do that all at once
  - Decline in sales from Univ staff sales – University was laying off people, decrease in clients
  - COVID-19 forced LDL to shut March 16
  - COVID-19
    - Staff have been working to reduce impact; all hourly staff were laid off; managers were laid off part time; perishables were given to staff; canceled monthly recurring payments

### **President's Report 19:01**

- Congratulations to new elected members. Thanks to GRC members – feedback and support. This has not been a normal year, did a great job because of GRC support. Thanks the Board for support in the last year and last two years. Thanks for the staff at GSA.
- Revised bylaws
- SLT professional development team
- Worked on GSA investment – winner of process will be chosen day after tomorrow
- Health and Dental transition
- Tuition negotiation – didn't receive what wanted but good that increased by 5% and commitment for extra financial support
- Federal and provincial advocacy – commitments from federal govt and provincial scholarship budget, mental health budget
- Quality Money contract renewed to 2024 with 4.8% increase
- Emergency bursary increased
- SU-GSA collaboration
- LDL contract
- Extra support for GAT during Winter, who had to work extra hours
- Collective Agreement – finished bargaining, almost done, will be ratified soon
- COVID-19 challenges
- Advocated in university, provincial, federal levels; tried to do best to support students
- All scholarships should continue – cannot be reduced or stopped by supervisor

### **VP Academic Report 19:09**

- AGES regulations
- Policies



- Minimum funding is being discussed now
  - Changes to supervision policy in terms of close relationships between supervisors and students
- Teaching and learning
  - Involved with large project change with USRI questionnaire, stopped due to COVID-19, carrying on with the project, will hear more by September
  - Major project on learning and technology – getting more focus now
- Graduate programs
  - Approval of new programs in all faculties
  - Changes in policies - reviewed all changes
- Online awards platform
  - Worked on website, funding acquired, identified features and tools that website should provide, next stage is to start web development for next year
- Peer Beyond 2020
  - Expanded to 3-day project, had 45 student presentations, \$6000 award value combined, high profile guest speakers at symposium; had first innovation day – had positive feedback from students
- Awards
  - 20 Citizenship Awards awarded
  - PDG - 100 funded
  - Bursary application - 65 awarded
  - 13 Excellence Awards applications, 7 GRCI applications, total for awards was 200,000

#### **VP External Report 19:14**

- 679 meetings attended over last 2 years
- Ab-GPAC
- Streamlined process for permanent residency
- Mental health grant renewed
  - Funds reduced
  - Will have to negotiate next year to keep money
- Postponed signing of performance-based funding agreement, delayed until end of May – don't see impact of more cuts coming at this time
- Grace period of 24 months for loan repayment
- Grace period for new parents 3-5 years
- Increase student grant
- Government
  - Advocating for students
  - Many updates on the website
  - Emergency response benefit increased eligibility criteria

- Emergency student bursary was announced
- Tri-council extensions for grants and scholarships, not sure of details, waiting for gov't
- SIN renewal process for international students
- Pause on loan repayment
- U of C
  - Parking fees waived for the period for all campuses and residence
  - Residence and housing students will be able to continue living there
  - Changed move out policy, students who will move out in the next few months will only pay for the time they will be living there, can cancel agreement
  - GAT funds
  - Recreational fees waived
  - Access to technology – university providing support for people needing access to technology
    - Reach out to GSA or provost student services if you need these resources
  - <https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/summary-of-covid-19-student-supports-eligibility/>

#### **VP Student Life Report 19:21**

- Sponsorship package to diversify income – have packages and webpages that need to be launched
- working with VPFS and staff will give updates to the new Board to continue the process
- Resigned GSA and committee agreement modified to include better terms
- Started working on Active Living draft – memo of understanding – in process, can't progress active living is shut now
- Increased discounted tickets, new events, listening to students and adding new tickets
- DGA insurance support that was \$100, provides DGA and GSG insurance support
- Will have agreement with DGA and GSG's and insurance providers
- Empower Me program introduced – 24% of student know about the services; room for improvement but good performance so far
- Strong on ground communications – Building Bridges initiative, more department orientation involvement
- Continued events online during COVID-19 – helps students
- Discounted Cineplex tickets

#### **VP Finance and Services Report 19:26**

- Four proposals, will be reviewed for better deal for investments

- Emergency bursary (EB)
  - Usage has been through the roof, record breaking year for emergency bursaries
  - Up to 1500 for people in need, can get money within week or two
  - Majority of people were funded
- New EB application – transitioned from paper application to meeting a person – financial need is a big need that might have multiple aspects; to remove bias that better writers have a better chance; will provide coaching to mitigate the emergency
- Will launch soon
- LDL losses – lost money in severance and due to shutting down in terms of legal fees; over the summer LDL performance over the year, generally make sales during the year and lose money in the summer; losing money in the summer is normal; would have lost more in the summer with continuing trend in sales
- Health and Dental – first year of new contract, will continue with same price for two years
  - Empower Me – phone mental health support and other parts of life support – nutrition, counselling → free service; next year will be paying \$7/student

### Question period 19:33

- Q: students needing to go to Foothills need a bus pass; comment on how students might proceed in terms of financial support for bus passes
  - Mo: students can use the low income bus passes – the negotiation was for everyone or nobody; unfortunately city cannot commit to anything – will try to push more;
  - Q: Is the GSA able to support financially?
    - No, cannot commit to anything right now. Difficult situation, can apply for emergency bursary; need to meet criteria; don't have budget to offer that support
    - Basem: can get passes at discounted prices if you are under financial conditions/ provide document to prove the need:  
<https://fairentry.calgary.ca/Public/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f>
- Q: Mohamed can you please elaborate on the Innovation Day at the symposium? How many students participated, how many attended?
  - Innovation Day was the third day – full day in collaboration with innovation portfolio at U of C – collaborated with Innovate Calgary to facilitate workshop and pitch design activity for students to present an idea and design how to pitch it in 5 minutes
  - 25-30 participants that engaged in discussion

- 11 students presented their work – presentations had to be indicated ahead of time
- Had space for 1 person to present out of the participants, but nobody indicated willingness
- Reps from Hunter Hub
- People who attended can follow up and get mentorship and guidance
- Provided feedback to students
- Had gifts to the 11 presenters – tickets to innovation events and innovation themed prizes
  - Not sure if event will take place, scheduled for June
- Q: Marcela, elaborate on waiving non instructional fees – seems strange that as grad student we are paying service fees, not getting the same services
  - A: some of the fees were waived i.e. rec fees, the ones in place now the university is trying to provide the services as much as possible; library staff are still paid, library services are provided

**DGA period 19:43**

- N/A

**Announcements 19:44**

- Breakfast with the Dean – May 5<sup>th</sup> – try to attend, good opportunity to talk to Dean
- Next week is Grad Success Week – webinars

**Other Business 19:45**

- Next meeting is Tuesday May 26

**Meeting adjourned 19:45**

- Motioned/seconded
- Discussion: N/A
- Opposed:0
- Abstained:0
- CARRIED