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President

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January 15, 2023 - February 17, 2023

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## **The GSA Strategic Plan 2023/26, Governance, & Student Engagement**

- We have started working on the implementation plan of the 2023/2026 Strategic Plan that was approved by you, our dedicated Graduate Representative Council (GRC). I want to thank all of you on behalf of our staff and board for your incredible contribution. To that end, I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to President Ed McCauley, Dr. Robin Yates (Dean of FGS), Catharine McLeod (Senior Director of Strategic Operations, FGS), Dr. Teri Balser (Former Provost) to name but a few. We appreciate the experience and wisdom you shared as we collected plans in the best interest of graduate students. In the coming weeks, we will present to GRC an implementation plan and a template for reporting progress.
- Earlier in the Fall, I assembled a working group to review the GSA governing documents including board members' portfolios. The goal is to streamline governance and operations procedures. We have successfully reviewed the policies and recommended changes to the Governance Committee. Some of the changes may require by-law changes next year. I will provide additional information in my next report.
- As you are aware the GSA elections are coming up in two weeks. I held a few meetings on Election Engagement Planning including a meeting with the Chief Returning Officer (CRO), AVP Labor, some staff, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governance Committee. No major recommendations were made on the elections. As a result, the board formally approved the policy to kick off the election cycle.

### **Ongoing Discussions on TFCC**

- Despite the Board of Governors approving the tuition and fee increases proposals, we continue to engage members of the Provost team on areas in that we can still make an impact. Among the topics discussed were plans to improve the M.Eng program. The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Dr. Bill Rosehart, sent a follow-up email after the meeting to share with me the

proposal being considered to improve the graduate experience of M.Eng students. We are working to provide feedback on the proposal and where necessary, we will schedule another meeting. We will continue to work with the Provost team and the Students' Union on the consultation guidelines. Also, we have officially received an approval notice for Quality Money from the Provost. The table below summarizes the allocation for the 2023/2024 academic year.

**2023-24 Allocation**

		%	\$
2022-23 Quality Money Allocation			\$2,366,997.81
Tuition Rate Increase		5.40%	\$127,817.88
2023-24 Quality Money Allocation			\$2,494,815.70

  

	2022-23 Headcount Enrolment	Percent Total	2023-24 Quality Money Allocation
Undergraduate (Students' Union)	29,720	75.88%	\$1,893,071.27
Graduate (Graduate Students' Association)	9,447	24.12%	\$601,744.42
Total	39,167	100.00%	\$2,494,815.70

- The Support and Emergency Bursaries (2022-2023). Emergency Funding (293 applications, 52 approved and awarded \$49,382). The GSA Support Bursary (they received 1205 applications, and 723 were approved and awarded \$611,761). We now have \$14,933.68 left for the rest of the academic year. Based on the funds remaining, the GSA Support Bursary is now closed. In my report to FGS Council on February 16, I emphasized that most of our fellow graduate students across all faculties and departments need help. Times are complex, and we need their support, our Deans and Graduate Program Directors. I encouraged the GPDs and Deans to regularly consult with fellow graduate students in their respective departments and faculties to learn more about the students they care for and work to see them succeed.
- Last but not least, I met with the chair of the UCalgary Board Finance and Properties Committee to discuss the Alumni Association's role in addressing food insecurity on campus. As a result, he has agreed to schedule a meeting with the Vice-Provost Student Experience, Verity Turpin, and us. Once we have that meeting, our VP External, AC Cameron, will take the lead.

**Changes to academic programs and calendar**

- Over the last few weeks, the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee (APPC) has received several proposals from the FGSC Executive for further review and recommendation. Some of the proposed changes include the following.
  - Revisions to Section A.5 - Offer of Admission. These changes formalize the deferral process for specific course-based graduate programs by allowing incoming students to postpone enrolment for a year. However, tuition deposits are only refundable if the circumstances are unavoidable.
  - Second, Revisions to Section R. Vacation (Time off from Studies). We heard the presentation for a joint proposal by our VP Academic, James Steele, and Dr. Mary O'Brien to increase vacation days for graduate students. There was unanimous consent to move the proposal forward to FGS Council.
  - Finally, FGS Executive Council received and approved a proposal to create PhD in Transdisciplinary Research and the Master of Transdisciplinary Research (thesis-based). The Transdisciplinary Credentials program has been forwarded to APPC. The proposal is undergoing consultation and recommendations. James Steele, VP Academic, and I met with Drs. O'Brien and Yates at the FGS to provide feedback on the Transdisciplinary Credential proposal. Other concerns we raised were funding policy, EDIA, workload, program marketing, and program specificity. I will provide additional updates in my following report.

### **Other updates from ab.GPAC, Committees, and the Tailor Institute**

- Our advocacy team participated in ab.GPAC Advo Week. Although unsatisfied with the organization's direction, we joined our counterparts in meetings with provincial politicians. We mainly highlighted the concerns of students around mental health, immigration, and reinstating PSE funding.
- APPC approved Changes to the Academic Regulations for Section G. We also supported the Creation of the Graduate Certificate in Community Health Sciences I & II. The committee also received reports from the subcommittee, including the Graduate Academic Program Subcommittee and the Calendar and Curriculum Subcommittee. These reports were based on their meetings in January.
- Research Data Management Steering Committee. The final draft of the Tri-Agencies Research Management Policy proposal is ready for review by GFC.

- I granted an interview to a team reviewing the Global Data Strategy Plan. The main idea is to consult with key university stakeholders to understand how they collect and use data and the sorts of challenges they face.
- Learning Spaces Community Conversation at the Tailor Institute. The pandemic has changed a lot in terms of how post-secondary institutions use spaces. In addition, there is a need to adapt to the ongoing changing needs of students. Hence, this meeting was to provide feedback on how the TI can redesign the learning space to accommodate the needs of students better.
- I met with the Dean of FGS, Dr. Robin Yates, to discuss emerging reactions from our January GRC and to provide recommendations to him on better positioning our advocacy concerns during his meeting with President McCauley. In addition, we discussed the issue of funding at the Werklund School of Education. We are committed to working with the Dean and GPDs to find a proper solution. Our fellow graduate students in the faculty will participate in those conversations. On that, I would like to highlight the role of Kirsten Neprily for her relentless pursuit of the issue.
- We have invited the UCalgary Strategic Plan committee to March GRC to consult with you.

Total Hours

Meetings: 112

Events: 4.5

Other: 52

Total Hours: 168.5

Average per week: 42.1

Meetings notes: all meetings attended are recorded in my weekly reports.

James Steele  
VP Academic  
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January 23<sup>rd</sup> – February 17<sup>th</sup>

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## 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](#).

## Advocacy

### 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 myself are in the process of presenting the proposal to the various stakeholder committees seeking its approval.
  - Update: We successfully passed the proposal through the GFC Graduate Academic Planning Subcommittee, meaning that we have only one more committee that it must pass before it is implemented.
  - The process has proven very fruitful however, as many scenarios that could adversely affect thesis based graduate students have come up, and the overwhelming sentiment was to pass the increased vacation in addition to looking at fixing these problems in the future (e.g., supervisors contacting students on weekends, supervisor expecting excessive work hours from their students, etc.).
  - This bleeds well into the next topic:

### 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: We have now received the data regarding Requirement to Withdraw (RTW) and are going through the data to identify common themes that lead a student to receive an RTW.
- In addition to this, we will be using this data, along with the personal experience of myself and the Associate Dean (Students) at FGS in dealing with student supervisor conflict.
- This will look like a pamphlet that will go out to students and their supervisors making it very clear that supervisors cannot overwork their students, contact students outside of work hours, etc.
- While this will not resolve the entirety of the issue, the hope is that it will successfully curb student supervisor conflict. For instance, just informing supervisors that they cannot contact their students on weekends, say, will cut down on a significant amount of conflict. Of course, such instances will still happen, but this should mitigate the frequency.

### **Protected Disclosures Meeting with GSA BoD**

- Last month, myself and the rest of the Board met with the leadership team at the Office of Protected Disclosures (OPD)
- From my perspective, I was very encouraged by the changes this team is making to the OPD.
- Notably, any graduate student is now entitled to a peer representative if they should find themselves in an academic misconduct hearing or related hearing.
- This will ensure that graduate students have equitable representation compared to other groups on campus, as faculty and non-academic staff currently are entitled to the same right of peer representation.
- Another change they are making is to work towards a “no-closed-doors” policy with other human-resources-related offices across campus. This means that any office to which a graduate student decides to report a troubling incident, the office will ensure that the report gets to the right organization on campus, even if it is not the office where the incident was initially reported.
- This is in contrast to the current system, where if an incident is reported to the wrong office, a student is then directed to what is deemed to be the appropriate office. What this means in practice, is that incidents often go unreported as an individual is more likely to be intimidated by such a confusing and bureaucratic system. Moreover, such reports often get “hot-potatoed” across campus, with students being sent office-to-office, with no organization actually taking on the incident.
- Both these changes are a direct result of GSA advocacy.

### **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 ASC was a huge help with PEER Beyond, and we'll resume their regular workshop series in March.
- Please look out for updates for which workshops and events they will be putting on next month!

## Events Updates

### PEER Beyond 2023

- PEER Beyond was a resounding success, with over 100 presenters and over 150 attendees throughout the weekend.
- The event kicked out with an engaging and important keynote by Joshua Whitehead, an acclaimed author and associate professor at the University of Calgary, who is also a recent graduate of UCalgary's PhD program in English.
- This was followed by two days of talks and poster presentations from graduate students, with a panel discussion by the graduate students who put on "Argonautika", the year end capstone performance by the School of Creative and Performing Arts.
- On the Saturday night, we had an after-conference social at the LDL. Thank you to Matt and his team for coming in on the weekend to show graduate students a good time!
- Finally, the two days culminated with FGS presenting the winners of the Images of Research Competition, a competition where graduate student researchers can present their research in one image.
- Thank you to everyone who came out to the two-day conference, and special thanks goes out to anyone who was able to provide their fellow graduate students with feedback on their presentations.
- I also want to thank all of our incredible volunteers who came out and made the conference possible. Whether you were moderating a talk series, registering attendees at the door, or helping with set-up and take-down, thank you.
- An extra special thank you goes out to Thao and Jaime. These two worked relentlessly to make sure that our first PEER Beyond since returning to in-person modality could be pulled off. Thanks to them, the planning process was truly seamless and a mean it when I say that I could not have done it without them, and they made my job very easy.

## Improving Organization Sustainability

### 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 provide 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.

## Awards

### Awards Update

- The Winter 2023 Bursary reviews are now wrapping up and we will be distributing awards soon.
  - Please note that we had nearly 700 applications, while we only have the capacity to fund approximately 80. For anyone who is experiencing financial hardship, I suggest a visit UCalgary's Needs Based Funding Page that details other avenues that graduate students can pursue for assistance. In particular, I recommend that everyone apply for the Tuition Reinvestment Bursary!
- The Winter 2023 Professional Development Grant intake is now closed and is currently in the process of review.
- Relevant to the GRC, the GRCi is currently in the process of review. Unfortunately, due to an error in Blackbaud, the review process was slightly delayed, however we expect that the decisions will nonetheless be announced within the 10-12 week window, as outlined in the terms of reference for the award.



## Total Hours

Meeting: 37

Events: 28

Others: 41

Total: 116

Average per week: 26.5 (N.B., This does not account for time-off)

## Meetings Attended

Meeting name	Date
Course Implementation WG	Jan 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Student Meeting	Jan 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Student Meeting	Jan 25 <sup>th</sup>
Time Off	Jan 16 <sup>th</sup> – Jan 30 <sup>th</sup>
GRC	Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>
Gov vs. Ops	Feb 1 <sup>st</sup>
Board Meeting	Feb 1 <sup>st</sup>
Ext Teach & Learning	Feb 1 <sup>st</sup>
Tech Training for PB23	Feb 1 <sup>st</sup>
Student Meeting	Feb 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Elections Forum	Feb 2 <sup>nd</sup>
PB23 Meeting	Feb 2 <sup>nd</sup>
GSA Staff	Feb 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Academic Support	Feb 6 <sup>th</sup>
Student Ombuds	Feb 7 <sup>th</sup>
FGS for Transdisciplinary	Feb 7 <sup>th</sup>
Meeting w/ Saaka	Feb 7 <sup>th</sup>
Board meeting	Feb 8 <sup>th</sup>
ADRC	Feb 8 <sup>th</sup>
Board Meeting	Feb 8 <sup>th</sup>
Student Meeting	Feb 8 <sup>th</sup>
Awards Committee	Feb 9 <sup>th</sup>
PB23 Meeting	Feb 9 <sup>th</sup>
PEER Beyond	Feb 11 <sup>th</sup>
PEER Beyond	Feb 12 <sup>th</sup>
GFC TLC	Feb 14 <sup>th</sup>
GFC GAPS	Feb 15 <sup>th</sup>
CFIWG	Feb 15 <sup>th</sup>
Awards Meeting	Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>
Board Meeting	Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>
Elections Table	Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>
Candidate Meeting	Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>
Student Meeting	Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>

Cameron Armstrong  
VP Finance and Services  
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February 1-28, 2023

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## 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 2019-2022 can be found [here](#).

The 2023-2026 plan will be available soon.

## 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, Keira Gunn, at [lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca), for more information.

### Search Committee Process Improvement

- Reformatted the standard operating procedures around selection and search committees to improve awareness and increase GSA student engagement.
- All search committee postings will now be advertised through the following channels:
  - GSA volunteer database
  - SLT leaders
  - GSG leaders
  - DGA leaders
  - GSA weekly newsletter
  - All GSA executives

## Improving Service Delivery

### Health and Dental Updates

#### *Service Update*

- We have 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).

- At this stage, we know the likely reason for the glitch is around the recent policy year/billing change introduced on the plan in January 2023. StudentCare is following up with Desjardins to see what corrections need to be made in their system to remedy previous wrongly denied claims and make sure this mistake doesn't continue through the year.
- We plan to communicate a reminder to students regarding the policy year change for 2023 and encourage those with previously rejected claims to follow up once we know 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.
- Changes to the Health and Dental plan:
  - Health and Dental survey showed divided opinion. A few takeaways:
    - 61% of students want similar coverage for a similar price.
    - Students think prescriptions/vaccinations have the most adequate coverage.
    - Students want dental benefits to increase the most.
    - Students are divided on what, if anything, they would sacrifice for additional dental coverage.
- Health and Dental changes timeline:
  - ~~January GRC:~~
    - ~~StudentCare presentation and survey introduction.~~
  - ~~Mid February FSC meeting:~~
    - ~~Review of survey data.~~
    - ~~Voting on StudentCare plan changes.~~
  - February GRC:
    - Review of survey data.
    - Voting on StudentCare plan changes.
  - March:
    - Approval of StudentCare plan changes.
    - Approval of 2023-2024 budget.

### **Quality Money (QM)**

- We received 73 applications in three intake periods for Quality Money (QM) and have approved funding for 55 projects in a combined amount of \$178,063.
  - We have seen an increase in QM applications compared to previous years.
  - The 4th and final intake for this year is open. The deadline to apply is March 7, 2023.

## Discounts for Students

### *New Discounts:*

- We are currently negotiating several additional discounts for students including:
  - A vendor in Mac Hall.
    - This discount will include regular savings for graduate students as well as catering benefits for any GSGs, DGAs or SLTs that want to host an event for their members.
  - Transportation benefits
    - Shared mobility discounts
    - Parking discounts
  - Communication benefits
    - Discounted phone services
- I will update everyone through the newsletter, social media accounts and this report as 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:
  - Intro to Investing workshop on January 24.
  - Budgeting 101 workshop on February 7.
- Upcoming:
  - DIY Investing workshop on March 1.
  - Job Hunting 101 workshop on March 16.

### Finance Standing Committee

- Reviewed and approved the GSA Budget and H&D Fee Changes on February 17, 2023.
- Please contact the FSC Chair, Pavana Bollu, at [fsc.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:fsc.gsa@ucalgary.ca) for more information.

### Health and Dental Committee

- Currently focusing efforts on service repair with system glitch for January enrollment students.
  - Using student cases as evidence of customer service delivery from StudentCare.

### 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

- Currently executing two Quality Money projects:
  - Battery recycling.
  - Pizza and salad garden boxes.
- Please contact the SC Chair, Sandra Moses, at [sustain.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:sustain.gsa@ucalgary.ca) for more information.

### Single-use Plastic Elimination Advocacy

- Met with graduate student and reviewed research on single-use plastics at UCalgary.
- Met with SU to see what can be done by the SU to eliminate/reduce single use plastics.
  - Single-use plastics will be banned in January 2024.
- Hosted conversation regarding environmental stewardship at the LDL.
  - Reusable, backpack-friendly, cutlery being purchased for the LDL.

### Styrofoam Recycling Advocacy

- Presented research to the Director of Caretaking.
- Goal is to expand upon current pilot program at Foothills campus.
- UCalgary is reviewing the materials and budget to see if expansion is feasible.

### Climate Action Grant Review Committee

- Served as the GSA representative on the Climate Action Grant review board.
  - Fund recipients have been selected.
- More information can be found here: <https://ucalgary.ca/sustainability/mobilizing-alberta/funding>

## Total Hours

Meetings: 48

Other: 62

Total: 110

Average per week: 27.5

## Meetings Attended

Meeting name	Day of the Week	Date
Executive Board Meeting	Wednesday	February 1
LOUD Debrief	Wednesday	February 1
ALAC Meeting	Wednesday	February 1
GSA Elections 101	Thursday	February 2
GSA Meeting	Thursday	February 2
Binance at UCalgary	Thursday	February 2
Unlocking Innovation Meeting	Tuesday	February 7
Election Table in Mac Hall	Tuesday	February 7
Equity in Action Meeting	Tuesday	February 7

<b>Budgeting 101 Workshop</b>	Tuesday	February 7
<b>Executive Board Meeting</b>	Wednesday	February 8
<b>GFC Meeting</b>	Thursday	February 9
<b>LDL Marketing Meeting</b>	Friday	February 10
<b>GSA/FGS Meeting</b>	Friday	February 10
<b>Bannock and Business</b>	Friday	February 10
<b>FSC Chair Meeting</b>	Monday	February 13
<b>Parking Discount Meeting</b>	Tuesday	February 14
<b>H&amp;D Budget Review</b>	Tuesday	February 14
<b>Advocacy Meeting</b>	Tuesday	February 14
<b>Executive Board Meeting</b>	Wednesday	February 15
<b>Mobility Discount Meeting</b>	Thursday	February 16
<b>Awards Meeting</b>	Thursday	February 16
<b>FGS Policy Committee Meeting</b>	Thursday	February 16
<b>H&amp;D Meeting</b>	Thursday	February 16
<b>Confluence YYC Event</b>	Thursday	February 16
<b>FSC Meeting</b>	Friday	February 17
<b>GSA Staff Meeting</b>	Tuesday	February 21
<b>Executive Board Meeting</b>	Wednesday	February 22
<b>All Candidates Meeting</b>	Wednesday	February 22
<b>GLU Meeting</b>	Thursday	February 23
<b>LDL Marketing Meeting</b>	Friday	February 24
<b>H&amp;D Committee Meeting</b>	Friday	February 24
<b>MyGradSkills Meeting</b>	Monday	February 27
<b>Monthly GRC</b>	Tuesday	February 28

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VP Student Life  
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January 23- February 20

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## 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 2019-2022 can be found [here](#).

The 2023-2026 plan will be available soon.

## Improving Advocacy

### Advocating to ALAC Committee

- Informing Active Living and Athletic Committee (ALAC) on graduate students' interests and needs.

### Advocating to FGS

- FGS updated us on Protected Disclosure.
- FGS team are looking for inputs on their harassment policy report and recommendations on ways to inform our membership about it.

### LOUD Series

- Joining LOUD series to hear student concerns and help create community.

### Advocating for Underrepresented Groups

- GSA<sup>2</sup> in collaboration with EDI and MHWS is hosting the intersectionality symposium on March 10, 2023.

### Ongoing Advocacy:

- Advocating for Mental Health
  - The Mental Health and Wellness Subcommittee (MHWS) vice-chair advocacy has been participating in following committee meetings as my delegate, advocating for graduate students:
    - Sexual and gender Wellness Week- Committee (GSA<sup>2</sup> chairs also attend these meetings),
    - National Standard Post-Secondary Committee,
    - Campus Mental Health and Strategy Implementation Committee.
- Advocating 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).
- Advocating 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,
    - Leadership certificates and how to gain them.

## Improving Service Delivery

### 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:
    - Curling, Feb 23, 2023
    - Bubble Soccer, March 14, 2023
  - Gender and Sexuality Alliance Subcommittee (GSA<sup>2</sup>) events:
    - Queer Film Night, Jan 27, 2022
    - Queer Sexual Health Trivia Night, Feb 13, 2023
    - Anti-Valentine's Day Cake Decorating, Feb 14, 2023
    - Queer Speaker Series, Feb 17, 2023
    - GSA<sup>2</sup> Charity Drag Event – Newbie Night, Mar 4, 2023
    - Intersectionality Symposium, Mar 10, 2023
    - 2SLGBTQIAP+ Book Club, April 13, 2023
  - Mental Health and Wellness Subcommittee (MHWS) events:
    - Recognizing and Destigmatizing Mental Health Panel Event, Jan 25, 2023
    - Yoga & Toe-ga: Movement for Mental Health, Feb 7, 2023
    - Pet Therapy with PALS
  - Newcomers and International Students Subcommittee (NISS) events:
    - Ice Skating, Jan 27, 2023
    - Indoor Trampoline (Flying Squirrel), Feb 26, 2023

### Student Engagement Coordinator

- Lake Louise trip, Jan 29, 2023:
  - As the requests for this event was high, the number of offered tickets were doubled to accommodate more students.
- Colorado vs Calgary hockey game, Feb 19, 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



### Vice President Student Life

- Breakfast with VPSL, March 2, 2023, 10:00-11:00 at LDL.
  - If you have attended GSA Events before or you have ideas to improve student life events and initiatives in the future, I want to hear from you at this event. Attend to give the GSA ideas for future events and win special prizes.

### Quality Money (QM) Applications

- We received 73 applications in third intake periods for QM applications. A noticeable number of these applications have been submitted by DGAs and GSGs.
  - Approving the majority of DGAs and GSGs QM applications to support them with their initiatives.

## Improving Communication

### Communication and social media

- 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.

## Improving Organization Sustainability

### 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: 42

Others: 72

Total: 114

Average per week: 28.5

Notes:

## Meetings Attended

Meeting name	Day of the Week	Date
SEEC appreciation get together	Monday	January 23, 2023
Grad Success Week Kick off meeting	Tuesday	January 24, 2023
Executive Board Meeting	Tuesday	January 25, 2023
LOUD Series meeting	Thursday	January 26, 2023
Work-Life balance workshop	Tuesday	January 31, 2023

## Report to GRC January 2023

<b>GRC</b>	Tuesday	January 31, 2023
<b>Executive Board Meeting</b>	Wednesday	February 1, 2023
<b>Active Living Athletic Committee (ALAC) meeting</b>	Wednesday	February 1, 2023
<b>GSA Elections 101</b>	Thursday	February 1, 2023
<b>GSA Board/Staff meeting</b>	Thursday	February 1, 2023
<b>SEEC #5 meeting</b>	Thursday	February 1, 2023
<b>MHWS Yoga event</b>	Tuesday	February 7, 2023
<b>Executive Board Meeting</b>	Wednesday	February 8, 2023
<b>GSA Executive team meeting with FGS dean</b>	Friday	February 10, 2023
<b>DGA food drive meeting</b>	Friday	February 10, 2023
<b>Peer Beyond</b>	Saturday	February 11, 2023
<b>Peer Beyond</b>	Sunday	February 12, 2023
<b>Executive Board Meeting</b>	Wednesday	February 15, 2023
<b>Engineering Grad Student Engagement meeting</b>	Thursday	February 16, 2023
<b>Award Committee Chairs Honorarium discussion</b>	Thursday	February 16, 2023
<b>Elections Booth</b>	Thursday	February 16, 2023
<b>FGS Council meeting</b>	Thursday	February 16, 2023
<b>Grad Success bi-weekly meeting</b>	Tuesday	February 21, 2023
<b>Executive Board Meeting</b>	Wednesday	February 22, 2023
<b>Health &amp; Dental Committee meeting</b>	Friday	February 24, 2023
<b>MyGradSkills Meeting</b>	Monday	February 27, 2023
<b>GRC</b>	Tuesday	February 28, 2023

A.C. Cameron  
VP External  
[vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca)  
[Date Range: Jan 21<sup>st</sup> – Feb 20<sup>th</sup> ]

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## 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](#).

## Improving Advocacy (External Partners)

### Gauging Priorities of Members

- Advocacy Priorities Survey has remained open; we are looking to create a report. Please encourage the rest of your DGA (all students in your department) to complete. [Link here](#).

### CASA Membership

#### Policy Updates!

Post-adv-week, looking to continue updating CASA's policy manual, in prep for AGM

#### Federal Policy Committee (FPC)

- 21 policy updates coming forward at the annual general meeting (AGM) in March
- Andrew and I invited to update one of CASA's white papers for AGM; we've opted to help with the Investing in Innovators paper, calling for improved research funding, including supports to offset the indirect costs of research.

#### Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC)

- Connected with [Support our Sciences \(SoS\)](#), looking to collaborate.
- SoS is calling for an increase to the Tri-council scholarships (CGS-M, CGS-D), as the first step in a larger fight for proper graduate student funding in Canada. These awards set the stage for every other funding package and these awards haven't been increased in 20 years.
- SoS is looking to build its presence at Universities across Canada; currently limited by low volunteer capacity, but still getting the attention of Parliament through open letter, petition, and coordinated rally. To get involved, visit their website, and/or reach out and I can connect you ([vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca)).

### ab-GPAC Membership

- Still unhappy with our membership here, drafting a letter of concern to the Chair.
- Meanwhile, this group is largely on the backburner.
- Motion passed for abGPAC to join the CAUS Get Out the Vote (GotV) campaign.

### Starting to write the UCGSA Advocacy Policy Manual

- We are drafting our own advocacy policy manual to guide our meetings with MLAs going forward, similar to the policy manual we've seen be effective at CASA.
- First policy forthcoming about Provincial Funding for Post Secondary Institutions; drafting recommendations, can expect to vote on these at March GRC.

**LOUD-Series**

- Launched the GSA LOUD series (Let's Organize University Departments). First meeting was a little rough – need to build our solidarity and take our voices to decision makers.
- Parallel the organizing done by the SU and coordinate on Provincial Days of Action.
- The government has responded to the Tuition Protest, we need to keep the pressure up!

**Calgary Student Alliance Membership**

- Quiet since loss of chair.

**City Council Follow-Up from the SU Leader's Dinner**

- Councilor Penner has responded to us, looking to set up a meeting late April re: housing.

**Advocacy: Local and On-Campus Initiatives****Nourish to Flourish; Food-Security Huddles with Students' Union and Provost's Office**

- **Nourish to Flourish Working Group**, revising its goals for the next year; 5 years.
- I've been advocating for the launch of a regular vendor of low-cost ready-made meals.
- Nourish to Flourish has drafted a strategic plan, with four points aiming to improve:
  - Access to food on campus (via Fresh Routes, community fridges, etc.)
  - Access to free meals on campus (breakfast/lunch programming)
  - Communication around food literacy on campus (website, literacy programming)
  - Framework and data about food insecurity on campus (understand the situation)

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

- Working on a food-housing assessment survey with department of sociology. Survey is being developed; delayed slightly by midterms.
- Connected with the founders of the Grad Snacks program (Foothills Campus), and shared knowledge of financial resources and regulations relevant to their expansion.
- **Still open to members** to help improve housing/food-access and/or literacy partnerships in the city, and to expand the [GSA's Food-Housing Website](#).

**Advocacy Engagement Working Group**

- Looking for more members! [Join our LOUD Series!](#)

**Collaborative Opportunity – SU.**

- The Students' Union is coordinating a Provincial Day of Action, late March, to call for proper funding of post-secondary schooling from the provincial government. We need your help! Register here:

**Collaborative Opportunity – CAUS.**

- CAUS has created a GotV campaign and shared an invite with abGPAC. Campaign is to mobilize students to exercise their vote in the upcoming provincial election. Campaign will require volunteers to canvass students and follow-up with texts/emails in preparation for the vote. If you or a friend are interested, please email me: [vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca)

### **Collaborative Opportunity – Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)**

- PSAC has launched their training Academia Taking Action: Creating Change Collectively
- Sessions run biweekly now through March, aimed at mobilizing student engagement in collective actions: how to have the conversations, where to find common ground, etc.

## **Improving Service Delivery**

### **Emergency Housing Support**

- Motioned the creation of a GSA Housing Taskforce through the Board, comprised of the President, VP Student Life, and Executive Director: tasked with connecting students in need of housing with supports that we know of.
- Plans to coordinate with this group prior to fall, to mitigate chaos of the housing crisis.

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

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

## **Improving Communication**

### **Advocacy Blog**

- Posting updates to the [GSA's website: Blogs and News](#). (Fall/budget update is live!)
- 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**

- Drafting a TFCC guidebook for future exec, including pro-tips and asks from prior years.
- Upcoming meetings with GSA President and Provost team to set guidelines for next rounds of consultations.

## **Other Accomplishments**

### **We are well-received at CASA**

- I've been nominated for five CASA awards including: Advocacy Expert, Guardian Angel, Rising Star, and Dynamic Duo (along with Andrew)
- Sustainability and ecological awareness have permeated into many workplans, including the drafting of a new operating policy focused on such. Consultations ongoing.

### **Senate.**

- Member of the Community Engagement Working Group.
- Student Mentorship Series coming along.

## **FYI & Highlights**

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

**UCP Responds to Student Voices – #Elections**

- In the days following the Jan 20<sup>th</sup> tuition protest, the leader of the Alberta United Conservatives announced a forthcoming affordability package geared towards students. [Details were announced this past week.](#) I'll note that this does next to nothing for international students, and still little for domestic, compared to the budget cuts and funding adjustments made over the past four years.
- Note that there was no mention of adjustments to the Campus Alberta Grant, which was cut over \$100Million to UCalgary alone since 2018, roughly \$700M cut across Alberta.

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

- Vocal around privatized healthcare; back-pedaling on her Sovereignty Act.
- Has said she will prioritize rural voices – does not bode well for education!

**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: 543 + 58

Research: 142 + 11

Communications: 196 + 38

Events and Other: 232 + 31

*Total: 1113 + 138 = 1251*

***Average per week: 34 hrs overall, (36 hrs/week in Feb).***

Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary

ES1030, 2500 University Dr. NW

Calgary AB T2N 1N4

[www.gsa.ucalgary.ca](http://www.gsa.ucalgary.ca)

## Meetings Attended

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

Meeting name	Day of the Week	Date
WSL Open House		Jan 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Food-Housing with Sociology		Jan 23 <sup>rd</sup>
CASA FPC Policy Consultation		Jan 24 <sup>th</sup>
Actions Huddle with the SU		Jan 24 <sup>th</sup>
LOUD Planning		Jan 25 <sup>th</sup>
Ab Solidarity Meeting, with PSAC		Jan 26 <sup>th</sup>
LOUD-Series: Tuition		Jan 26 <sup>th</sup>
Nourish to Flourish		Jan 30 <sup>th</sup>
GSA Housing Huddle		Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>
GSA Work-Life Balance Workshop		Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>
CASA EDI Consultation		Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>
TFCC Meeting		Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>
Advo Huddle		Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>
GRC Meeting		Jan 31 <sup>st</sup>
GSA Board Meeting		Feb 01 <sup>st</sup>
GSA Executive Huddle		Feb 01 <sup>st</sup>
LOUD Huddle		Feb 01 <sup>st</sup>
GSA Elections Breakfast		Feb 02 <sup>nd</sup>
SU Collective Action Workshop/Barnstorm		Feb 02 <sup>nd</sup>
LOUD Huddle		Feb 02 <sup>nd</sup>
CASA Policy Check-In		Feb 07 <sup>th</sup>
SU Huddle		Feb 08 <sup>th</sup>
CASA FPC Meeting		Feb 09 <sup>th</sup>
GSA Exec x FGS		Feb 10 <sup>th</sup>
Food-Housing Working Group Meeting		Feb 10 <sup>th</sup>
PSAC Workshop		Feb 10 <sup>th</sup>
Advo Huddle		Feb 10 <sup>th</sup>
Peer Beyond		Feb 11 <sup>th</sup>

<b>Advo Huddle</b>	Feb 13 <sup>th</sup>
<b>CASA Membership Consult</b>	Feb 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>CASA Graduate Advisory Committee Meeting (with Support our Science)</b>	Feb 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Advo Policy Huddle</b>	Feb 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Board Meeting</b>	Feb 15 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Elections Table</b>	Feb 15 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Advo Communications Huddle</b>	Feb 15 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Advo Huddle</b>	Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Advo Huddle</b>	Feb 17 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Food Studies Interdisciplinary Research Group</b>	Feb 17 <sup>th</sup>

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