



**GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION
GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, May 31, 2022, 5:30 PM MT**

Attendees:

Saaka Sulemana Saaka, President
James Steele, VP Academic
Alex Cameron, VP External
Masume Akbari, VP Student Life
Cameron Armstrong, VP Finances & Services
Keira Gunn, AVP Labour
Brett Nelson, Speaker
Quinn Goddard, Clerk

Quorum

(entered after the meeting from the sign-in list)

May 2022 GRC Meeting Minutes

Meeting began and online sign-in [5:30PM]

Territorial Acknowledgement – Saaka Sulemana Saaka [5:32PM]

Approval of the Agenda [5:34 pm]

Moved – Jasper Greysson-Wong
Seconded – Nick Barry-Hallee
Discussion N/A
CARRIED (86% in favour)

Approval of April 2022 Minutes [5:35PM]

Moved – Jasper Greysson-Wong
Seconded – Rachelle Drummond
Discussion N/A
CARRIED (82% in favour)

2022-2025 Strategic Plan (GRC engagement session) – Sherry Choma [5:37PM]

- Creating renewed 3-year plan for GSA (working from now until December 2022)
 - o Set high-level priorities and objectives for GSA for Jan 2023-Dec 2025
 - o Implementation and Monitoring plans
 - o Aims to strengthen impact of GSA's work (intentional commitment, appropriate priorities, aligned resources)
- Choma's role is to facilitate, hear from graduate students
 - o Three phase process
 - Phase 1: Organizational Assessment & Environmental Scan

- Understand what this means from diversity of perspectives
 - Get input from GSA survey results, and other future opportunities for graduate students to provide input
 - Phase 2: Strategic Plan
 - Where should the GSA go and why?
 - What should the GSA focus on in 2023-2025?
 - Phase 3: Implementation and monitoring plan
- During the session, GRC meeting attendees were asked to provide responses to the following two questions via a shared whiteboard on Zoom
 - (i) *what does the GSA do well?* Some prevalent responses:
 - Last Defence Lounge (LDL)
 - Peer Beyond conference
 - Advocacy (for graduate student pay, health and safety of graduate students during COVID, etc.)
 - Communication
 - Diverse representation
 - Fiscal transparency and responsibility
 - Opportunities for student involvement with campus community
 - (ii) *what would you like to see the GSA improve on/start?* Some prevalent responses:
 - Better support for students with disabilities
 - Collaborate with FGS
 - Advocating for academically employed students
 - Research grants
 - Support for DGAs in addressing program/department issues
 - Events sell out too quickly
 - Provide supports for students to find funding after initial term
 - Advocate for work-life balance culture
 - Continue to advocate for fair(er) wages for graduate students
 - Representation for programs located off of the main campus
 - Better support for students in conflict with their supervisor
 - Make summaries of advocacy work more accessible for average person
 - More environmental activism
 - Food security

Swearing in of President, Saaka Sulemana Saaka [5:56PM]

Swearing in of VP Academic, James Steele [5:58PM]

Executive Introductions [5:59PM]

- **President – Saaka Sulemana Saaka (He/Him) [5:59PM]**
 - PhD Candidate in Political Science
 - Focus on direction of GSA and overseeing its operations, communication with stakeholders, advocacy
- **VP Academic – James Steele (He/Him) [6:02PM]**
 - PhD Candidate in Mathematics
 - Encourages students to joining the Awards Committee
 - Oversees supervisor conflict, research funding, issues with courses

- Academic events such as Peer Beyond, professional development workshops
- **VP External – Alex Cameron (He/Him) [6:05PM]**
 - MSc in Mathematics
 - Believes strongly in environmental activism
 - Advocate for external resources, mental health (especially concerning food, housing security, regenerative culture)
 - Empowerment of student voice, engage with DGAs
- **VP Student Life – Masume Akbari (She/Her) [6:08PM]**
 - PhD Student in Geomatics Engineering
 - Run fun events, workshops on career development, permanent residency, intersectionality, EDI, mental health
 - Orientations for incoming students
- **VP Finance & Services – Cameron Armstrong (He/Him) [6:11PM]**
 - MBA Candidate in Sustainable Development
 - Health & Dental Plan
 - Sustainability

LRC Chair Report & Update – AVP Labour, Keira Gunn (She/They) [6:12PM]

- Bill 17 (the Labour Statutes Amendment Act)
 - Takes away constitutional right to have union of choosing for graduate student representation
- GSA acts as labour union for academically employed graduate students
 - Exclusivity of GSA as labour union expires July 1st
 - There were efforts to hold discussions to see if GSA is still best choice
 - With Bill 17, no longer have ability to choose own representation
 - Outside of Alberta, any non-faculty group of academic workers has union to represent them
 - Largely represented by PSAC, CUPE outside of Alberta
 - SFU represents themselves
 - GSA as a labour union for graduate students is a relationship unique to Alberta
 - Represents 7,000 graduate students at any given time, only 2,000 of which actually academically employed
- With passing of Bill 17, no expiry date on student representative group
 - Now indefinitely required to be represented by GSA

Question period [6:21 pm]

- *Question from chat: Is Bill 17 being challenged?*
 - Possibility of Supreme Court challenge, but no challenges will be immediate
 - It will be made a priority to grant constitutional right to choose representation
- *With the GSA representing graduate students, all graduate students are represented even if not academically employed in a given semester – would this be changed if we had a different body of representation?*
 - No clear answers yet
- *Question from chat: I understand the issue but do you have reservations about how the GSA 'takes care' of workers...*
 - In GSA's best interest to have tight relationship with University of Calgary, whereas AVP Labour advocates more aggressively (e.g. can point to document with what must be in place)
 - It has taken a while to find working balance between two kinds of advocacy

- Hence why Gunn leans towards separation of Labour and GSA (following rest of the country)
- Currently have service agreement with PSAC (Public Service Alliance of Canada)
 - Intended to be the foot-in-the-door for PSAC becoming bargaining agent
 - Likely to be re-negotiated since agreement was not intended to be long term (current agreement is not sustainable)
- *Request for Saaka Sulemana Saaka to talk more about his portfolio – Anonymous [6:32PM]*
 - Responsible for engaging with stakeholders
 - He serves as the graduate student voice on University of Calgary council meetings (present graduate student perspective, responsibility to push for graduate student advocacy)
 - What does he intend to achieve?
 - Focus on strategic plan
 - Address emergent issues
 - Provide support for VPs to succeed in their roles

DGA Period [6:34PM]

- No announcements

Announcements [6:35PM]

- GSA Committees
 - Chair and Vice Chair application period open until June 10
 - First responsibility would be to recruit committee members
- Supervision and Graduate Program Experience Survey 2022
 - GSA needs help to understand student-supervisor relationship
 - First in-depth survey for University of Calgary to examine the topic
- Health & Dental Committee
 - Looking for GRC Representative to join committee for 2022-2023 year
- GRC Prize Draw! [6:38PM]

Other business [6:38PM]

- *Question remaining from question period for Saaka Sulemana Saaka: What are current goals and priorities for GSA with regards to EDI? – Anonymous GRC Rep*
 - Currently putting together terms of reference for committee, how best to structure EDI committee
 - Those who would like to participate and contribute are encouraged to get involved
 - Will hear more about EDI issues in coming months

Adjournment [6:40PM]

MOTION to adjourn May 2022 GRC meeting at 6:40 pm.

Moved – Jasper Greysson-Wong

Seconded – Cameron Armstrong

CARRIED (91% in favour)