



**GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION  
GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING  
Tuesday, April 25, 2023, 5:30 PM**

**Attendees:**

Saaka Sulemana Saaka, President  
 James Steele, VP Academic  
 Cameron Armstrong, VP Finance and Services  
 AC Cameron, VP External  
 Masume Akbari, VP Student Life  
 Keira Gunn, Chair/GSA AVP Labour of Labour Relations Committee  
 Saaka Sulemana Saaka / Kristaps Balodis, Speaker  
 Quinn Goddard, Clerk

**GRC**

|                 |                      |  |              |
|-----------------|----------------------|--|--------------|
| <i>Shervin</i>  | <i>Ataeian</i>       | <i>Civil Engineering Graduate Society</i>                        |              |
| <i>Kristaps</i> | <i>Balodis</i>       | <i>Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society</i>        |              |
| <i>Priya</i>    | <i>Kannankulathu</i> | <i>Sustainable Energy Development</i>                            |              |
| <i>Andres</i>   | <i>Zambrano</i>      | <i>Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association</i> |              |
| <i>Robert</i>   | <i>Clarke</i>        | <i>Immunology Graduate Association</i>                           |              |
| <i>Vineesha</i> | <i>Seru</i>          | <i>Veterinary Medicine Grad Students Association</i>             |              |
| <i>Kelsey</i>   | <i>Racicot</i>       | <i>Masters of Pathologists' Assistant GSA</i>                    |              |
| <i>Leonie</i>   | <i>O'Sullivan</i>    | <i>Chemistry Graduate Student Association</i>                    |              |
| <i>Donovan</i>  | <i>Smith</i>         | <i>Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization</i>            |              |
| <i>Timi</i>     | <i>Ajayi</i>         | <i>Kinesiology Graduate Students Association</i>                 | <i>Proxy</i> |
| <i>Taylor</i>   | <i>Kergan</i>        | <i>Physics &amp; Astronomy Dep Grad Association</i>              |              |
| <i>Garima</i>   | <i>Mehta</i>         | <i>Not a GRC member</i>  |              |
| <i>Raymond</i>  | <i>Liang</i>         | <i>Classics and Religion DGA</i>                                 | <i>Proxy</i> |
| <i>Joshua</i>   | <i>Lee</i>           | <i>Gastrointestinal Graduate Students Association</i>            |              |
| <i>Tara</i>     | <i>Cranna</i>        | <i>Political Science Graduate Student Association</i>            |              |
| <i>Sam</i>      | <i>Fleming</i>       | <i>Classics and Religion DGA</i>                                 |              |
| <i>Manvir</i>   | <i>Gill</i>          | <i>Biomedical Technology GSA</i>                                 | <i>Proxy</i> |
| <i>Sophia</i>   | <i>Kimiagari</i>     | <i>Philosophy Graduate Students' Association</i>                 | <i>Proxy</i> |
| <i>Cassie</i>   | <i>Holmes</i>        | <i>School of Creative and Performing Arts Graduate Society</i>   |              |
| <i>Hiyat</i>    | <i>Mitchell</i>      | <i>Graduate Programs in Education Students Association</i>       |              |
| <i>Isla</i>     | <i>Shill</i>         | <i>Kinesiology Graduate Students Association</i>                 |              |
| <i>Quinn</i>    | <i>Goddard</i>       | <i>Linguistics Graduate Students' Association</i>                |              |
| <i>Gina</i>     | <i>Vetro</i>         | <i>Political Science Graduate Student Association</i>            |              |
| <i>Rachelle</i> | <i>Drummond</i>      | <i>Not a GRC member</i>  |              |
| <i>Brayden</i>  | <i>Greenstein</i>    | <i>Masters of Public Policy Students Association</i>             |              |
| <i>SooBean</i>  | <i>Kim</i>           | <i>History Graduate Students Union</i>                           |              |
| <i>Alexia</i>   | <i>Hill</i>          | <i>Masters of Public Policy Students Association</i>             |              |
| <i>Emma</i>     | <i>McLaughlin</i>    | <i>Kinesiology Graduate Students Association</i>                 |              |
| <i>Beatriz</i>  | <i>Moya</i>          | <i>Graduate Programs in Education Students Association</i>       |              |

|               |               |   |       |
|---------------|---------------|---|-------|
| Nicole        | Sarden        | Immunology Graduate Association                           |       |
| Zach          | Bailey        | Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization            |       |
| Melissa       | Glass         | History Graduate Students Union                           |       |
| Parmin        | Dhoot         | Graduate Programs in Education Students Association       |       |
| Justin        | Nichol        | Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association        |       |
| Ben           | Peckham       | Psychology Graduate Students Association                  |       |
| Florian       | Schwarz       | Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society        | Proxy |
| Britney       | Wong          | Community Health Sciences Student Executive               |       |
| Victoria      | Li            | Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association        |       |
| CJ            | Osakwe        | Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association                  | Proxy |
| Aarti         | Kejriwal      | Biochemistry and Molecular Biology                        |       |
| Arshia        | Razavi        | Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association                  | Proxy |
| Shuang        | Qiao          | Civil Engineering Graduate Society                        |       |
| Lindsey       | Orthner       | Microbiology & Infectious Diseases GSA                    |       |
|               | Sundarapuram  |   |       |
| Kapilraj      | Jayabalan     | Civil Engineering Graduate Society                        |       |
| Eva           | Zaffarini     | Medical Science Graduate Student Association              |       |
| Mawuli        | Tay           | Graduate Programs in Education Students Association       |       |
| karina        | hincapie      | Vox Condiscipulum   |       |
| Isla          | Shill         | Kinesiology Graduate Students Association                 |       |
| Abigail       | Williams      | Graduate Programs in Education Students Association       |       |
| Madeline      | Ward          | Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society        | Proxy |
| Victoria      | Barbosa       | Biochemistry and Molecular Biology                        |       |
| Astha         | Gautam        | Chemistry Graduate Student Association                    |       |
| Tanille       | Shandro       | Chemistry Graduate Student Association                    |       |
| Cali          | Sproule       | School of Creative and Performing Arts Graduate Society   |       |
| Pavana Sindhu | Bollu         | Not a GRC member  |       |
| Parmin        | Dhoot         | Graduate Programs in Education Students Association       |       |
| Kelsey        | Harkness      | Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization            |       |
| Jesse         | Neumann       | Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association        |       |
| Shervin       | Ataeian       | Civil Engineering Graduate Society                        |       |
| Kristaps      | Balodis       | Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society        |       |
| Priya         | Kannankulathu | Sustainable Energy Development                            |       |
|               |               | Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association |       |
| Andres        | Zambrano      | Immunology Graduate Association                           |       |
| Robert        | Clarke        | Immunology Graduate Association                           |       |
| Vineesha      | Seru          | Veterinary Medicine Grad Students Association             |       |
| Kelsey        | Racicot       | Masters of Pathologists' Assistant GSA                    |       |

**Meeting Began – 5:30PM**

**Online Registration – 5:30PM**

**Territorial Acknowledgement [Masume Akbari] – 5:34PM**

### **Approval of Agenda – 5:36PM**

Motioned  
Seconded  
CARRIED

### **Approval of March 2023 GRC Meeting Minutes – 5:36PM**

Motioned  
Seconded  
CARRIED

### **GSA Bursaries Presentation [Joel Dooley-May, Assistant Registrar Student Financial Support] – 5:39PM**

*MOTION: Move to GRC roles until speaker arrives – 5:37PM*

*Motioned  
Seconded  
CARRIED*

[Speaker arrived at 5:39PM]

- 2020-2021: total of \$283,585.62 disbursed
  - o Split into two initiatives (previously only emergency funding)
    - Emergency funding (emergency bursary)
    - Need-based funding (support bursary)
- 2021-2022: total of \$514,824.00 disbursed
  - o More support being used for COVID quarantine, etc.
  - o Increase in applications
- 2022-2023: total of \$671,361 disbursed
  - o Distinct shift to support bursary
  
- See more demand for bursaries from course-based students
  
- Emergency funding: for emergencies or unforeseen expenses
  - o Student reaches out to someone on campus about situation, referred to Student Financial Support
  - o Small committee (four) does review of applications
  - o Students receive notification whether or not approved
  - o Disbursement made next payroll date (10<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>)
- Support funding
  - o Student applies on GSA website
  - o Review format: If expenses outweigh resources, have a need
  - o Only notify those who successfully receive funding
  - o Disbursement made next payroll date (10<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>)
  
- **Question:** What kind of administrative expenses do you have?
  - o Dooley-May: Only one part-time person, ≈\$35,000/year
  
- **Question:** How are funds split between the two types of bursaries?

- Dooley-May: We never want to run out of emergency funding, so we always leave dedicated 'emergency' fund for the emergency bursaries, since those have most impact
  - We meet with the GSA about allocating funds, so that decision is made in consultation with students
- **Question:** Bursaries use prompted by tuition increases, and I worry that applying for and accessing these bursaries creates administrative burden on individuals who are already in difficult situations
  - Dooley-May: Support bursaries application takes under a minute
    - Emergency bursary more cumbersome since have to tell a story for why you need the funding
      - Trying to make it less and less impactful on mental health, but still need some kind of process to vet applicants
- **Question:** Are there any plans to make the bursary applications more accessible for people? There are barriers for people who may be blind or have reading comprehension disabilities to access the application.
  - Dooley-May: Unfortunately limited by technologies available to us
    - However, often have someone who can meet with student one-on-one and do application for them (standard policy with undergrads)
  - Follow-up comment: That is great, maybe it could be added to the page to make it clear that is an option
- **Question:** You noted that there is a delay in when students receive funding due to disbursing money according to payment periods. I'm concerned that many students need it sooner. How many applications do you see where students have need for funding immediately?
  - Dooley-May: We do have the ability to give students money immediately, but this is like a loan, so then student has debt burden

### **Election for GRC Roles – 6:00PM**

- Electing Speaker/Judicial Board Chair, Clerk, Chief Returning Officer (CRO), and Finance Standing Committee Chair

[Opened floor to nominations]

[Nominee speeches] – 6:07PM

*MOTION: Add 10 minutes to the clock – 6:35PM*

*Motioned*

*Seconded*

*CARRIED*

*BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Graduate Representative Council approves the GRC Speaker, Clerk, Chief Returning Officer and Finance Standing Committee Chair for the year 2023-2024*

*Speaker: Kristaps Balodis*

*Clerk: Paulina Anaba*

*CRO: Amir Shani*

*FSC: Pavana Bollu*

**Swearing in of incoming Board of Directors (General Election President, VP Academic, VP External, VP Student Life, VP Finance & Services) – 6:44PM**

President: James Steele  
VP Academic: Kirsten Neprily  
VP External: AC Cameron  
VP Student Life: Masume Akbari  
VP Finance & Services: Cameron Armstrong

**Review of forthcoming Advocacy (Funding) Policy [AC Cameron] – 6:50PM**

- Useful to have documents to guide research, recommendations for government-level advocacy
- Document houses collection of concerns that lead into recommendations for designing policy that impacts students
- Intended to be pilot document in library we want to develop (have documents on diversity of topics, like immigration, health care, etc.)
  - o Allows incoming VP External to have foundation of research, don't have to go and do it themselves
- Most of university's funding comes from government (Alberta Campus grant)
  - o Current operating budget around 2010 levels, funding from government about 30% of what it was
    - Impacts program quality, etc.
- Some of the primary asks in funding policy document:
  - o Additional funding stream in Campus Alberta Grant that directly funds graduate student research (want it to apply universally, and go straight to grad students, not filtered through administrative expenses etc.)
  - o Provincial Government should legislate transparent and publicly available reporting on PSI expenditures
  - o Ongoing reporting by Ministry of Education on accessibility of graduate education in Alberta (e.g. baseline graduate funding relative to poverty line, etc.)
- **Question:** What do you mean by 'universal' regarding funding?
  - o Cameron: Means funding not getting concentrated in particular department, or by enrollment, but to each student

*MOTION: Extend question period by 5 minutes*

*Motioned*

*Seconded*

*CARRIED*

- **Question:** International students are more targeted, effected, should be included in 'Be It Resolved That' section (i.e. help for international students should be a primary recommendation). Acknowledging challenges of international students deserves its own line in the list of resolutions
  - o Cameron: Noted. Counterpoint: is it enough if looking for tuition parity between international and domestic students? [Accepted by individual who asked]

## Executive Reports – 7:06PM

- Saaka Sulemana Saaka (President)
  - o [Not present]
  
- James Steele (VP Academic):
  - o Vacation increased from two weeks to three weeks (joint advocacy between GSA and FGS)
    - Thesis-based graduate students year lasts from Sept–April, so they get three weeks of vacation within that year
  - o PSA: If supervisor withholds funding, department still has duty to fund you
  - o Summer student status: recent change in what means to be full-time student
    - If course-based student, may have to take additional course during summer if program does not take leave during spring/summer period
  
- AC Cameron (VP External):
  - o NDP have announced their platform for PSE
    - Get out and vote in upcoming provincial election!
  - o SU Town Hall Q&A was successful event
  - o Food + Housing Working Group looking at how to create standing low-cost market
    - Food-literacy still needs research
    - CASA calling for Stats Can to gather food security data
  - o Building our policy library
  
- Masume Akbari (VP Student Life):
  - o First GSA drag show (Mar 25, raised \$2400 for Skipping Stone<sup>1</sup>)
  - o Planning for Grad Success Week
  - o Wellness Centre Hiring Committee conducting interviews for two more counselors
  - o Growing organizational capacities
    - Updating VPSL Committees' terms of references
    - DGA & GSG engagement discussion
      - DGAs only used \$9000 of allotted event grant out of \$65000 (14%)
      - Assigned insurance grant (\$3000) wasn't used
      - Students are not using money to hold events, workshops, etc.
      - Currently in discussions as to how to engage DGAs more, please reach out if you have ideas about how to better engage students
  
- Cameron Armstrong (VP Finance & Services):
  - o Health and Dental Committee terms of reference updated to expand opportunities for student involvement
  - o AdHoc Search Committee to find new provider (i.e. instead of StudentCare) as health insurance provider for students
  - o 68 of 93 Quality Money applications funded for fiscal year (allocated \$208,468)
  - o New discount: 25% off Calgary Airport Parking

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<sup>1</sup> Charity that helps trans and gender diverse individuals: <https://www.skippingstone.ca>

- Financial education: Personal Tax workshop was held on March 29
  - Currently scheduling workshops for Fall

#### Question Period – 7:18PM

- **Question:** No DGAs used the insurance funds?
  - Akbari: DGAs said that they needed insurance for events, but not a single DGA used it
- **Question:** I know there's a cap for each DGA to access funds, but maybe we could have a trial period where DGAs that want to hold more events could apply for more funds
  - Akbari: This year funds allocated to each DGA increased to \$1300 (previously \$300).
    - When you have application system, everyone waits until last minute to apply
    - We did remove cap on accessing allocated funds though, so now you can ask for all \$1300 at once
- **Question:** Do DGAs funds expire at the end of financial or academic year?
  - Akbari: Expire at end of financial year
  - Follow-up comment: That was a problem for our DGA, since we didn't realize money was gone because we assumed it was in terms of academic year

#### DGA Consultation Period – 7:22PM

- Encourage submissions to YYC Policy Blog
  - Gets good traction, school generally reposts, can get a few thousand eyes on your paper
- Students in bio-sciences department helping to organize nation-wide Support Our Science protest on May 1<sup>st</sup> (goal to increase graduate student and postdoc funding)
  - Will be gathering at University train station, then marching to Len Webber's office
  - Steele: Friendly reminder that if you are participating, you are not participating as TA, or as part of GSA/GRC
- **Question:** When looking for funding for events, I would like document for who to ask regarding getting funding for different kinds of events. My DGA wanted writing retreat, but no support for where to ask about securing funding
  - Akbari: If want to know about any kind of events, reach out to me, but can also look at DGA handbook on website
- Saaka: Today last GRC as president, wanted to say it has been an incredible year
  - Work is not done, make sure you continue to support our team; GSA collective effort

#### DGA Period – 7:30PM

- CLARE (Classics and Religion) DGA: graduate student conference on May 5<sup>th</sup> regarding how people respond to disaster (<https://events.ucalgary.ca/arts/classics-religion/event/434931-emotions-under-duress-responses-to-disaster-and>)

#### Announcements – 7:32PM

- GRC Survey: fill out survey by May 10<sup>th</sup>
  - Designed to help improve engagement during GRC meetings, chance to win gift cards
- Support bursaries applications are open

**Other Business – 7:33PM**

**Meeting adjourned – 7:34PM**

Seconded  
PASSES