

Saaka Sulemana Saaka

President

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February 20 – March 20, 2023

## **The GSA Elections**

Let me begin by thanking the CRO, Tanille Shandro, and our dedicated GSA staff (Daniella, Taruneesh, Thao, and Jaime) for their tireless work on the elections.

My gratitude also goes to the candidates who ran in the elections and all graduate students who participated in the elections process in diverse ways. The results, as announced by the CRO, are as follows:

- President James Steele
- VP Academic Kirsten Neprily
- VP External AC Cameron
- VP Finance and Services Cameron Armstrong
- VP Student Life Masume Akbari
- AVP Labour Hunter Yaworski

## **GSA Support and Emergency Bursaries**

As I have previously reported, the GSA collaborates with the University on financial assistance programs. The following are details outlining the emergency and support bursary situation this year:

- 2022-2023: Emergency Funding (278 applications, 43 approved, awarded \$40,792).
- GSA Support Bursary (1168 applications received, 634 approved, and \$537,160 awarded). We now have \$98,124.6 left for the rest of the academic year. We no accept support bursary applications for this academic year.

## ***Emerging advocacy issues***

- We had our first meeting with the provost team to discuss TFCC consultation guidelines. Among the issues we want to address are timelines for meaningful consultation with graduate students, sharing information about decisions around fee increases, feedback to GRC from the provost team, and thorough engagement with students.
- Following the announcement of the provincial budget, we have been meeting with political leaders, including the Minister of Advanced Education, Hon. Nicolaides, and Hon. David Eggen, NDP MP for Edmonton-Northwest, to

share graduate students' concerns and to advocate ways to make education more affordable including the need to increase the Alberta Campus Grant.

- The GSA is fully involved in CASA. Our VP External, AC Cameron, chairs the Graduate Advisory Committee to highlight graduate student voices in the alliance. AC and Andrew (our Advocacy Advisor) will join their counterparts at CASA in Halifax for the Annual General Meeting (March 20th-25<sup>th</sup>) to continue conversations about graduate students' needs.
- Provincially, the GSA is an active member of the Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC). We met with our counterparts to discuss ab-GPAC's role in highlighting graduate students' concerns in the next provincial elections, including:
  - Restoring public funding to Post Secondary Institutions (PSIs).
  - Providing funding for mental health support for graduate students.
  - Increasing financial aid for graduate students (grants and bursaries).
  - Introducing a pathway to permanent residency for graduate students.

Also, ab-GPAC met with the Min. of Advanced Ed. Hon. Nicolaides will discuss our assessment of how the announced budget will impact grad students. Our review is summarized below.

#### Potential Positive Impacts

- \$20 million over three years to address rural physician shortages.
- \$30 million over three years for targeted healthcare enrollments, looking to increase healthcare bridging programs.

#### Negative PSE Impact

- Own source revenue is expected to increase to 54% in budget 2023 and 55% by 2025 (53% in 2022).
- Government-funded operating expenses are only forecasted to increase by \$21 million annually for the next three years.
- Institution source-funded expenses are forecasted to increase by 141 million in budget 2023, 107 million in 2024, and 120 million in 2025.
- Students who receive the return to service bursary must complete one year of nursing service in Alberta for every \$6,000 received.
- The government claims operating expenses are increasing by \$182 million. However, \$141 million is coming from PSI's source funding, \$2 million is from Ministry support services, and \$3 million is from support for adult learning. Government-funded increases for PSE totalled only \$48 million.



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

We have received more QM applications this year compared to previous years, including seventy-three (73) applications over the first three intake periods for Quality Money (QM) and approved funding for fifty-five (55) projects to a combined amount of \$178,063. Our fourth intake period closed this week, and we plan to fund more graduate student-led projects. And the remaining applications will be up for review later this month. This year, we have seen a significant increase in QM applications compared to years prior. We are continually grateful to the University of Calgary for sponsoring this program.

James Steele  
VP Academic  
vpa.gsa@ucalgary.ca  
February 17<sup>th</sup> – March 21<sup>st</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](#).

## Updates

### 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 me are in the process of presenting the proposal to the various stakeholder committees seeking its approval.
  - Update: The motion has passed! After getting through the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee, it has cleared its final and is making its way to the Board of Governors to officiate the decision.
  - Starting in May 2023, thesis-based graduate students will have a right to three weeks of vacation or time off from their research subject to the following stipulations:
    - A student's supervisor must be given notice of the vacation.
    - The vacation must be taken at a time that does not significantly interrupt time-sensitive research initiatives, such as key experiments or data collection exercises.
    - This is independent of any duties that are governed by the collective agreement, such as GATs, GARs, and GANTs. That is, students must still be available at times they have agreed to in such a contract.
    - All course work is still expected to be completed.
  - Please take advantage of this! My hope is this initiative will improve individual mental health and help improve the well-being of graduate students across campus.

### 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: What is made very clear from our work over the past year is that there are all the relevant policies in place to protect students, however it is apparent that both students and supervisors are unaware of what is and is not expected of this relationship (e.g., a supervisor cannot “fire” a student, a supervisor cannot restrict funding, a supervisor cannot expect students to publish conference papers, etc.).
- For now, Dr. Cunningham and myself will update the current student-supervisor pamphlet to include specific reference to the upcoming concerns, and both FGS and the GSA will promote this to try to raise awareness, and hopefully reduce the amount of students that find themselves in these situations.

### **TFCC Consultation Discussion**

- The rest of the Board and I met with the Provost Dr. Penny Werthner, Dean of FGS Dr. Robin Yates, and Vice-Provost (Student Experience) Dr. Verity Turpin to discuss how we can create a frame work for tuition and fees consultation that can lead to meaningful engagement and consultation with the graduate student community.
- The University’s team agrees that this is needed, and I’m encouraged by the beginning of these conversations, and would love to have graduate-student input to inform them going forward.

### **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 will host a MITACS Grant Writing Workshop and EDI in Academics and the Workplace Workshop in April (date TBD).

### **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 provider 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.
- Update:
  - Included in my recommendations to the next VPA, I am recommending the creation of faculty representatives on the Awards Committee to help boost engagement and redistribute some of the workload and responsibilities of the chairs and VCs.
  - In the budget, you will also see that we have topped up several of the needs-based awards, such as the Bursary and the Professional Development Grant, given the unprecedented increase in applications that we have seen over the past year. This will complement the already exceptional increase we received to our needs-based funding pool provided by the university as a result of our TFCC negotiations.
  - Furthermore, we will be renaming the Bursary to distinguish it from the GSA Support Bursary, to avoid the obvious confusion that this entails.
  - Similarly, we have moved the Emergency Bursary to a recommendation-based system, as most EB applications get denied as the reason for application is not seen as emergent. These students will instead be able to take advantage of the increased pool for the GSA Support Bursary and GSA Bursary (or whatever they will be called next year). This should help streamline the process and get students the help they need in a more effective manner.

### Awards Update

- The Professional Development Grant has now been distributed, and applicants have been contacted regarding the result of their application.

- We are currently in the adjudication process for the 2023 GSA Excellence Awards, and the Board is currently adjudicating the 2023 GSA Leadership and Emerging Leader Awards. Thank you to every who applied. Regardless of the outcome of these awards, we truly value the contribution each of the applicants has made to the campus community.
- Please be kind to our Awards Committee; language that is threatening or considered to be harassment will not be tolerated.

### Course Feedback Implementation Working Group

- Over the past year, myself and Keira Gunn have represented graduate students on this working group to come up with a course feedback system to replace the problematic USRIs.
- That system will be replaced by the Explorance Blue platform, that will hopefully boost engagement with course feedback and create a more equitable environment in these evaluations.
- We are currently finalizing our recommendations for the implementation of this system. If you have any suggestions for this implementation, please let myself or Keira know.

### University of Calgary Bookstore Working Group

- Similarly, I am on the working group meant to reconsider how the bookstore can best represent students.
- This working group is in its infancy, so if you have anything you would like to see from the bookstore, please let me know!

### Transdisciplinarity and Entrepreneurship

- These are the two concepts the University of Calgary is pursuing to differentiate our university from the other U15s.
- Expect to see a lot of opportunities in these spaces in the coming months.

Total Hours

Meeting: 55

Events: 4

Others: 29

Total: 88

Average per week: 29.3 (Accounting for Vacation)

## Meetings Attended

Meeting name	Date
Vacation	Feb 20 - 25
Mtg. VPA Candidate	Feb 22
President's Awards	Feb 27

<b>Selection Committee</b>	
<b>GSA Awards</b>	Feb 27
<b>GRC</b>	Feb 28
<b>BoD Meeting</b>	March 1
<b>Werklund Funding</b>	March 1
<b>GSA Awards</b>	March 2
<b>Student Mtg</b>	March 2
<b>GFC Academic Planning Subcommittee</b>	March 6
<b>BoD Mtg</b>	March 8
<b>Associate Deans (Research) Council</b>	March 8
<b>GSA Awards</b>	March 9
<b>Excellence Awards Mtg</b>	March 9
<b>GSA Staff/Board Mtg</b>	March 9
<b>Assoc. Dean Cunningham Regarding Student-Supervisor</b>	March 10
<b>Student Meeting</b>	March 10
<b>Student Meeting x2</b>	March 13
<b>GFC Academic Planning and Priorities</b>	March 13
<b>GFC Teaching and Learning</b>	March 14
<b>BoD Meeting</b>	March 15
<b>GFC Executive</b>	March 15
<b>Election Announcement</b>	March 15
<b>Awards Meeting</b>	March 16
<b>Student Meeting</b>	March 16
<b>GFC Research &amp; Scholarship</b>	March 16
<b>Werklund Funding Huddle</b>	March 16
<b>SAPL: Education Through Reconciliation Event</b>	March 16
<b>Course Feedback Implementation WG</b>	March 17
<b>Excellence Awards Mtg</b>	March 17
<b>Mtg Dr. Leslie Reid</b>	March 17
<b>TFCC Discussion</b>	March 20
<b>Student Meeting</b>	March 20



Cameron Armstrong  
VP Finance and Services  
[vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca)  
March 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, Hunter Yaworski, at [lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:lrc.gsa@ucalgary.ca), for more information.

## Improving Service Delivery

### Wellness Centre Collaboration

#### Staffing Updates

- The Wellness Centre is hiring two new counselors:
  - One for Residence Services.
  - One for Student Success Centre.
  - Cross-departmental booking will be available.

#### Service Updates

- We're working on a new survey on students' awareness/priorities:
  - What services are they aware of?
  - What new services would they like to see?
- We're working on a “pro tips” guide for students:
  - Calling in for day of appointments.
  - Cancelling ASAP (at least 24 hours in advance).
  - Using EmpowerMe or PsyVitality.
  - Knowing what you need (counselor vs advisor).

## 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.
- No changes are being made to the Health and Dental plan for 2023-2024:
  - Health and Dental survey showed divided opinion. A few takeaways:
    - 61% of students want similar coverage for a similar price.
    - 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:
    - Final 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 is currently under adjudication.

### Discounts for Students

#### *New Discounts:*

- Opa! Of Greece in Mac Hall
  - Offering 10% off from 3:00 PM-8:00 PM from Monday-Thursday, and all day from Friday-Sunday at location in Mac Hall.
  - For the catering, 10% for GSA members spending \$100+ on a catering order.
  - How to claim your discount: Please show your UCID and an original GSA Newsletter email to verify you're a graduate student.
- Neuron Mobility (scooters and ebikes)
  - 30% off monthly ridership passes.
  - How to claim your discount: Verify your ucalgary.ca email through the Neuron App.
- I will update everyone through the newsletter, social media accounts and this report as additional 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:
  - DIY Investing workshop on March 1 and Job Hunting 101 workshop on March 15.
- Upcoming:
  - Personal Tax workshop on March 29 at 5:30PM.
    - <https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/product/personal-tax-workshop-march-29/>

### Finance Standing Committee

- Reviewed and approved the February financial statements.

### 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.
- Preparing their final action for this fiscal year:
  - Purchasing reusable cutlery in advance of the federal ban on single-use plastic taking effect in January 2024.
  - Planning to use the cutlery for promotional purposes as well as a prize or gift for those helping the Sustainability Committee.
- Please contact the SC Chair, Sandra Moses, at [sustain.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:sustain.gsa@ucalgary.ca) for more information.

### 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.
- UToday recently published an article on this effort:  
[https://www.ucalgary.ca/news/ucalgary-students-divert-2000-plus-pounds-lab-styrofoam-landfill?mkt\\_tok=MTYxLU9MTi05OTAAAAGKf7dca\\_ky3-E0vq26NV9pzQwUo0rcbSC9NCX69FMkxRj2P3rpCLX0ftjUbX4DeLYVsRxpVaQN9zJd\\_qYR81YpQB3IFLyHEcD0Or6YKTIwWw4NA](https://www.ucalgary.ca/news/ucalgary-students-divert-2000-plus-pounds-lab-styrofoam-landfill?mkt_tok=MTYxLU9MTi05OTAAAAGKf7dca_ky3-E0vq26NV9pzQwUo0rcbSC9NCX69FMkxRj2P3rpCLX0ftjUbX4DeLYVsRxpVaQN9zJd_qYR81YpQB3IFLyHEcD0Or6YKTIwWw4NA)

### Total Hours

Meetings: 39

Other: 58

Total: 97

Average per week: 24.25

### Meetings Attended

Meeting name	Day of the Week	Date
GSA Meeting	Thursday	March 2
UPass Meeting	Tuesday	March 7
January Financial Meeting	Wednesday	March 8
Personal Tax Meeting	Wednesday	March 8
Climate Justice Meeting	Wednesday	March 8
ENTI Pitch Advising	Thursday	March 9
GSA Meeting	Thursday	March 9
LDL Marketing Meeting	Friday	March 10
DeFi to ReFi Meeting	Tuesday	March 14
Executive Board meeting	Wednesday	March 15
MyGradSkills Meeting	Wednesday	March 15

<b>Election Announcement</b>	Wednesday	March 15
<b>Job Hunting 101 Workshop</b>	Wednesday	March 15
<b>GRC Prep Meeting</b>	Thursday	March 16
<b>Haskayne Town Hall</b>	Thursday	March 16
<b>Investing Meeting</b>	Thursday	March 16
<b>Platform Calgary Meeting</b>	Friday	March 17
<b>H&amp;D Meeting</b>	Friday	March 17
<b>GSA Board Meeting</b>	Friday	March 17
<b>Tuition Process Meeting</b>	Monday	March 20
<b>Exercise Science Meeting</b>	Monday	March 20
<b>GSA Board/Staff Meeting</b>	Tuesday	March 21
<b>Canada/Mexico Trade Meeting</b>	Tuesday	March 21
<b>GLU Committee Meeting</b>	Tuesday	March 21
<b>Executive Board Meeting</b>	Wednesday	March 22
<b>Industry Day</b>	Thursday	March 23
<b>Exploring Conflict Workshop</b>	Tuesday	March 28
<b>ALAC Meeting</b>	Tuesday	March 28
<b>GRC Meeting</b>	Tuesday	March 28

Masume Akbari  
VP Student Life  
[vpsl.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpsl.gsa@ucalgary.ca)  
February 21- March 17

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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 2023-2026 can be found [here](#).

## Address Critical Barriers to Thriving

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

### Advocating for Mental Health

- Meeting with Kevin Wiens/Wellness center director, February 27, 2023.
  - To inform the GSA membership about existing supports at wellness center, they will work on promotional statements to include in GSA newsletter and social media.
  - A survey will be created to ask students about the supports they need from wellness centre.
  - The Mental Health and Wellness Subcommittee (MHWS) vice chair advocacy was connected to Kevin Wines, for more collaborations.
- Meeting with Edwin Morales (Associate Director, Counselling) and Kaitlin Van Geel (Counsellor), Wellness Centre, March 3, 2023.
  - We have discussed the empathy circles idea and the possibility of making it happen through peer support program.
- Ongoing Mental Health Advocacy
  - The MHWS vice-chair advocacy has been participating in following committee meetings as my delegate, advocating for graduate students:
    - Sexual and gender Wellness Week- Committee (Gender and Sexuality Alliance Subcommittee (GSA^2) chairs also attend these meetings),
    - National Standard Post-Secondary Committee,
    - Campus Mental Health and Strategy Implementation Committee.

### Housing Advocacy

- In Fall 2023 housing meeting, the housing availability in residence for Fall 2023 was discussed:
  - The residence does not have enough rooms to house the applicants for Fall 2023.
  - The emergency housing plan will be on effect in Fall 2023 semester.
  - Currently, the new students are receiving information about housing in Calgary and how to find a place to live in when they arrive to Calgary.

### **Advocating for Underrepresented Groups**

- The intersectionality symposium took place on March 10, 2023, at the Science Collaborative Space (ST 142). It was a collaboration between GSA<sup>2</sup>, EDI, and MHWS. The panels covered the following topics:
  - Intersectionality in Academia (by Tonya Callaghan, Gregor Wolbring, and Cynthia Seow)
  - PM Disability Awareness (by Ashley King, Alex Mertens, and Erin Novakowski)
  - Black Mental Health (by Patrina Duhaney, Regine King, and Lana Bentley)

### **Ongoing Advocacy 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).

### **Ongoing Advocacy 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.

## **Broaden and Deepen Student Engagement**

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

### **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:
    - 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:
    - Pet Therapy with PALS, March 31, 2022
  - Newcomers and International Students Subcommittee (NISS) events:
    - Indoor Trampoline (Flying Squirrel), Feb 26, 2023
    - Badminton Tournament March 30, 2023

**Student Engagement Coordinator**

- 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 VP Student Life on March 2, 2023.
- Harry Potter trivia night at LDL on March 6, 2023.

**Grow Organizational Capacities**

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

**Updating VPSL Committees' Term of References (TOR)**

- To enhance performance of committees working under VPSL portfolio, their TORs has been modified to provide a clearer reflection on how these committees work, what is expected from chairs, vice-chairs, and the committee members, their goals, and operations. The provided modifications will be voted on April's board meeting, and if passed, they will be in-effect starting May 2023.

**Improving Communication**

- 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.

**Events at LDL**

- Encouraging different committees and subcommittees to hold their events at LDL to boost LDL operation.
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**LDL coupons for winners at different events**

- This initiative has been suggested to committees to boost LDL operation.

**Total Hours**

Meeting: 23

Others: 72

Total: 95

Average per week: 23.5

Notes:



## Meetings Attended

Meeting name	Day of the Week	Date
Grad Success bi-weekly meeting	Tuesday	February 21, 2023
Executive Board Meeting	Wednesday	February 22, 2023
Health & Dental Committee meeting	Friday	February 24, 2023
My Grad Skills Meeting	Monday	February 27, 2023
GSA/Wellness Center check in	Monday	February 27, 2023
GSA Board/Staff meeting	Tuesday	February 28, 2023
Events team meeting	Tuesday	February 28, 2023
GRC	Tuesday	February 28, 2023
Executive Board Meeting	Wednesday	March 1, 2023
Housing Huddle	Wednesday	March 1, 2023
SEEC #6 meeting	Thursday	March 2, 2023
Fall 2023 Housing (SU/GSA/Residence)	Friday	March 3, 2023
Empathy Circles discussion with Wellness Centre	Friday	March 3, 2023
Grad-Success bi-weekly meeting	Monday	March 6, 2023
GSA Board/Staff meeting	Thursday	March 9, 2023
Executive Board Meeting	Wednesday	March 15, 2023
FGS Council meeting	Thursday	March 16, 2023
Health and Dental committee meeting	Friday	March 17, 2023

A.C. Cameron  
VP External  
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[Date Range: Feb 21<sup>st</sup> – Mar 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 closing in April; 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!

Leading up to AGM, drafted my annual

#### Federal Policy Committee (FPC)

- 21 policy updates coming forward at the (AGM), March 21-25
- Andrew and I invited to shift our focus from the Innovators paper to the new Food and Housing Security papers, following the policies we passed earlier this year.

#### Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC)

- Drafted my annual report. GAC completed the policy items from the work plan I drafted; just have a graduate forum left. Biggest challenge has been lack of graduate delegates among membership. Strategies proposed to improve number of graduate student delegates in the alliance.
- Had connected with [Support our Sciences \(SoS\)](#) last month. 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

- News that UofA GSA is coordinating with the UASU to protest their BoG meeting, similar to our action in January. Keep your ears out for follow up info.
- We are part of the CAUS Get Out the Vote campaign and looking for canvassing teams.

### 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. Delays in drafting, looking at April GRC.

### **Meetings with MLAs – In response to Budget 2023**

- Met with both the Minister of Advanced Education, Demetrios Nicolaidis, and the Shadow Minister (Critic) for Advanced Education, David Eggen, to discuss the Alberta budget 2023 affordability measures, and impacts on graduate students.
- Minister Nicolaidis believes our economy is standing strong, yet this tuition cap and loan program are the best way to ensure affordability. Opposed to restoring the Campus Alberta Grant. Will follow up with us on research travel funding. There is an active bill on the floor of the legislature to implement the upcoming budget as presented.
- Mr. Eggen is looking to “repair the damage” done over the past four years. Plans to restore the Campus Alberta Grant, and improve future student consultations.

### **Calgary Student Alliance Membership -- UPass**

- Quiet lately. Cam has stepped in to help with UPass, coordinating with the SU.

### **City Council Follow-Up from the SU Leader’s Dinner – Housing and Transit**

- Meeting scheduled with Councilor Penner for early May;
- Meeting pending with Councilor Mian as well.

### **Collaborative Opportunity – SU: Leader’s Town Hall**

- Students’ Union are hosting a Q&A with Rachel Notley on April 5<sup>th</sup> from 4:30-6:30 pm.
- [Please register here \(free\)](#).
- SU have also reached out multiple times to Danielle Smith to arrange the same, but haven’t heard anything back from her office.

### **Collaborative Opportunity – AFL, ATA.**

- The Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) has launched community action teams in preparation for the upcoming Alberta election. They are willing to work with us and maybe the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) on a joint rally for education, in advance of the election. I would need volunteers to help coordinate this, please email to sign up.

### **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.

## **Advocacy: Local and On-Campus Initiatives**

### **Nourish to Flourish; Food-Security Huddles with Students’ Union and Provost’s Office**

- **Nourish to Flourish Working Group** has launched its task teams:
  - 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)
- Free meals group working with the GSA Food-Housing, Food Justice Now, and Faith and Spirituality Centre. looking to connect with the SU on a meal space on campus.
- Framework team is exploring the PUSH framework to assist with Times Higher Ed. reporting measures that UCalgary already does through the Office of Sustainability.

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

- Working on a food-housing assessment survey to understand the roots of the issue; looking at fine details including safety of residence and access to foods; needs ethics approval. We have submitted a Quality Money application to hire some GANT students.
- Coordinating with Food Justice Now, and Nourish 2 Flourish on a proposal to launch a food literacy hub, including a standing low-cost market on campus and low-cost meals.
- **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 representatives from each DGA!** [Join our LOUD Series!](#)

**LOUD-Series**

- “Let’s Organize University Departments” (LOUD) is taking roots in Werklund as students are calling for improved funding regulations. Myself and some other Board Members are coordinating with some members from GPESA and the GLU-Stewards network to mobilize knowledge of their funding agreement throughout their departments.

**Calling out for departmental representatives!** Please designate an organizer from your DGA (could be yourself as a GRC rep, or someone else, ideally on your DGA executive team) to join the Advocacy Engagement Working Group as a LOUD- Department Representative. Ideal candidates are comfortable raising political issues in their department, and have a strong desire to improve the graduate student experience. Familiarity with the Canadian governmental system is an asset, but not outright required; we can always learn. I recommend DGAs elect this position at the same time as the rest of their executive, and possibly create a position in their bylaws/constitution. Please email [vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca) with any questions.

**Improving Service Delivery****Emergency Housing Support**

- GSA Housing Taskforce and myself met with Shane from Ancillary Services and the SU to share information about the anticipated housing challenges coming this fall. Waitlist is filling up for residence far ahead of average for the year, and we are exploring communication strategies to mitigate the need for last-minute emergency support.
- Looking at both short and long-term strategies. To build a new building generally takes 2+ years from date of project approval.

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

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

**Pitched Empathy Circles to the Wellness Centre ([link here](#))**

- A practice to help facilitate active listening, aimed at having participants feel heard.
- VP Student Life and I met with Edwin at the Wellness Centre to explore options to train staff and volunteers in the practice and offer these to our students. Some interest from staff to undergo the training, and pitch to Peer Support Groups and other spaces,

## Improving Communication

### Advocacy Blog

- Posting updates to the [GSA's website: Blogs and News](#). (Ab Budget Response 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

- TFCC recommendations submitted to the Board. Reviewed. Looking to explore tuition consultation next year with Special General Meetings of the GRC. Connecting with the SU to coordinate our consultation guidelines.
- Meeting with Provost team went well. All agree that we're looking to clarify the timelines, and work towards clear measures of meaningful consultation.

## Other Accomplishments

### I've been re-elected 😊

- Thanks to all who voted! I'm honoured to serve you as VP External again this next year!

### 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.

- Report to Senate submitted; I'll be away for CASA AGM during the next full meeting.

## FYI & Highlights

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

### AB Government Responds to Student Voices – #Elections

- Alberta government has launched its budget 2023. Promising affordability measures for students, but focuses heavily on domestic students and student loans. Little support offered for international students.
- Note that there was still no mention of restoring the Campus Alberta Grant, which was cut \$130Million to UCalgary alone since 2019, roughly \$700M cut across Alberta.

### Danielle Smith is currently residing as Premier.

### 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: 601 + 57

Research: 153 + 25

Communications: 234 + 25

Events and Other: 263 + 15

Total: 1251 + 122 = 1373

**Average per week: 33 hrs overall, (25 hrs/week in Mar so far).**

## Meetings Attended

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

Meeting name	Day of the Week	Date
GSA Food Housing		Feb 21 <sup>st</sup>
Senate Community Engagement		Feb 21 <sup>st</sup>
LOUD - GPESA		Feb 22 <sup>nd</sup>
GSA All Candidates Meeting		Feb 22 <sup>nd</sup>
LOUD Huddle - Werklund		Feb 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Actions Huddle: SU		Feb 22 <sup>nd</sup>
CASA Federal Policy		Feb 24 <sup>th</sup>

<b>PSAC Training</b>	Feb 24 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Advocacy Outreach Efforts</b>	Feb 25 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GSA Staff/Board Meeting</b>	Feb 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>CASA NIAC Consultation</b>	Feb 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GSA Elections Forum</b>	Feb 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GRC Meeting</b>	Feb 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Student Leaders Roundtable with Ministry of Advanced Education</b>	Feb 28 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Housing Taskforce Huddle</b>	Mar 01 <sup>st</sup>
<b>LOUD-Werklund Huddle</b>	Mar 01 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Nourish 2 Flourish</b>	Mar 02 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>AB Solidarity Meeting</b>	Mar 02 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Housing meeting with Ancillary and SU</b>	Mar 03 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>CASA Federal Policy</b>	Mar 03 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>SU Town Hall with Jason Copping</b>	Mar 03 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Empathy Circles Idea with the Wellness Centre</b>	Mar 03 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>GSA Food-Housing: Survey</b>	Mar 07 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GSA Advo Huddle</b>	Mar 07 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GSA x Mr. Eggen</b>	Mar 08 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GotV with the SU</b>	Mar 09 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL)</b>	Mar 09 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Ministry of Advanced Education</b>	Mar 13 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GSA Food-Housing: Market</b>	Mar 14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GSA Board Meeting</b>	Mar 15 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GSA Advo Huddle</b>	Mar 15 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GSA Elections Announcement</b>	Mar 15 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Nourish 2 Flourish</b>	Mar 16 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Ab Solidarity Meeting</b>	Mar 16 <sup>th</sup>
<b>LOUD Huddle - Werklund</b>	Mar 16 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Ab-GPAC Board Meeting</b>	Mar 17 <sup>th</sup>
<b>GSA x Provost: TFCC Guidelines Chat</b>	Mar 20 <sup>th</sup>