

James Steele  
VP Academic  
vpa.gsa@ucalgary.ca  
March 21<sup>st</sup> – April 17<sup>th</sup>

---

## Strategic Plan Goals

As VP Academic, I am committed to ensure that all aspects of my portfolio are in alignment with the GSA's Strategic Plan. The GSA's 3-year strategic plan 2019-2022 can be found [here](#).

## Updates

### Graduate Student Vacation

- Advocating for graduate student vacation to be increased from a suggested minimum of 2 weeks to protected minimum of 3 weeks (ongoing).
  - We have compared comparative research with various comparable institutions along with the health benefits of increased vacation and the potential benefits for productivity of graduate students.
  - Now that the research is compiled, Dr. Mary Grantham O'Brien, Senior Associate Dean FGS, and me are in the process of presenting the proposal to the various stakeholder committees seeking its approval.
  - **Update:** The motion has passed and will come into affect May 1<sup>st</sup>. Tell your friends!
  - One clarification, this should be thought of as on a one year cycle, starting in September. If you have already gone on two weeks of vacation, enjoy another this summer!

### Student Supervisor Best Practices

- Another collaboration with FGS to compile an extensive set of best practices supervisors and their students.
  - For now, the goal of this project is simply to create a reference for best practice, though with the expectation that the research will reveal policies that must be updated. I will advocate for these changes as needed, should the changes be a priority for graduate students.
  - Along with Clifton Cunningham, Associate Dean FGS, we are going the data of students who were required to withdraw, to understand what can be done to avoid these extreme cases and work our way back from there.
  - **Update:** Given that the end of the year, there has been several blind spots in funding policy that has come to light, and we intend to nail this down to add to the best practices.
  - In particular, if a student is funded through their supervisors grant, and then needs to switch supervisors, they are technically still owed funding for the remainder of their funded years through the minimum funding agreement.
  - However, this does not seem to be common knowledge in departments.

- I am meeting with FGS to go over the details, but I intend to advocate for this to be written out explicitly (rather than implicitly) in our funding agreement.
- This will hopefully lead to less student conflict regarding funding.

### **Werklund Funding Townhall**

- Along with AC and Kirsten Neprily, the incoming VPA, we have been organizing Werklund students surrounding the funding situation in their faculties.
- There are several policies at Werklund that appear to be resulting in students not getting their funding, or not understanding what is needed to get their funding.
- We have organized two townhalls to hear students concerns, and identify some common threads.
- To bring this to FGS and Werklund administration, we will be distributing an anonymous survey, so that Werklund students can voice their concerns, while remaining anonymous.
- This will give us data to bring to the administration and hopefully change these policies for the better.

### **Personal Advocacy**

- Throughout the year, I advocate for individual students and help guide them through any academic difficulties they might be encountering. This can include trouble with a supervisor or an instructor but can take many shapes.
- If you or someone you know requires assistance related to such matters, please feel free to contact me; no problem is too small, and I meet with multiple students each week.

### **Committees**

- I sit as the graduate student representative on various committees. If you have concerns that you want heard, please let me know and I will be sure to voice them at the appropriate meeting.

### **Academic Support Committee**

- The Academic Support Committee is hosting a Grant Writing Workshop, run by Mitacs, Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.
- Come by to enjoy some pizza and refreshments, and get ready for Grant Writing season!

### **Improving Our System for Distributing Awards**

- Over the past year, the GSA has seen a near %150 increase in the number of awards applications that come through the awards committee, on top of last year already being a record year for applications.
- To be clear, our Awards Committee is truly amazing this year, and its senior leadership team of Leah, Sai, and Cabrini have been working way more hours than they signed up for to ensure that the committee can still process and distribute awards in an equitable and expedient fashion.
- However, the current reality is unsustainable, as it is asking too much of our graduate student volunteers.

- For the time being, we have asked staff members to step in to fill in the gaps and shift some of the work from the SLT. Special shoutout to Taruneesh, Allie, and Jaime for this.
- To fix the process for the future, we are currently implementing the following:
  - Increase honorariums for SLT to more adequately reflect the work they are doing.
  - I am in talks with Blackbaud, our service provides and host of the GSA Awards platform, to see what can be done to expedite the process. There are several tasks that currently requires a substantial amount of manual labour to complete, however should theoretically be able to at least be partially automated.
  - What cannot be automated, I am working to streamline the award applications so that they might require less manual labour to review (e.g., moving away from spreadsheets, making questions more concise, etc.).
  - In addition, we hope to increase the committee members for next year, hoping that we will receive 85-100 committee members, up from the 75 committee members sitting this year.
  - Furthermore, we may make the staff involvement permanent, so that the SLT can focus on governance of the committee.
- **Update:**
  - I am currently working on redesigning the largest awards to make the process more manageable.
  - This includes the Bursary and the Professional Development Grant.
  - I will be handing this off to the next VPA to make the final call.

### **Awards Update**

- We have now adjudicated all remaining awards for the 2022/2023 academic year!
- This comes after the awards committee adjudicated the final awards of the year, being the GSA Excellence Awards, and the board has decided on the Leadership, Emerging Leader, and non-monetary year end awards.
- The winners of this award will be announced at the Awards Gala on April 26<sup>th</sup> and will be posted to the GSA website soon afterwards.

### **Course Feedback Implementation Working Group**

- Over the past year, myself and Keira Gunn have represented graduate students on this working group to come up with a course feedback system to replace the problematic USRIs.
- That system will be replaced by the Explorance Blue platform, that will hopefully boost engagement with course feedback and create a more equitable environment in these evaluations.
- We are currently finalizing our recommendations for the implementation of this system. If you have any suggestions for this implementation, please let myself or Keira know.

Total Hours  
Meeting: 52  
Events: 25  
Others: 51  
Total: 128  
Average per week: 32

## Meetings Attended

| Meeting name                             | Date     |
|--|----------|
| BoD Meeting                              | March 22 |
| Werklund Townhall planning               | March 22 |
| Awards Mtg                               | March 23 |
| Awards SLT Mtg                           | March 23 |
| Werklund Funding Towhall                 | March 23 |
| BOG Introduction                         | March 24 |
| Advocacy Huddle                          | March 24 |
| Student Meeting                          | March 24 |
| Student Meeting                          | March 24 |
| SU Day of Action                         | March 27 |
| Mtg with FGS, re. supervisor conflict    | March 27 |
| Student Meeting                          | March 27 |
| Volunteer Appreciation Event             | March 27 |
| Conflict Styles Workshop                 | March 28 |
| Mtg with FGS, re. supervisor conflict    | March 28 |
| BOD Meeting                              | March 29 |
| TFCC Discussion with University SLT      | March 29 |
| Student Meeting                          | March 29 |
| Werklund Townhall planning               | March 29 |
| Awards meeting                           | March 30 |
| Student Meeting                          | March 30 |
| Learning Technologies Advisory Committee | March 30 |
| Werklund Funding Townhall                | March 30 |
| NanoTech Networking Event                | March 31 |
| Board lunch                              | April 1  |
| Meeting with FGS                         | April 4  |
| BOD Meeting                              | April 5  |

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Meeting with FGS re supervisor conflict</b> | April 5  |
| <b>Rachel Notley SU Event</b>                  | April 5  |
| <b>GSA Staff Board Meeting</b>                 | April 6  |
| <b>Excellence Awards adjudication Mtg</b>      | April 11 |
| <b>BOD Meeting</b>                             | April 12 |
| <b>Associate Deans' (Research) Council</b>     | April 12 |
| <b>Student Meeting</b>                         | April 13 |
| <b>President's Award Adjudication</b>          | April 14 |
| <b>Meeting FGS</b>                             | April 14 |
| <b>Student Meeting</b>                         | April 14 |
| <b>Student Meeting</b>                         | April 14 |
| <b>Student Meeting</b>                         | April 14 |
| <b>GSA Board Retreat</b>                       | April 17 |
| <b>President's Award Adjudication (Final)</b>  | April 17 |

A.C. Cameron  
VP External  
[vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca)  
[Date Range: Mar 21<sup>st</sup> – Apr 17<sup>th</sup> ]

---

## Strategic Plan Goals

As VP External, I am committed to ensure that all aspects of my portfolio are in alignment with the GSA's Strategic Plan. The GSA's 3-year strategic plan 2019-2022 can be found [here](#).

## Announcements

- **Advocacy Policy Statement (Funding)** – myself and Andrew (Advocacy Advisor) have drafted a **Policy Statement** concerning our research and proposed recommendations for provincial funding of post-secondary institutions. The document is included in this month's GRC package. We will be voting to approve this at the April GRC. Please review and email me with any questions / comments / amendments to this document.
- The **NDP have announced their platform for post-secondary**, which includes:
  - Tuition freeze to 2022-23 levels creation of student consultation council
  - Canceling performance-based funding and reviewing the funding structure in full
  - Housing supports (Notley's assistant gave me her card to chat food-housing!)
  - Mental health supports (5 free sessions), antiracism, inclusivity, [and more!](#)
- **Support Our Science** has called a national day of action (May 1) in response to the lack of funding for graduate and postdoctoral researchers in the most recent federal budget. Details at their website. **Please note**— if you are academically employed (GAT, RA, GANT), your employment rights and responsibilities are detailed in your **collective agreement**. I strongly advise you contact your AVP-Labour ([lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca)) for more information about your rights if you are planning to participate in the day of action.

## Improving Advocacy (External Partners)

### Gauging Priorities of Members

- Advocacy Priorities Survey closing in April. This will guide the advocacy our team does over the summer and into the next year. Please encourage the rest of your DGA (all students in your department) to complete. [Link here](#).
- Is there something you'd like to see us advocate for that isn't included? Get in touch!

## CASA Membership

### Successful AGM

Awarded "CASA's Advocacy Expert" by membership 😊

#### Federal Policy Committee (FPC)

- 21 policy updates passed at the (AGM), March 21-25
- Food -Housing Security paper in draft, looking at a release later this year.

#### Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC)

- Networking through the wide undergraduate network in CASA, arranging chats with other GSA's to build solidarity for better graduate funding, and with [SoS](#).

### **ab-GPAC Membership**

- We are part of the *CAUS Get Out the Vote campaign* and looking for canvassing teams.

### **Building the UCGSA Advocacy Policy Manual Library**

- Creating a library of advocacy policy statements to guide our meetings with MLAs and stakeholders, based on the policy manual we've seen be so effective at CASA.
- First policy on Provincial Funding for Post Secondary Institutions drafted: in-package.

### **Invited to the SU Leader's Town Hall: Q&A with Rachel Notley**

- NDP have announced their platform for post-secondary funding, including:
  - Tuition freeze to 2022-23 levels creation of student consultation council
  - Canceling performance-based funding and reviewing the funding structure in full
  - Housing supports (Notley's assistant gave me her card to chat food-housing!)
  - Mental health supports (5 free sessions), antiracism, inclusivity, [and more!](#)
- SU had asked us for questions in advance and we supplied a short list of graduate related questions, including questions about: restoring the Campus Alberta Grant, improving student consultation, eliminating performance-based metrics, creating freedom of association for academically employed graduate students. Most of these answered in advance by their platform. We asked on the floor about what supports the NDP plan to offer graduate students, given that federal funding has been stagnant since 2003, and that we are the largest users of the SU food Bank.

### **Calgary Student Alliance Membership -- UPass**

- Quiet lately. Cam has stepped in to help with UPass, is coordinating with the SU.

### **City Council Follow-Up from the SU Leader's Dinner – Housing and Transit**

- Meeting scheduled with Councilor Penner for early May;
- Meeting pending with Councilor Mian as well.

### **Collaborative Opportunity – AFL, ATA.**

- The Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) has launched community action teams in preparation for the upcoming Alberta election. They are willing to work with us and maybe the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) on a joint rally for education, in advance of the election. I would need volunteers to help coordinate this, [please email to sign up](#).

### **Lobby Document (in partnership with PSAC)**

- In solidarity with student groups and associations across the province, we have compiled a lobby document that overviews our concerns and priorities. Plan is to submit to both major parties in advance of the election and request a formal response.
- Document lists our concerns along:
  - Skyrocketing tuition
  - Food insecurity
  - Inadequate provincial funding
  - Unaffordable and unavailable housing
  - Cuts and treatment of non-academic staff
  - Stagnant funding of academic labour.



## Advocacy: Local and On-Campus Initiatives

### Food-Housing (ad-hoc) Working Group

- Aims to help improve housing/food-access, literacy, and/or partnerships in the city, and to expand the [GSA's Food-Housing Website](#).
- Working on a food-housing assessment survey to understand the roots of the issue.
  - This survey will help us guide funding that is available to us for food-security initiatives through Nourish 2 Flourish. This assessment aims to research fine details of the food-housing experience, including safety of residence and access to foods; needs ethics approval and social scientists to develop and analyze.
  - Denied our Quality Money application to hire grad students for GANT positions, looking for other funding options.
- Coordinating with Food Justice Now, and Nourish 2 Flourish on a proposal to launch a food literacy hub, including a standing low-cost market on campus and low-cost meals.
  - Met with Ancillary Services to explore options for spaces. Suggested we might lease the Nest in Crowsnest hall for a vendor/market space. Reaching out to current lease holder to get a sense of costs and timelines.
- **Membership resets end of the month. Will be looking for new members in May.**

### Nourish to Flourish Working Group

- Four task teams: I'm engaged with the meal access and food security framework teams. Work along both are joint with our GSA Food-Housing WG, updates above.
- **Communications and Food-Literacy:** Wellness centre presented on their most recent campus community wellbeing survey, which includes a module on food-security. Notable takeaways include:
  - Survey is run Canada-wide, through an ethics-approved sample size. 25% of sample responded (over 1000 from UCalgary). Comparisons exist within U15.
  - Data shows we have similar rates of food insecurity to other U15 overall; however, UCalgary sees double the U15 rates of students cutting meal size or skipping meals due to lack of funds (almost half of our respondents!).
- Free meals group working with the GSA Food-Housing, Food Justice Now, and Faith and Spirituality Centre. looking to connect with the SU on a meal space on campus.
- Framework team is exploring the PUSH framework to assist with Times Higher Ed. reporting measures that UCalgary already does through the Office of Sustainability.

### Advocacy Engagement Working Group

- **Calling out for departmental representatives!** Please designate an organizer from your DGA (could be yourself as a GRC rep, or someone else, ideally on your DGA executive team) to join the Advocacy Engagement Working Group as a LOUD-Department Representative. Ideal candidates are comfortable raising political issues in their department, and have a strong desire to improve the graduate student experience. Familiarity with the Canadian governmental system is an asset, but not outright required; we can always learn. I recommend DGAs elect this position at the same time as the rest of their executive, and possibly create a position in their bylaws/constitution. Please email [vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca) with any questions.
- [Sign up for the LOUD Mailing List!](#)



### **LOUD-Series**

- “Let’s Organize University Departments” (LOUD) is taking roots in Werklund as students are calling for improved funding regulations. Myself and some other Board Members are coordinating with some members from GPESA and the GLU-Stewards network to mobilize knowledge of their funding agreement throughout their departments.
- Held a town hall March 30<sup>th</sup> with good turnout and engagement from participants. Looking to be a resource hub for WSE in this space, help the members advocate for themselves.

### **Improving Service Delivery**

#### **Emergency Housing Support**

- Housing shortage likely pending for the fall term.
- Lead for on-campus resources shifted to GSA – Housing taskforce (Pres, VPSL).

#### **GSA’s Food-Housing Website ([link here](#))**

- Website live, needs some volunteers to update. Join the Food-Housing Working Group!

#### **Pitched Empathy Circles to the Wellness Centre ([link here](#))**

- A practice to help facilitate active listening, aimed at having participants feel heard.
- Edwin at the Wellness Centre connecting with other groups on campus who may be interested in engaging with this practice. Looking to follow up over the spring.

### **Improving Communication**

#### **Advocacy Blog**

- Working with Thao (Communications Manager) to think of more engaging platforms.
- **Question:** How would you like to receive updates and advocacy-related information?

### **Improving Organization Sustainability**

#### **TFCC**

- The SU share my recommendations for how to improve student consultation timelines in TFCC next year. Provost’s team are meeting with the SU and GSA separately, so extra work to be done to

### **Other Accomplishments**

#### **Food-Security Networking.**

- Senate and Alumni associations have noted their increasing attention to food-security attributed in-part to my frequent reminders of the gravity of this issue for graduate students. Representatives would like to set up standing coffee chats for action plans.

### **FYI & Highlights**

#### **[Grad Snacks Program](#) Launched at Foothills Campus!**

#### **Danielle Smith is currently residing as Premier.**

### Bills 17 and 32

- Both remain in effect. See your AVP-Labour for more information.

### Support Our Science – [Letter Campaign](#)

- Tri-Council Awards values haven't increased since 2003. These used to be prestigious and sufficient monies to live off of, but cost of living has caught up if not more.
- Support our Sciences is a movement calling for restored fundings of these awards.

### \*How to move the GSA as an Organization

- As an organization, our definitions, protocols, and procedures are given in [our Bylaws](#).
- The GSA is made of “active membership”, meaning all graduate students currently enrolled at UCalgary. Every active member is automatically a member of their respective departmental graduate association/consortium. Each department elects their representative to correspond with the executive Board through the GRC.

#### Graduate Representative Council (GRC)

- The GRC has authority over priorities and focal points of the Board.
- GRC generally follows [Roberts Rules of Order](#).
- The Board must abide by motions tabled and passed at GRC meetings. If there is something you would like the Board to do, you need to table and pass a motion at GRC.

#### As a departmental graduate association (DGA) or consortium

- Your departmental association/consortium is governed by your internal constitution/bylaws. Ask your DGA exec where you can find these posted.
- Your DGA is free to endorse/act in solidarity

#### As an individual or self-assembled collective

- You are free to act so long as you remain in the [University's Policies and Procedures](#).

### Total Hours (all-in-all)

Meeting: 658 + 45

Research: 178 + 10

Communications: 259 + 15

Events and Other: 278 + 57

*Total: 1373 + 127 = 1500*

**Average per week: 34 hrs overall.**

### Meetings Attended

Please refer to my Board Reports for finer details and internal meetings.

| Meeting name                     | Day of the Week | Date                                    |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| CASA AGM                         |                 | Mar 21 <sup>st</sup> - 25 <sup>th</sup> |
| GSA Volunteer Appreciation Event |                 | Mar 27 <sup>th</sup>                    |
| GRC Meeting                      |                 | Mar 28 <sup>th</sup>                    |
| GSA Board Meeting                |                 | Mar 29 <sup>th</sup>                    |

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| <b>LOUD Huddle - Werklund</b>                       | Mar 29 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Nourish 2 Flourish</b>                           | Mar 30 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>AB Solidarity Meeting</b>                        | Mar 30 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>LOUD – Werklund Town Hall</b>                    | Mar 30 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Support Our Science Meeting</b>                  | Mar 31 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>GSA x SU Actions Debrief</b>                     | Mar 31 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Advo Huddle</b>                                  | Apr 03 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Senate Community Engagement Meeting</b>          | Apr 04 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Food Security Networking</b>                     | Apr 04 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>CASA Federal Budget Review</b>                   | Apr 05 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>GSA Board Meeting</b>                            | Apr 05 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Advo Huddle</b>                                  | Apr 05 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>SU Town Hall Q&amp;A with Rachel Notley</b>      | Apr 05 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>SU NDP Mixer</b>                                 | Apr 05 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>AB Solidarity Meeting</b>                        | Apr 05 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>SU SLC Gallery Member</b>                        | Apr 11 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>SU Huddle: TFCC</b>                              | Apr 11 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>GSA Board Meeting</b>                            | Apr 12 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>GSA Advo Huddle with SU</b>                      | Apr 12 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>GSA Advo Huddle: Policy Statement</b>            | Apr 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Food-Housing x Ancillary Services: food hub?</b> | Apr 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>Nourish 2 Flourish</b>                           | Apr 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>AB Solidarity Meeting</b>                        | Apr 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| <b>GSA Board Retreat</b>                            | Apr 17 <sup>th</sup> |
|   |                      |
|   |                      |
|   |                      |

Masume Akbari  
VP Student Life  
[vpsl.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpsl.gsa@ucalgary.ca)  
March 18- April 17

---

## Strategic Plan Goals

As Vice President Student Life, I am committed to ensure that all aspects of my portfolio are in alignment with the GSA's Strategic Plan. The GSA's 3-year strategic plan 2023-2026 can be found [here](#).

## Address Critical Barriers to Thriving

Alleviate financial barriers, mental health barriers, and other emergent barriers through service delivery, collaboration, and advocacy.

### Advocating for Mental Health

- Participating in Wellness Centre Counselor Interviews, March 12 and 13, 2023
- Ongoing Mental Health Advocacy
  - The MHWS vice-chair advocacy has been participating in following committee meetings as my delegate, advocating for graduate students:
    - Sexual and gender Wellness Week- Committee (Gender and Sexuality Alliance Subcommittee (GSA<sup>2</sup>) chairs also attend these meetings),
    - National Standard Post-Secondary Committee,
    - Campus Mental Health and Strategy Implementation Committee.

### Advocating for EDI

- The Equity, Diversity, Inclusion committee took various initiatives to promote EDI:
  - This committee's name is changed to EDIA to include Accessibility in addition to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
  - The GSA, with the help of EDIA committee, will initiate an audit on GSA policies.

### Advocating to Active Living and Athletic Committee (ALAC)

- Working on Terms of Reference for this committee to define the oversight and activities of this committee.

### Ongoing Advocacy for international students

- The Newcomers and International Students Subcommittee (NISS) chairs have been participating in following committee meetings as my delegate, advocating for graduate students:
  - International Student Support Network (ISSN).

### Ongoing Advocacy for engineering graduate students to Schulich School of Engineering

- Participated in bi-weekly meetings with Schulich School of Engineering Graduate Student Council, dean of faculty of engineering and their team and discussed:
  - Events for graduate students,
  - Workshops for graduate students.

## **Broaden and Deepen Student Engagement**

Ensure diverse student voice, participation, and leadership are embedded in GSA services and advocacy.

Over the GSA term for 2022-2023, the Student Engagement and Events Committee (SEEC) organized 41 events for different groups of graduate students.

### **Student Engagement and Events Committee (SEEC)**

- Various events have been planned and organized by SEEC subcommittees. These diverse events are planned based on different groups of graduate students' interest and enhance their student life experience at UCalgary.
  - Event Subcommittee (ES) events:
    - Bubble Soccer, March 14, 2023
  - Gender and Sexuality Alliance Subcommittee (GSA<sup>2</sup>) events:
    - GSA<sup>2</sup> Charity Drag Event – Newbie Night, Mar 4, 2023
    - 2SLGBTQIAP+ Book Club, April 13, 2023
  - Mental Health and Wellness Subcommittee (MHWS) events:
    - Pet Therapy with PALS, March 31, 2022
  - Newcomers and International Students Subcommittee (NISS) events:
    - Badminton Tournament March 30, 2023

### **Student Engagement Coordinator**

- Grad Fest, April 12, 2023
- Yoga, Mondays 7-8 pm
- GSA Monthly Board Game Night, Third Wednesday of the month 5 – 7 pm
- Strength Training, Thursdays 6-6:45 pm
- LDL Monday Night Trivia

### **Grad Success Week (GSW) planning**

- As the GSA representative, I have participated in bi-weekly meeting to help with GSW:
  - Finding speakers and planning the event
  - Promoting the event on GSA social media

## **Grow Organizational Capacities**

Strengthen organizational infrastructure, competencies, and culture to sustainably benefit UCalgary's growing and diverse graduate student community.

### DGA&GSG engagement discussion

- To increase DGA&GSG engagement multiple discussions have been held. The following are the amount of grant used by these associations:
  - DGAs used \$9000 event grant out of \$65000 (%14).
  - The assigned insurance grant (\$3000) wasn't used.
  - Some GSGs never used their event grant.
    - Some of them applied for Quality Money (QM), but never used their event grant.

### Updating VPSL Committees' Term of References (TOR)

- To enhance performance of committees working under VPSL portfolio, their TORs was modified to provide a clearer reflection on how these committees work, what is expected from chairs, vice-chairs, and the committee members, their goals, and operations.
- The updated TORs are: SEEC, MHWS, GSA^2, ES, NISS.

### Improving Communication

- I have attended GSA events to:
  - Open an in-person line of communication for graduate students.
  - Check the quality of events and navigate the methods to improve them.
- Meetings with DGAs and GSGs as per their request to assist them with their operational questions and inform them about available GSA resources.
- Advertising DGAs' and GSGs' events on GSA social media and newsletter as per their request to increase engagement with these events.
- Participating in NanoNexus conference held by Nano Group along with the GSA VP Academic to improve communication with GSA Graduate Student Groups.

### Events at LDL

- Encouraging different committees and subcommittees to hold their events at LDL to boost LDL operation.
- 

### LDL coupons for winners at different events

- This initiative has been suggested to committees to boost LDL operation.

### Total Hours

Meeting: 36

Others: 54

Total: 90

Average per week: 22.5

### Meetings Attended

| Meeting name                                 | Day of the Week | Date           |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
| Tuition Process Discussion with Provost Team | Monday          | March 20, 2023 |

|  |           |                |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Grad Success bi-weekly meeting</b>        | Tuesday   | March 21, 2023 |
| <b>Meeting with a GSG President</b>          | Tuesday   | March 21, 2023 |
| <b>Executive Board Meeting</b>               | Wednesday | March 22, 2023 |
| <b>Meeting with Dr. Domene for GSW</b>       | Thursday  | March 23, 2023 |
| <b>GSA SEEC Appreciation bowling event</b>   | Friday    | March 24, 2023 |
| <b>GSA^2 Drag Show</b>                       | Saturday  | March 25, 2023 |
| <b>Alberta day of action event</b>           | Monday    | March 27, 2023 |
| <b>GSA Volunteer appreciation</b>            | Monday    | March 27, 2023 |
| <b>Exploring conflict styles workshop</b>    | Tuesday   | March 28, 2023 |
| <b>ALAC meeting</b>                          | Tuesday   | March 28, 2023 |
| <b>GRC</b>                                   | Tuesday   | March 28, 2023 |
| <b>Executive Board Meeting</b>               | Wednesday | March 29, 2023 |
| <b>MHWS Pals event</b>                       | Friday    | March 31, 2023 |
| <b>Nano Conference</b>                       | Friday    | March 31, 2023 |
| <b>Events team meeting</b>                   | Tuesday   | April 4, 2023  |
| <b>Board Transition meeting with FGS</b>     | Tuesday   | April 4, 2023  |
| <b>Grad Success bi-weekly meeting</b>        | Tuesday   | April 4, 2023  |
| <b>Executive Board Meeting</b>               | Wednesday | April 5, 2023  |
| <b>Events team meeting</b>                   | Tuesday   | April 11, 2023 |
| <b>Executive Board Meeting</b>               | Wednesday | April 12, 2023 |
| <b>Wellness Centre Counselor Interviews</b>  | Wednesday | April 12, 2023 |
| <b>Wellness Centre Counselor Interviews</b>  | Thursday  | April 13, 2023 |
| <b>Health &amp; Dental Committee meeting</b> | Friday    | April 14, 2023 |
| <b>GSA Board/Staff meeting</b>               | Tuesday   | April 18, 2023 |
| <b>DGA engagement discussion</b>             | Tuesday   | April 18, 2023 |
| <b>Events team meeting</b>                   | Tuesday   | April 18, 2023 |
| <b>Grad Success bi-weekly meeting</b>        | Tuesday   | April 18, 2023 |
| <b>Executive Board Meeting</b>               | Wednesday | April 19, 2023 |
| <b>Grad Student Engagement meeting</b>       | Thursday  | April 20, 2023 |
| <b>30 mins thesis Finale</b>                 | Thursday  | April 20, 2023 |
| <b>Events team meeting</b>                   | Tuesday   | April 25, 2023 |



Cameron Armstrong  
VP Finance and Services  
[vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca)  
March 29 – April 25, 2023

---

## Strategic Plan Goals

As Vice President of Finance and Services, I am committed to ensure that all aspects of my portfolio are in alignment with the GSA's Strategic Plan. The GSA's 3-year strategic plan 2023-2026 can be found [here](#).

## Improving Advocacy

### Labour Relations

- Per the GSA bylaws, the VPFS is responsible for “the oversight of the LRC (GLU), ensuring fulfilment of the Association’s duty of fair representation to AEGS.”
- Please contact the Associate Vice President of Labour, Hunter Yaworski, at [lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca), for more information.

## Improving Service Delivery

### Wellness Centre Collaboration

#### *Staffing Updates*

- The Wellness Centre is hiring two new counselors:
  - One for Residence Services.
  - One for Student Success Centre.
  - Cross-departmental booking will be available.

#### *Service Updates*

- We're working on a new survey on students' awareness/priorities:
  - What services are they aware of?
  - What new services would they like to see?
- We're working on a “pro tips” guide for students:
  - Calling in for day of appointments.
  - Cancelling ASAP (at least 24 hours in advance).
  - Using EmpowerMe or PsyVitality.
  - Knowing what you need (counselor vs advisor).

## Health and Dental Updates

### *Service Update*

- We discovered an issue with the payment processing of Desjardin now that the blackout period is over.
  - Students who enrolled in January are having their claims rejected in error.
  - If you know of a student experiencing an issue with StudentCare or Desjardin rejecting their claim, please have them reach out to [askgsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:askgsa@ucalgary.ca) or [vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca).
- We have communicated a reminder to students regarding the policy year change for 2023 and encourage those with previously rejected claims to follow up now that Desjardin has their system repaired.

### *Fee Update*

- Enrolment changes started in January.
  - Enrolment methodology has not changed.
    - Full-time students are still automatically enrolled.
    - Part-time students are still automatically opted out.
  - Students now pay pro-rated fees through August 2023.
  - Starting September 2023, one enrolment payment plan will begin.
    - Student starting their studies outside of the September intake will pay pro-rated fees for their first year.
- No changes are being made to the Health and Dental plan for 2023-2024:
  - Health and Dental survey showed divided opinion. A few takeaways:
    - 61% of students want similar coverage for a similar price.
    - Students are divided on what, if anything, they would sacrifice for additional dental coverage.

## Quality Money (QM)

- We received 93 applications in three intake periods for Quality Money (QM) and have approved funding for 68 projects in a combined amount of \$208,468.
  - We have seen an increase in QM applications compared to previous years.
  - The next QM intake will be in August 2023.

## Discounts for Students

### *New Discounts:*

- Calgary Airport
  - Offering 25% off parking lots 2 and 3 as well as the overweight lot.
  - This discount is intended for GSA members only and must be accessed through a unique URL that was sent in the weekly newsletter on Tuesday, April 4.
- I will update everyone through the newsletter, social media accounts and this report as additional discounts are finalized and ready to use.

### *Existing Discounts:*

- Can be found here: <https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/events/discounted-tickets/>

## Improving Communication

### Financial Education Workshops

- Past:
  - Person Tax workshop on March 29.
- Upcoming:
  - Working on scheduling workshops for the Fall.

### Finance Standing Committee

- Reviewed and approved the March and April financial statements.

### Health and Dental Committee

- Reformatting Terms of Reference to allow for additional student participation.
- Forming an AdHoc Committee with its own Terms of Reference to assist with the review and selection of the next health and dental provider.

### ALAC Committee

- Changing Terms of Reference for this committee to include financial oversight of athletic and active living fees.
  - TFCC process brought attention to the lack of student feedback available on this committee for budget review.

## Improving Organization Sustainability

### Sustainability Committee Workshop Series

- Purchased reusable cutlery in advance of the federal ban on single-use plastic taking effect in January 2024.
  - Planning to use the cutlery for promotional purposes as well as a prize or gift for those helping the Sustainability Committee.
- Please contact the SC Chair, Sandra Moses, at [sustain.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:sustain.gsa@ucalgary.ca) for more information.

## Total Hours

Meetings: 31

Other: 54

Total: 85

Average per week: 21.25

## Meetings Attended

| Meeting name                 | Day of the Week | Date     |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Executive Board Meeting      | Wednesday       | March 29 |
| Personal Tax Workshop        | Wednesday       | March 29 |
| FGSC Executive               | Thursday        | March 30 |
| FSC Meeting                  | Friday          | March 31 |
| SAIT H&D Meeting             | Monday          | April 3  |
| Indigenous Lecture Series    | Tuesday         | April 4  |
| Executive Transition Meeting | Tuesday         | April 4  |
| Executive Board Meeting      | Wednesday       | April 5  |
| ENTI Advising                | Thursday        | April 6  |
| GSA Meeting                  | Thursday        | April 6  |
| Executive Board Meeting      | Wednesday       | April 12 |
| SEDV Meeting                 | Wednesday       | April 12 |
| FGS Meeting                  | Thursday        | April 13 |
| H&D RFP Meeting              | Friday          | April 14 |
| H&D Committee Meeting        | Friday          | April 14 |
| GSA Meeting                  | Tuesday         | April 18 |
| Executive Board Meeting      | Wednesday       | April 19 |
| Food/Housing Meeting         | Thursday        | April 20 |
| FSC Meeting                  | Monday          | April 24 |
| GRC Meeting                  | Tuesday         | April 25 |