



**GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION  
GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING  
Tuesday, March 28, 2023, 5:30 PM**

**Attendees:**

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

**GRC**

<i>Abigail</i>	<i>Williams</i>	<i>Graduate Programs in Education Students Association</i>	
<i>Julian</i>	<i>Palandri</i>	<i>Physics &amp; Astronomy Dep Grad Association</i>	
<i>Kristaps</i>	<i>Balodis</i>	<i>Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society</i>	
<i>Florian</i>	<i>Schwarz</i>	<i>Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society</i>	<i>Proxy</i>
<i>Priya</i>	<i>Kannankulathu</i>	<i>Sustainable Energy Development</i>	
<i>Britney</i>	<i>Wong</i>	<i>Community Health Sciences Student Executive</i>	
<i>Pooja</i>	<i>Woosaree</i>	<i>Physics &amp; Astronomy Dep Grad Association</i>	<i>Proxy</i>
<i>Kelsey</i>	<i>Racicot</i>	<i>Masters of Pathologists' Assistant GSA</i>	
<i>Parmin</i>	<i>Dhoot</i>	<i>Graduate Programs in Education Students Association</i>	
<i>Benny</i>	<i>Rana</i>	<i>Kinesiology Graduate Students Association</i>	<i>Proxy</i>
<i>Robert Kenneth</i>	<i>Clarke</i>	<i>Immunology Graduate Association</i>	
<i>Hannah</i>	<i>Smith</i>	<i>Biomedical Engineering GSA</i>	
<i>Hiyat</i>	<i>Mitchell</i>	<i>Graduate Programs in Education Students Association</i>	
<i>Emma</i>	<i>McLaughlin</i>	<i>Kinesiology Graduate Students Association</i>	
<i>Brayden</i>	<i>Greenstein</i>	<i>Masters of Public Policy Students Association</i>	
<i>Alexia</i>	<i>Hill</i>	<i>Masters of Public Policy Students Association</i>	
<i>Leonie</i>	<i>O'Sullivan</i>	<i>Chemistry Graduate Student Association</i>	
<i>James</i>	<i>Sousa</i>	<i>Gastrointestinal Graduate Students Association</i>	
<i>Krishna</i>	<i>Shah</i>	<i>School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape</i>	
<i>Rachel</i>	<i>Stubbs</i>	<i>English Department Graduate Association</i>	
<i>Sam</i>	<i>Fleming</i>	<i>Classics and Religion DGA</i>	
<i>Cassie</i>	<i>Holmes</i>	<i>School of Creative and Performing Arts Graduate Society</i>	
<i>Timi</i>	<i>Ajayi</i>	<i>Kinesiology Graduate Students Association</i>	<i>Proxy</i>
<i>Karina</i>	<i>Hincapie</i>	<i>Vox Condiscipulum</i>	
<i>Eva</i>	<i>Zaffarini</i>	<i>Medical Science Graduate Student Association</i>	
<i>Giselle</i>	<i>Lin</i>	<i>Chemistry Graduate Student Association</i>	<i>Proxy</i>
<i>Andrew</i>	<i>Koshyk</i>	<i>Biomedical Engineering GSA</i>	
<i>Patricia</i>	<i>Fraino</i>	<i>Graduate Association of Geology and Geophysics Students</i>	
<i>Astha</i>	<i>Gautam</i>	<i>Chemistry Graduate Student Association</i>	

Ahmed	AlJuhany	Philosophy Graduate Students' Association	
Alexander	Buchner Beaudet	Biomedical Technology GSA	
Brandon	Sonmor	Classics and Religion DGA	
Victoria	Li	Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association	
Tara	Cranna	Political Science Graduate Student Association	
Milana	Leskovic	Sociology Graduate Students' Caucus	
Waseem	Shaukat	Veterinary Medicine Grad Students Association	Proxy
SooBean	Kim	History Graduate Students Union	
Melissa	Glass	History Graduate Students Union	
Kelsey	Harkness	Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization	
Georgina	Freeman	Computational Media Design	
Oscar	Tejada	Immunology Graduate Association	
Kyle	Farquharson	Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association	
Hunter	Yaworski	Not a GRC member	
Quinn	Goddard	Linguistics Graduate Students' Association	
Benjamin	PeckhM	Psychology Graduate Students Association	
Beatriz	Moya	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association	
Taylor	Kergan	Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association	
Saeid	Kalantari	Geomatics Graduate Group	
Aarti	Kejriwal	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology	
Xinyang	Liu	Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society	
Cali	Sproule	School of Creative and Performing Arts Graduate Society	
Ginamaria	Vetro	Political Science Graduate Student Association	
Akposeiyifa	Ebufegha	Mechanical Engineering Graduate Students' Association	
Mawuli	Tay	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association	
Josh	Lockett-Hardis	Not a GRC member	
Donovan	Smith	Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization	
Alexander	Buchner Beaudet	Biomedical Technology GSA	
Parmin	Dhoot	Graduate Programs in Education Students Association	
Andres	Zambrano Moreno	Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association	
Madeline	Ward	Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society	Proxy
Victoria	Rodrigues Alves Barbosa	Biochemistry and Molecular Biology	
Zach	Bailey	Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization	
Deepali	Dang	School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape	
Justin	Nichol	Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association	
Joshua	Lee	Gastrointestinal Graduate Students Association	

**Meeting Began – 5:30PM**

**Online Registration – 5:30PM**

**Approval of Agenda – 5:32PM**

- **Question:** Who will be the Speaker for today?
  - o [Saaka Sulemana Saaka affirmed he would be serving as Speaker until new Speaker appointed]

Opposed: 0  
CARRIED

#### **Approval of February 2023 GRC Meeting Minutes – 5:34PM**

Opposed: 0  
CARRIED

#### **Territorial Acknowledgement [Cameron Armstrong] – 5:35PM**

#### **Appointing the GRC Speaker [Saaka Sulemana Saaka] – 5:36PM**

- BrettC Nelson has resigned from position, wants to thank them for their contribution to GRC
- Still need Speaker for rest of term
- [Campaign speech from candidate, Kristaps Balodis]

*MOTION: Approve Speaker nomination for March and April GRC meetings*

In favour: 43

Abstained: 2

CARRIED

- **Question [regarding Strategic Plan]:** Generating these plans is important, it's great GRC can provide feedback. However, students today are facing issues, and while it's excellent a Strategic Plan is in place, it's pretty clear that what was communicated to Ed McCauley [President of UCalgary] not reflected in Strategic Plan.
  - o Saaka: I'm not the right person to ask about Strategic Plan directly. I talked to Dr. McCauley after other meeting, and there was clear attempt to take into consideration all concerns raised by students during GRC meeting
    - Many comments made to Dr. McCauley could have been said with more respect, so be respectful of guest speakers we'll have today
    - President McCauley won't be here tonight since at a conference

*MOTION: Move up Executive Reports*

Seconded

CARRIED

#### **Executive Reports – 5:48PM**

- Saaka Sulemana Saaka (President)
  - o 2023 GSA Elections
    - Thank you to all candidates who ran, congratulations to those who won
    - Need to improve election process, please send in feedback if have any ideas
  - o TFCC consultation guidelines

- Not happy with how institution responded to tuition issue
    - Started talking to Provost
  - GSA Emergency Support Bursaries
    - Only about \$10,000 remaining
  - Provincial budget and emerging issues
    - Budget does not cover all demands of graduate students
    - Increase engagement, make voices heard
- James Steele (VP Academic):
  - GSA Awards System
    - Nearly 200% increase in awards applications
    - Awards team very dedicated, worked extra hours to accommodate this
      - Working to make process easier (both application and adjudication)
    - More behind-the-scenes work will be done by staff, rather than students
  - Three weeks of time off for thesis-based graduate students should be in university calendar by May
    - Still expected to complete coursework
  - Student-Supervisor Booklet
  - UCalgary Strategic Plan
    - GSA fights for graduate students who will come in the future
    - Strategic Plan includes minimum funding increase (to become highest-paying university in U15)
      - If you would like to see these things retained in the Plan, tell them, since currently still in draft form
      - Need to fight for future students who will be affected directly by Plan
- AC Cameron (VP External):
  - Policy Manual has drafts in progress
    - Looking to do consultations mid-April
  - Met with MLAs to discuss provincial budget
  - LOUD-Werklund: making push for minimum funding
    - Reach out if you want better regulation in your department for how much scholarship you can get and still retain minimum funding
  - Work in Food-Housing Working Group continuing
  - Upcoming Q&A with Rachel Notley April 5<sup>th</sup> (hosted by SU)
  - Federal government just released budget today, down 48% (vs. expected increases based on inflation) in graduate level funding from TriCouncil
    - Join Support Our Science<sup>1</sup> campaign to help increase funding
- Masume Akbarki (VP Student Life):
  - Events: First GSA drag show, Intersectionality Symposium
  - Advocating to better Wellness Centre, Residence
  - Updating VPSL Committees' Term of References
- Cameron Armstrong (VP Finance & Services):

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.supportourscience.ca>

- Wellness Center currently recruiting for two new counselors
  - Survey on student priorities and awareness regarding wellness centre
- Resolved January enrolment issues with insurance, Desjardin's system has been fully updated
- Adjudicated final round of Quality Money applications
  - Going to update handbook regarding hiring students
- New discounts available (e.g. Opa!, Neuron scooters)
- Financial education: Job Hunting workshop, Personal Tax workshop

### UCalgary Strategic Plan [Penny Werther, Robin Yates, Kate Hamilton] – 6:08PM

- One draft of Plan created, but still lots of work that can be done
- Want Plan to be bold, aspirational
- Hope that graduate students might want to work at UCalgary in future, so students should consider it from that perspective as well
  
- **Question:** In the draft, really appreciate increased graduate student funding, for all students. Often a lot of grants available, but they go to richest 10% students, so really liked that aspect. However, didn't find anything about sustainability
  - Werther: Strategic initiatives already in place at university cover sustainability issues, and those aren't going anywhere
- **Question:** Want to reiterate support for increased minimum funding for graduate students. Worry that you say streamlining processes, but some proposed additional hires don't seem like the best use of funds. Would want to see more specifications in later drafts, and how success would be measured
  - Hamilton: Creating Associate Dean positions would be way to have connection within faculty and across faculties
    - Stipend on top of existing pay (since Dean would be existing professor, etc.)
    - Way to embed community engagement
  - Werther: Appreciate concerns about whether it is useful position to have
- **Question:** Strategic Plans are clearly future-focused, but what does the Strategic Plan do to help current graduate students? I worry the current cohort will become a lost cohort, after having dealt with all these cuts, COVID, etc. Many international students feel deceived by how minimum funding works, since not aware that tuition not included
  - Werther: Well-aware of issues that current graduate students facing, and still working to fix them. One of things took away from earlier conversations is that sometimes faculties haven't been clear enough about funding packages, working to correct that so funding details, cost of living, etc. are very clear
  - Yates: Would love to partner with GSA to see if can push minimum funding up higher. Remember we are talking about minimum funding, not actual funding. Always face dilemma as to what is most ethical way to distribute available funding. Average is still not great, but much higher than minimum
    - Regarding international students feeling deceived: agree it could be more explicit. Show students cost of living calculator, which also needs to be updated. Want more student feedback on documents
- Werther: Still want feedback on Strategic Plan, especially input from students, so please reach out

- Comment: One thing that could be done today are increased Emergency Bursaries. Investment in that would help students to live. If more investment, that would be amazing
  - Saaka: Any concerns about Emergency support bursaries, share comments, since working on process for next year

*MOTION: Request to extend question period on Strategic Plan 15 more minutes*

Seconded

CARRIED

- **Question:** Wanted more information on workshops, since core challenge students have with supervisors stems from lack of mental health knowledge on supervisor part. Should make all faculty and staff undergo mental health training. Second question: if some faculty aren't on board with shared core, are they going to be let go?
  - Werther: Great recommendation regarding mental health training.
    - No one is losing their job on how moving forward with Strategic Plan. Hoping to create greater community in university, help UCalgary differentiate itself
  - Hamilton: Want faculty and staff to be able to come together across faculties; professional development of own workforce
- **Question:** Masters of Public Policy very separate degree from rest of school. Saw that ability to take courses through different departments included in Plan. Think this is great, but wondered if students in MPP program would be excluded
  - Hamilton: Ongoing desire for interdisciplinary learning, but haven't got into details for implementation
  - Werther: Looking for new director for School of Public Policy
- **Question:** Nothing in Plan to support departments that are already doing incredibly interdisciplinary work, but are struggling
  - Werther: Many faculty members spoke up to say that they are already doing interdisciplinary research, so that point was raised. Group created to discuss transdisciplinary research, but point acknowledged that it's already going on at the university

### **2023-2024 GSA/LDL budgets for approval [Cameron Armstrong] – 6:42PM**

- Going to be several vice-chair positions, so committee member honorarium going up drastically
- Quality Money Budget:
  - More funding going towards Peer Beyond (a lot of interest this year, but not enough funding)
  - New line items like EDI Event Series see large increase, since just getting created
- **Question:** In QM budget, \$90,000 allocated for administrative support. How does administrative support fit into this when the focus is on student projects? What percentage of their salary is coming from this?
  - Armstrong: Permanent staff salaries in GSA have to come from somewhere
    - Six permanent staff members touch Quality Money in some form. Different percentages of salaries dedicated to different areas of budget, since employees have differing levels of engagement (e.g. only some work in Health and Dental)
    - Not able to disclose salaries to GRC

- Saaka: Salaries are agreement between GSA and UCalgary board, have to report on it. Goal of budget not to interrogate what staff do or what they're getting paid for, cost of running GSA has to be serviced from different aspects of income we get, \$90,000 not coming out of the blue
- Professional Development Grant budget, levy of \$5/student, awarded twice a year
- Advocacy budget: levy of \$9/student, withdrawal from reserves around \$12,000
  - Major expenses are membership dues to CASA<sup>2</sup> and abGPAC<sup>3</sup>
  - Full-time advocacy advisor and travel to in-person advocacy events
- Health & Dental budget: Increase of 9% in fees, GSA drawing from reserves to cover some of expense
- Armstrong: GSA fees cover internal expenses, levy covers external fees (e.g. advocacy)
  - Salary to revenue very lean for UCalgary (vs. e.g. UofA, which is most comparable university in Alberta)
- LDL Budget
  - Revenue budget increasing 20%, increasing momentum coming out of COVID
  - Still have a loss for LDL, losing about \$28,000-\$30,000
- GSA Budget
  - Delegate commission fellowship increased – pay student an honorarium to attend meeting on behalf of GSA executive member
  - Increase in legal fees, so increased legal fee budget
  - Professional fees with negotiating health and dental plan contract

[Requested motion for 15 more minutes of budget discussion]

[Counter-motion for 10 minutes]

*MOTION: Extend GSA/LDL Budget Approval Discussion by 10 minutes*

Seconded

CARRIED

- **Question:** What does outreach budget do exactly?
  - Cameron: No room to buy pizza if running events, or hire grad students to keep events on track, so that line was added to cover that kind of thing
- **Question:** Some line items are surprisingly large, like awards gala (increase from \$6,250 to \$13,000), and website budget of \$35,000
  - Armstrong: Need to have mobile-friendly GSA website, so budget associated with paying company for that. Others are results of it being a coming-out-of-COVID budget, didn't know how much interest there would be. Want to have enough money to have good event
- **Question:** We are in austerity times, and does this budget reflect that? Things like GSA Retreat, Awards Gala, increased executive wages aren't in line with the austerity that is being pushed on graduate students. How does this budget address shortcomings for students?

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.casa-acae.com>

<sup>3</sup> <https://abgpac.ca>

- Saaka: I understand that times are hard, ideally wouldn't want to increase anything, but have to reward passion and work that goes into GSA jobs (i.e. executive fellowships increasing, but GSA executive fellowship does not cover my cost of living, I have to take TAships)
  - Even though times are hard, can still work within our means
- Reply: I don't disagree, but still, graduate students are putting in more hours and not seeing 10% increase
  - Steele: We are sincerely doing everything we can to advocate for graduate students right now. But, have to have resources we need to advocate for students (increase budgets so can have bigger presence, etc.)
- **Question**: Possible to have only academically employed graduate students voting in budget approval, or separate their votes?
  - Saaka: GSA responsible for all finances of GSA, and graduate labour union part of GSA. Bylaws are set to not have that distinction
- **Question**: Do we have quorum? Is quorum based on number of people, or percentage?
  - Steele: We have met quorum. It is 50% of DGAs

*Motion to approve the 2023-2024 GSA and LDL Budgets*

In favour: 32

Opposed: 6

Abstain: 1

CARRIED

**Question Period – 7:27PM**

- [Cameron promoted joining Support Our Science movement]

**DGA Consultation Period – 7:29PM**

- Akbarki: Allocated event money to DGAs, but none really used it. Fiscal year ended, so that money is lost. Question to DGAs – why didn't you use the money?

**DGA Period – 7:30PM**

- School of Public Policy: Alumni channel for students (creating larger event for alumni to come and talk about different career paths)
- School of Creative and Performing Arts: Graduate student work at Alchemy Festival, and all students can get free tickets using code CYSFREE. <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/creative-performing-arts/news-and-events/school-events/scpa-2022-23-season/alchemy-2023>
- Physics Department: Got kicked out of building for being too loud, so bonding with other departments. Like to host breaks every Monday at 10:30, so if want to connect, reach out for invite
- Math Department: Working on sustainability event, contact us if you'd like to present work you do related to applications of math for climate simulations, etc.



**Announcements – 7:34PM**

- GRC Roles to be decided next month, consider nominating someone during April 2023 meeting
- Gradfest on April 12<sup>th</sup> – year end graduate party, 90s themed for all the 90s babies
- GSA Annual Survey
- GSA Food Drive March 1- April 13
- Reminder that application for Canada Housing Relief fund closes soon (one time top-up to Canada housing benefit)
- Reminder to apply for Emergency Bursary (applications open year round, via referrals)

**Other Business – 7:37PM**

- School of Public Policy: Re-starting YYC Policy Blog, any student can submit

**Meeting adjourned – 7:39 PM**

Seconded  
CARRIED