



GRADUATE  
STUDENTS  
ASSOCIATION  
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY



2022-2023 **ANNUAL  
Report**

Prepared By : Thao Nguyen, GSA Staff

# Welcome to your Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary!

The GSA represents the collective voice of University of Calgary graduate students at the UCalgary and to all levels of government.





# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

“our journey, rich with achievements, mirrors our collective vision, resilience, and the indomitable spirit of our graduate student community.”

Dear colleagues,

It is an honor to report to our esteemed members of the GRC, fellow students, and all those passionate about this transformative year for the Graduate Students' Association. We reflect on a year marked by myriad achievements, unprecedented challenges, and robust collaborative efforts. Last year, we laid a foundation for our future as a graduate student community with the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. This is not merely a document but a vision and roadmap emphasizing three pillars:

1. Broaden and deepen student engagement. Our commitment is clear: to weave diverse student voices, participation, and leadership into the very fabric of GSA services and advocacy.
2. Address critical barriers to thriving. No obstacle should hinder our students. Be it financial constraints or mental health concerns, we remain steadfast in addressing these through targeted service delivery, collaboration, and unwavering advocacy.
3. Expand the GSA's organizational capacities. We aspire to refine our organizational culture and infrastructure to cater sustainably to UCalgary's dynamic graduate student community.

The GSA represents all graduate students. The past

year posed multifaceted challenges, as global socioeconomic and political crises deeply affected our members. Our internal efforts during the tuition and fees consultation process did not achieve the results we sought. Yet, leading the GSA through these times was a privilege. Your passion and contributions were a beacon. Through these hurdles, we secured significant victories, including a \$133,000 boost in bursary funding, a 2% tuition cap for thesis-based graduate scholars, and the genesis of a food and housing task force at UCalgary.

Further, our collective efforts resulted in:

- A deserved three-week vacation for thesis-based students.
- Advocacy that positioned graduate student funding as a top priority for UCalgary.
- Strong representation for students in academic integrity hearings.
- Eloquent external advocacy at municipal and federal levels, evidenced by our responses to Calgary's budget and the Federal Economic Statement.
- Formation of the Food Security Task Force at UCalgary due to our indefatigable advocacy.

Beyond policy and advocacy, our endeavors significantly enriched student life. Over 100 events

celebrated the spirit of student camaraderie. Our initiatives for underrepresented groups, peer support sessions for Iranian graduate students, and advocacy in health and wellness speak volumes about our commitment.

The GSA's role continues to evolve, prompting us to adapt. The board, volunteers, and our dedicated staff prioritized governance and operations. Meanwhile, the Graduate Labor Union (GLU), previously the LRC, underwent pivotal transformation. Through increased outreach and education, the GLU team fortified our international students, instated accountability structures, and reinvigorated the union's spirit. Let's champion the GLU as they build momentum in the forthcoming years, especially as they negotiate the collective agreement.

In closing, our journey, rich with achievements, mirrors our collective vision, resilience, and the indomitable spirit of our graduate student community. Let our accomplishments be the bedrock on which we construct even grander ambitions for the GSA.

Thank you for your dedication, passion, and for making this year outstanding.

Saaka Sulemana Saaka  
The GSA President, 2022/2023.

# 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

## Vision

**A community of highly engaged and thriving UCalgary graduate students.**



## Mission

To ensure needed services, communities, advocacy, and growth opportunities are available and accessible for all UCalgary graduate students.

## What We Do

- Deliver Valued Services
- Advocate Student Priorities
- Build and Connect Community
- Offer Growth Opportunities

## 2023-2026 Priorities

### 1 Broaden and Deepen Student Engagement

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

### 2 Address Critical Barriers to Thriving

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

### 3 Grow Organizational Capacities

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



# A Year In Review



**\$1,122,460**

in bursaries, grants and funding

**\$133,000**

increase in graduate student bursary

**\$209,218**

Quality Money funding provided to 69 graduate student projects

**1,450**

discounted tickets sold

**5,570**

graduate students and family members enrolled in the H&D Plan

**105**

events

**275**

volunteers

**345**

graduate student leaders

**122**

graduate representative council members

## Notable Advocacy Wins:

- \$133,000 increase in bursary funding
- 2% tuition cap for thesis-based graduate students
- Peer and GSA support for academic matters
- Three-Week Vacation for thesis-based graduate students
- Graduate student funding is a top priority for the UCalgary
- Food and housing task force established at UCalgary

# GSA & LDL STAFF

|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Daniella Ikurusi  | Executive Director                  |
| Lina Girgis   | Human Resources Manager             |
| Thao Nguyen   | Marketing and Communication Manager |
| Taruneesh Sachdeva  | Executive Coordinator               |
| Jaime Garcia  | Student Engagement Coordinator      |
| Chantel Cadogan   | Finance and Accounting Coordinator  |
| Allie Bishop  | Administrative Assistant            |
| Andrew Kemle  | Advocacy Advisor                    |
| Matt Broughton  | LDL General Manager                 |
| Jim Doody   | LDL Chef                            |
| JR. Hamilton  | LDL Front of House Supervisor       |
| <b>LDL STAFF:</b><br>Brenton Leppke, Ellen Halvorson, Imad Kanaan, Cong Luo, Bailey Davidson, Mehreen Shabbir, Sophia Marlow, Chad Lariviere, Ethan-James Friesen, Lee Emma Doody |                                     |

# ABBREVIATIONS

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| CASA              | Canadian Alliance of Student Associations                   |
| EDIA Subcommittee | Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Subcommittee |
| FGS               | Faculty of Graduate Studies                                 |
| GSA               | Graduate Students' Association                              |
| GRC               | Graduate Representative Council                             |
| GSA^2             | Gender and Sexuality Alliance Subcommittee                  |
| MHWS              | Mental Health and Wellness Subcommittee                     |
| NSERC             | Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada |
| TFCC              | Tuition and Fees Consultation Committee                     |
| SEEC              | Student Engagement and Events Committee                     |



# Kudos to our Board of Directors 2022-2023



- Led the GSA's 2023-26 Strategic Plan Development
- Strengthened GSA Governance and Operations through policy and procedure review
- Consulted with the UCalgary's TFCC
- Approved \$15 000 from Quality Money to audit the GSA's policies, governing documents, and practices to reflect our commitment to EDIA

**Saaka Sulemana Saaka** President



- Submitted a response to the City of Calgary budget
- Submitted a response to the Federal Fall Economic Statement
- Participated in several CASA Committees and was awarded the Advocacy Expert
- Pushed for food security effort which resulted in the formation of a Food Security Task Force at UCalgary

**AC Cameron** VP External



- Successfully negotiated three weeks of vacation or time-off from research for thesis-based graduate students
- Streamlined the Awards Committee to accommodate the increase in demand
- Successfully advocated for peer or GSA representatives for graduate students on academic integrity or related hearings overseen by Office of Protected Disclosure.

**James Steele**  
VP Academic



- Organized over 100 fun, innovative, and engaging events with the Student Engagement Coordinator and the Student Engagement and Events Committee
- Expanded support for DGAs and GSGs for event and operational bursaries
- Advocated for underrepresented groups with the GSA SEEC Subcommittees
- Initiated peer support sessions for Iranian graduate students

**Masume Akbari**  
VP Student Life



- Pushed to have the preferred provider network public with more practitioners added for chiropractic, massage therapy, and physiotherapy
- Advocated to have the Wellness Centre hire two new counselors
- Initiated the single-use plastic elimination with the Last Defence Lounge and the SU
- Hosted 10 financial education workshops and 5 sustainability committee workshop series

**Cameron Armstrong** VP Finance and Services



# FEDERAL ADVOCACY

through partnership with  **CASA | ACAE**  
Canadian Alliance of Student Associations  
Alliance canadienne des associations étudiantes

*Graduate students across the country are being heard loud and clear at the Federal level on many important issues.*



## Graduate Student Representation

AC, GSA VP External, sat on the Federal Policy Committee and was Chair of the Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC). As the Chair of GAC, AC delivered updates to CASA as a whole on graduate students.

## Policy Development

The GSA External Advocacy Team reviewed, researched, and rewrote several policies for CASA's policy manual, including:

- Graduate Student Grant Policy
- Copyright Policy
- Student Loans Policy
- Food and Housing Security Policy

The Student Loans Policy was used as part of CASA's advocacy efforts to get interest abolished.

GSA External Advocacy Team (AC Cameron, VP External and Andrew Kemle, Advocacy Advisor)

## Advocacy Research

The GSA team worked with Trevor Potts and Rose Grant on three research papers:

- Living in the Red, a student food and housing insecurity/affordability research
- Investing in Innovators, a research paper advocating for increased funding for graduate students.

## Graduate Student Presence

As part of GAC, the GSA External Advocacy Team worked with CASA Home Office to think of ways to expand the graduate student presence within CASA.

## About the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA):

The CASA is a national voice for Canada's post-secondary students.





# INSTITUTIONAL ADVOCACY



*Special thanks to all graduate students for showing up at the Graduate Representative Council, consultation sessions, and voicing your concerns on graduate student funding and tuition and fee increases!*

The GSA has worked closely with our partners at the University of Calgary including the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Students' Union, and departmental organizations to bring graduate student priorities to the forefront.

The major graduate student advocacy win for the past year was:

**Graduate Student Funding is a Top Initiative of UCalgary's Ahead of Tomorrow 2023-2030 Strategic Plan.**

The inclusion of this aspirational funding commitment was made possible by all of the graduate students who spoke out in support of fair and equitable research funding.

**The GSA also advocates on many different other areas of graduate student experience including:**

mental health support at the Wellness Services, student supervision support, equity and inclusion for under-represented groups, support for Mechanical Engineering students, and Bathroom Policy.



## Notable Advocacy Wins





## Priority 2-Address Critical Barriers to Thriving

# HEALTH AND DENTAL PLAN



**5,776** grad students and family members were served by the GSA Extended Health and Dental Plan!



The GSA partners with StudentCare to provide graduate students with an extended health and dental plan with a wide range of benefits.

This past year, the GSA VP Finance and Services and our Services team advocated for more preferred providers, quicker response time for inquiries, clear communication about Blackout Period, and better services from StudentCare and Desjardins.

**1-2**

business days average response time for general inquiries

**41**

preferred providers added for chiropractors, massage therapists, physiotherapists



## Transition to Single-Year Policy

Going forward, the GSA health and dental insurance is transitioning to a September 1 to August 31 policy year for all students. This change will impact premium fees of graduate students with programs starting in January, May and July 2023.

**\$916,477**

Health Claims

**\$694,573**

Dental Claims

\*September 2022 to March 2023 data



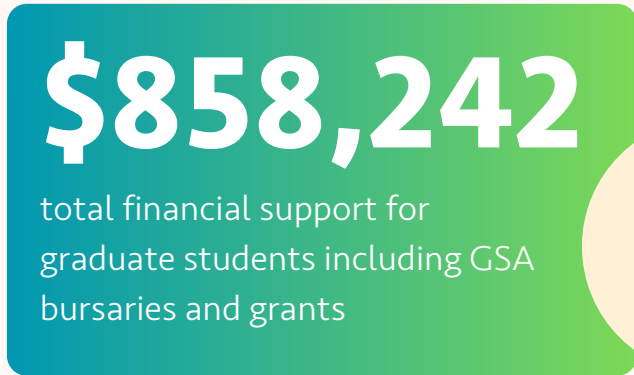
## 2023-24 Focuses

- Improving Health and Dental Services by reducing wait time for inquiries
- Launching the Health and Dental Plan Provider Search for the next 3 years
- Advocating with the UCalgary Student Wellness Services for more student mental health support



# FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Last year, we saw a drastic increase in the number of applications for financial support provided by the GSA. The GSA had worked diligently to introduce structural changes and advocate for increased funding to accommodate the sharp increase in student financial needs.



## Bursaries

**723**

Support Bursaries

**88**

GSA Bursaries

**59**

Emergency Bursaries

## Grants

**95**

Professional Development Grants

**\$57,931**

PDG funding disbursed

## Financial Education

**12**

Financial Education Workshops

**10**

Financial Blogs

## 2023-24 Focuses

- Advocating for regulations for tuition and fee increases
- Advocating for increases in graduate student funding federally and provincially
- Supporting the Awards Committee to process large amount of applications





### Priority 1 - Deepen Student Engagement:

The GSA aims to ensure diverse student voice, participation, and leadership are embedded in GSA services and advocacy.

# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Effective student engagement allows the GSA to better represent graduate students while ensuring participation and leadership are embedded in GSA services and advocacy.

### Added a Student Engagement Coordinator to support our priority in deepening student engagement

As part of the Strategic Plan, the GSA added the Student Engagement Coordinator position to ensure that student engagement is a key focus for the upcoming years. More financial resources were added in the budget for outreach.

### First Drag Show

The GSA^2 Subcommittee hosted its first Newbie Night: Drag Show at the end of March. This event was a charity show, and \$2,434 was raised for the Skipping Stone Foundation.

### In-Person Events

Organized over 100 fun, innovative, and engaging events with the Student Engagement Coordinator and the Student Engagement and Events Committee.

### Committee and Subcommittee

#### Highlighted Events

- Intersectionality Symposium
- First Drag Show
- Letters to Home
- Peer Beyond Graduate Research Conference

# 105

social events

# 1,450

discounted tickets sold

# 33%

graduate students attended GSA events

# 10

academic events

# 100

presenters at Peer Beyond

# 900

graduate students attended Fall GradO in partnership with the FGS

# 69

approved Quality Money projects

# \$209,218

total Quality Money invested in graduate student initiatives

# 2 tons

Styrofoam recycled by one of GSA QM projects

# \$2,434

raised for Skipping Stone Foundation in the Drag Show



## 2023-24 Focuses

- Engage with the Departmental Graduate Associations and Graduate Student Groups
- Engage with graduate students at Foothills and downtown campuses
- Enhance advocacy outreach via departmental associations



Offer Growth Opportunities and Connect and Build Community

# VOLUNTEERING & LEADERSHIP

Graduate student volunteers are at the heart of the GSA. Our volunteers lead our committees, run events, lead advocacy efforts, and build the community.

We sincerely thank the 275 volunteers of our 8 committees, 4 subcommittees, various working groups. You empower the GSA to support graduate students to reach your fullest potential.

275

volunteers

223

departmental leaders

122

GRC members



## GSA Leadership Award

Keira Gunn, former GSA AVP Labour  
Ariel Kim, Chair of GSA Gender and Sexuality Alliance



## GRC DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

Brett Nelson,  
Department of Linguistics  
2022-23 GRC Speaker



## VOLUNTEER EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Pavana Bollu  
Pamela Farrell  
Leah Mercier  
Colin McKenzie  
Nneka Jk-Onyeka





Offer Growth Opportunities and Advocate Student Priorities

# ACADEMICALLY EMPLOYED GRADUATE STUDENT SUPPORT



The GSA Graduate Labour Union (formerly known as the GSA Labour Relations Committee) represents, supports, and educates Academically Employed Graduate Students at the University of Calgary.



**Keira Gunn**

2022-23 GSA AVP Labour  
Chair of the Graduate Labour Union



**Hunter Yaworski**

2023-24 GSA AVP Labour  
Chair of the Graduate Labour Union



## Notable Achievements:

- Rebranded the Labour Relations Committee to the Graduate Labour Union
- Increased engagement through outreach and education initiatives
- Built solidarity with other activism groups on campus
- Empowered international students to advocate for their rights and enshrining their voice in the union
- Developed the infrastructure to give accountability for the union back to its members
- Offered 4 rounds of stewards training through the PSAC, and now have a steward in nearly every department across campus
- Brought back General Members Meetings, holding one in October and one in February. Both with 40+ members in attendance.

## 2023-24 Focuses

- Complete the Collective Agreement negotiation with the University of Calgary
- Recruit and train stewards in every department across campus



Offer Valued Services and Build and Connect Community

# LAST DEFENCE LOUNGE

The Last Defence Lounge (LDL) is a fully licensed restaurant operated by the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary, and located on the third floor MacEwan Student Centre (MSC 350). The LDL reopened in April 2022 after a temporary closure due to COVID-19.



**60**  
events

**\$520K**  
sales revenue

**6**  
student staff



**Matt Broughton**

LDL General Manager

WOW, what a year at the LDL! In February 2022 I was hired to Manage the re-opening of the LDL after a two-year closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a challenging time, wrought with uncertainty, but we built a great team, with several graduate students and navigated the murky, post-pandemic waters. After a summer of building and re-gaining the university community's attention that we were back in business, we had a very successful 2022-2023 academic year.

As we chart our course through 2023-2024, we will not lose focus on what is most important, engaging with you, the grad students. We are proud to provide a safe, welcoming and sustainable venue to hang out with friends and colleagues, host events and work.

I am grateful to the GSA, and all of its stakeholders for the opportunity to work and grow with you all and I'm excited to continue to build on the LDL's success and its sustainability within our organization.

Matthew Broughton (he/him)  
General Manager, The Last Defence Lounge

# AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## Auditor's Report



SCAN ME!



## Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2023, with comparative information for 2022

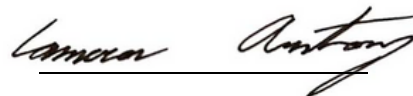
|   | 2023                | 2022                |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Assets</b>                                     |                     |                     |
| Current assets:                                   |                     |                     |
| Cash and cash equivalents                         | \$ 2,375,991        | \$ 2,143,109        |
| Accounts receivable                               | 16,722              | 15,115              |
| Inventory (note 6)                                | 18,950              | 11,855              |
| Prepaid expenses and deposits                     | 1,298,908           | 1,061,956           |
|   | <u>3,710,571</u>    | <u>3,232,035</u>    |
| Investments (note 3)                              | 2,992,109           | 3,083,754           |
| Property and equipment (note 4)                   | 507,863             | 567,131             |
|   | <u>\$ 7,210,543</u> | <u>\$ 6,882,920</u> |
| <b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>                 |                     |                     |
| Current liabilities:                              |                     |                     |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities (note 5) | \$ 208,345          | \$ 220,067          |
| Deferred revenue (health and dental premiums)     | 1,268,578           | 1,177,026           |
|   | <u>1,476,923</u>    | <u>1,397,093</u>    |
| Net assets:                                       |                     |                     |
| Unrestricted                                      | 3,095,555           | 2,823,579           |
| Internally restricted (note 2)                    | 2,638,065           | 2,662,248           |
|   | <u>5,733,620</u>    | <u>5,485,827</u>    |
| Economic dependence (note 7)                      |                     |                     |
| Commitments (note 9)                              |                     |                     |
|   | <u>\$ 7,210,543</u> | <u>\$ 6,882,920</u> |

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

Approved on behalf of the Members:



President



VP Finance and Services

**Statement of Operations****Year ended March 31, 2023, with comparative information for 2022**

|   | 2023              | 2022              |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Revenues:   |                   |                   |
| Graduate Students' Centre Lounge (Schedule 1)       | \$ 518,816        | \$ –              |
| Graduate Students' Association (Schedule 2)         | 5,342,549         | 4,736,472         |
|   | <u>5,861,365</u>  | <u>4,736,472</u>  |
| Cost of sales (Schedule 1)                          | 173,824           | 1,245             |
| General and administrative expenses:                |                   |                   |
| Graduate Students' Centre Lounge (Schedule 1)       | 390,209           | 86,159            |
| Graduate Students' Association (Schedule 2)         | 4,929,622         | 3,912,508         |
|   | <u>5,319,831</u>  | <u>3,998,667</u>  |
| Excess of revenues over expenses before other items | 367,710           | 736,560           |
| Realized loss on disposal of investments            | (8,768)           | –                 |
| Change in unrealized loss on investments            | (111,149)         | (195,095)         |
| Loss on disposal of property and equipment          | –                 | (272)             |
| Excess of revenues over expenses                    | <u>\$ 247,793</u> | <u>\$ 541,193</u> |

See accompany notes to financial statements.