



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

**Attendees:**

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

*GRC*

Vishnupriya Kannankulathu, Sustainable Energy Development  
Akposeiyifa Ebufegha, Mechanical Engineering Graduate Students' Association  
Hannah Smith, Biomedical Engineering GSA  
SooBean Kim, History Graduate Students Union  
Brandon Sonmor, Classics and Religion DGA  
Tara Cranna, Political Science Graduate Student Association  
Mallika Sharma, Economics Graduate Association  
Alex Buchner Beaudet, Biomedical Technology GSA  
Patricia Fraino, Graduate Association of Geology and Geophysics Students  
Victoria Rodrigues Alves Barbosa, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
Leonie O'Sullivan, Chemistry Graduate Student Association  
Aashay Tripathi, Economics Graduate Association  
Keira Gunn, Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society  
Joshuah Lockett-Harris (Not a GRC member)  
Lakshmi Vineesha Seru, Veterinary Medicine Grad Students Association  
Brayden Greenstein, Masters of Public Policy Students Association  
Joshua Lee, Gastrointestinal Graduate Students Association  
Krisha Shah, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape  
Ahmed Aljuhany, Philosophy Graduate Students' Association  
Milana Leskovac, Sociology Graduate Students' Caucus  
Emma McLaughlin, Kinesiology Graduate Students Association  
Isla Shill, Kinesiology Graduate Students Association  
Melissa Glass, History Graduate Students Union  
Cassie Holmes, School of Creative and Performing Arts Graduate Society  
Ben Peckham, Psychology Graduate Students Association  
Beatriz Moya, Graduate Programs in Education Students Association  
Georgina (Gina) Freeman, Computational Media Design  
Astha Gautam, Chemistry Graduate Student Association  
Parmin Dhoot, Graduate Programs in Education Students Association  
Sam Fleming, Classics and Religion DGA  
Quinn Goddard, Linguistics Graduate Students' Association  
Andres Zambrano, Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association

Kyle Farquharson, Graduate Anthropology and Archaeology Student Association  
Tanille Shandro, Chemistry Graduate Student Association  
Kristaps Balodis, Graduate University of Calgary Mathematics Society  
Hiyat Mitchell, Graduate Programs in Education Students Association  
Ginamaria Vetro, Political Science Graduate Student Association  
Deepali Dang, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape  
Zach Bailey, Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization  
James Sousa, Gastrointestinal Graduate Students Association  
Taylor Kergan, Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association  
Karina Hincapie, Vox Condiscipulum  
Julian Palandri, Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association  
Andrew Koshyk, Biomedical Engineering GSA  
Daniel Cecchi, Physics & Astronomy Dep Grad Association  
Melody Dowdy, English Department Graduate Association  
Alexia Hill, Masters of Public Policy Students Association  
Britney Wong, Community Health Sciences Student Executive  
Victoria Li, Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association  
Justin Nichol, Biological Sciences Graduate Students' Association  
Oluwatimilehin (Timi) Ajayi, Kinesiology Graduate Students Association  
Abigail Williams, Graduate Programs in Education Students Association  
Mawuli Tay, Graduate Programs in Education Students Association  
Nneka Jk-Onyeka (Not a GRC member)  
Donovan Smith, Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization  
Kelsey Harkness, Hotchkiss Brain Institute Trainee Organization  
Aarti Kejriwal, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
Shane Ram, Microbiology & Infectious Diseases GSA  
Sophia Kimiagari, Philosophy Graduate Students' Association

**Meeting Began - 5:30PM**

**Online Registration - 5:30PM**

**Territorial Acknowledgement [James Steele] - 5:34PM**

**Approval of Agenda - 5:36PM**

- **Question:** Shouldn't we discuss the budget before the fees?
  - o Cameron Armstrong: Fees getting approved today are going into budget (e.g. executive honorariums, health and dental fees, etc.)
    - These fees need to be solidified before they enter the budget
- AC Cameron: Wants to amend agenda by adding Policy Consultation Recommendation session for 10 minutes after executive reports  
*Allowed by Speaker*

*MOTION: Add Policy Consultation Recommendation session to Agenda for February 2023 GRC Meeting*

Seconded  
CARRIED

- **Comment:** We should do the policy consultation sooner since it involves advocacy
  - o [After discussion, policy consultation moved to after approval of January GRC minutes]

Opposed: 0

CARRIED

### Approval of January 2023 GRC Meeting Minutes - 5:41PM

Opposed: 0

CARRIED

### Provincial Funding Policy Asks [AC Cameron] - 5:42PM

- Advocacy Advisor and AC Cameron have drafted policy recommendation regarding what GSA/GRC wants to see from provincial government regarding tuition, etc.
- Over \$700 million cut from operating budget of every university, so created list of demands from GSA to take to provincial government
  - o Asks:
    - Want funding stream within Campus Alberta Grant<sup>1</sup> program to subsidize graduate tuition in full by 2030 and support minimum funding packages for (thesis-based) graduate students
    - Want continued increases in funding from Campus Alberta Grant
    - Want the Campus Alberta Grant restored to its 2018 levels (adjusted for inflation)
    - Want to restore and maintain a majority of 60% university operational fundings by public sources
- **Comment:** I love this, these are incredibly ambitious asks
- **Comment:** Second previous comment. I notice you're specifically talking about thesis-based graduate students; should also consider up international students who are often doing course-based programs
- **Question:** Could we also advocate for permanent residency for international graduate students?
  - o **AC Cameron:** Yes, there's a need for additional policies – but had to cut some things out (e.g. immigration streams, mental health, etc) to streamline current list of demands
- **Question:** There are quite a few points here, could we make it more succinct? And maybe we should look at provinces that have had good success with graduate program funding, and find specific numbers based on their policies to ask for (rather than just choosing 60%)
- **Comment:** This is a good plan. GSA need to take community engagement as a serious issue and treat it as part of its responsibility in order to make your plan a reality.
- VP External asked GRC to email him regarding how they'd like to deliver input on the policy (e.g. survey or draft document? Town hall?)

### GSA General Fees and Health and Dental [Cameron Armstrong] - 5:52PM

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<sup>1</sup> The Alberta Government's funding for post-secondary: <https://www.alberta.ca/publicly-funded-institutions-government-support.aspx>

- Results from Health and Dental survey:
  - o Most students felt prescriptions had most adequate funding out of all areas of plan
  - o Most students want to see dental benefits increase the most, followed by vision
  - o No clear winner in coverage area students willing to sacrifice
    - Most voted-for category was osteopath/physiotherapy, but so few are using upper limit of that coverage area that even cutting it in half would barely save each student a dollar
- Going into last year of contract with Studentcare
  - o Dental most utilized area of plan, so increasing it would inflate prices when re-negotiating
- Overall cost increase for the plan is 9%
  - o Propose 4% fee increase for students, translates to \$25 per student
  - o GSA will use reserves (≈\$250,000) to take lion's share of fee increase
    - This will increase draw on reserves substantially

*MOTION: 4% increase in Health & Dental Fee for 2023-2024 year*

*Increase Health & Dental Student Fee for one dependent from \$626 to \$651*

*Increase Health & Dental Student Fee for two or more dependents from \$1,252 to \$1,302*

Approve: 35

Oppose: 4

Abstain: 9

CARRIED

*MOTION: No change in GSA general fee amount for 2023-2024 year*

Approve: 38

Oppose: 2

Abstain: 5

CARRIED

### **GSA & LDL Draft Budgets [Cameron Armstrong] - 6:06PM**

- Official approvals for budget will happen in March
  - o Will be sent out month in advance for review, today's presentation just for discussion
- Budgets under discussion:
  - o Labour Relations Committee Budget
  - o Advocacy Budget
    - \$9/graduate student, given to VP External (e.g. for travel to Ottawa to meet with ministers, abGPAC membership, etc.)
  - o Professional Development Grant
  - o Quality Money Budget
    - Allocated by UCalgary based on graduate student portion of student population
  - o Health & Dental Budget
    - Already discussed: budget reflects 9% increase, 5% absorbed by GSA
  - o LDL Operating Budget

- Revenue down compared to 2019/2020 year
- Increased cost of goods sold and inflation, but stabilized staffing levels, flexible operating hours, limited menu to control costs
- Operating Budget
  - New expense lines for outreach, standing committees
  - Increase in funding for positions that were previously overworked and underpaid, etc

*MOTION: 10% increase to GSA Executive fellowship for 2023-2024  
 Not developed by executive board, but by GSA staff  
 Researched compensation for other GSA staff across province*

- **Question:** Can you explain more what we are voting on? What is the GSA Executive Fellowship?
  - Cameron Armstrong: The GSA Executive Fellowship is comprised of the President, VP Academic, VP External, VP Student Life, and VP Finance & Services
- **Question:** Who pays for this?
  - Cameron Armstrong: Comes out of general Operating Budget (not a restricted fund)
  - **Question:** Is this shifting money away from other things?
    - GSA fees going up by nature of population (since more graduate students entering university) so there is simply more money to be allocated
- **Question:** Don't doubt that roles deserve this increase especially if there has been research, but is this a good move to make when graduate students are vociferously asking for help, and not seeing any kind of monetary break?
  - Cameron Armstrong: If compensation for position is closer to fair, that might entice people to come into an executive position. Looking at forum [for GSA election, held before February 2023 GRC Meeting], only one position that has any kind of competition, likely due in part to low honorarium
  - Saaka Sulemana Saaka: Share your concerns. When in executive role, can't take on other obligations (e.g. TAs), so increase should reflect how much work the positions are
- **Comment:** Some years ago, executive honorarium also included reduction in tuition. Conflict of interest, since if taking tuition reduction from institution, the institution has something over you. Should keep in mind that removal of reduced tuition rate has decreased honorariums
- **Comment:** Can you speak to your hours as executives?
  - Saaka Sulemana Saaka: It depends on individuals, someone may come into role and work far fewer hours, but others go above and beyond and commit extra hours. Advertised hours are not fair reflection of what you do
- **Comment\*:** As graduate researchers, we often put in extra hours for research that goes unpaid. Don't doubt work that you do and don't think you don't deserve it, but this doesn't look good when graduate students are struggling to get funding. Should link what executives are getting to funding that graduate students are seeing – tie it into betterment of graduate students
  - Saaka Sulemana Saaka: Increases reflect GSA membership fees. Share your concerns, but hope you know it's not an easy decision
- **Comment:** We can't vote on this before seeing the whole budget. If I vote 'yes' for this, I haven't seen what else is coming out of Operating Budget, I feel like I need more information
  - Cameron Armstrong: Need to solidify fees we're voting on before releasing whole budget. Need to approve individual ones since then whole budget can be voted on, even though it maybe seems nicer to just view budget more holistically and pick out individual areas

- Whole picture will be going out in GSA digest for student review
- **Comment:** Just wanted to clarify - this increase is not being reflected in tuition increases, just from increased membership?
  - Saaka Sulemana Saaka: GSA does not get tuition money. Students get charged certain amount for GSA fees.
  - Cameron Armstrong: Nothing being taken away from other line items, just more money available
- **Comment:** Want to clarify earlier comment(\*); didn't think money was coming out of graduate student pockets, just that optics of this can be applied to graduate students, and graduate students need more money. ALL graduate students need 10% more, so should link increase to increase in minimum funding, and should be implemented in future. This looks problematic
  - Cameron Armstrong: Would be too difficult to put in request you're getting at. Not a job, it's an honorarium. Would be very difficult or impossible
- **Comment:** I think these are two separate things [graduate student funding and executive honorariums], and having a solution to only one of them right now does not mean you shouldn't try to solve the one you have a solution for
- **Comment:** "Well, we have more revenue, so why not" sounds like something university administration would say. Know not really comparable since executives making far less, but to me answer is obvious in both cases: cut administrative/ staff expenses.
  - Cameron Armstrong: GSA would see significant levels of attrition if honorariums cut

Approve: 33

Oppose: 23

Abstain: 16

CARRIED

### Executive Reports - 6:41PM

- Saaka Sulemana Saaka (President)
  - Expect to see internally generated funds of university go up 54%
  - Alberta Government announced 2% cap on tuition hikes, starting 2024-2025
    - Want to discuss cap with Provost (since UCalgary proposing hike of 5.5%-10%)
    - Hopefully provide updates in March
- James Steele (VP Academic):
  - Over 150 people presented in PEER Beyond
  - Continued work on fighting for vacation (2-3 weeks for thesis based, so can take time away from their research)
  - Data compilation for advocacy
    - Student-supervisor best practices revision with FGS (based on VP Academic's work with individual students on conflicts have with supervisor, within departments, etc)
- AC Cameron (VP External):
  - Student Affordability Plans just got released
    - Alberta government's response to Tuition Protest to claim they support student affordability in post-secondary institutions

- Takeaway: collective action and distributed advocacy works! Need to maintain pressure on government
  - Will formalize Policy regarding funding (as discussed earlier)
  - SU Day of Action (March 27th): province-wide, rallying for proper government support of post-secondary
- Masume Akbarki (VP Student Life):
  - Advocacy (Mental Health, EDI, international students, etc)
  - Student Experience (events)
  - Approving Quality Money applications to support DGA and GSG events
- Cameron Armstrong (VP Finance & Services):
  - Worked on fee changes
  - Ongoing issue: January enrollment students can't submit claims through Studentcare
    - Will communicate once resolved so can re-submit their claims
  - Reminder for Quality money applications, and that DGA event budgets reset March 31
  - Upcoming investing and job-hunting workshops

#### Question Period - 6:54PM

- Saaka Sulemana Saaka: We have almost exhausted pool of funds for support bursaries (≈\$14,000 left), so saving reserves for emergency cases for remainder of term
- **Question:** How much involvement was there for Strategic Plan from university admin?
  - Saaka Sulemana Saaka: Take feedback from FGS, Provost, President, etc. on how they view role of GSA within UCalgary. No direct involvement from UCalgary admin, just consulted for critical feedback regarding position of GSA
- **Question:** I read your [VP External's] executive report, and noticed less than positive opinion of abGPAC, but yet we spend a lot belonging to abGPAC. How do we stop being in abGPAC? Would like to see that decision being driven by GRC
  - AC Cameron: Looking into legalities concerning membership of organization, since it is large part of advocacy budget. Make sure that understand rules of membership so can make informed decision.
    - Hypothetically, should we vote to leave? On the hook for 12 months of membership to them
  - Saaka Sulemana Saaka: Have to assess value of abGPAC to UCalgary GSA. Don't want to make decisions that have bad consequences for GSA, more information will come in future
    - Sign agreements with abGPAC and CASA, have legal and financial consequences
  - AC Cameron: Ensure that provincial advocacy capacity at full reserves
- **Question:** What can DGAs do regarding Day of Action?
  - AC Cameron: Highlighted that DGAs free to have within-department meetings
- **Comment:** Need document for what Day of Action is to bring back to departments so that message remains clear, how to get involved etc.
  - [VP External will draft document]
- **Comment:** Should include other UCalgary campuses in protest, not clear if they are included
  - AC Cameron: Day of Action primarily from SU, not sure what their representation is like on Foothills or other campuses. Would you be interested in setting something up at Foothills?

- [VP External put out call to GRC for help with work related to organizing Day of Action summary, etc.]
- **Comment:** Graduate Labour Union planning to do outreach at Foothills, lots of students there who are not being properly served, trying to get stewards into all departments there as well
  - o Would be great to see GSA support for Day of Action, push faculty to get involved
  - o Present united front on tuition increase issue
  - o Graduate students should provide guidance, logistical support to undergraduates
- Keira Gunn: GSA support not so straightforward, since we are employees under collective bargaining. Want to support SU, but need to be careful since GSA can't be associated with something considered a "strike"
  - o **Question:** What can I tell students I'm TAing? Do I have to avoid using "strike"?
    - Kiera Gunn: Just don't tell students about it on behalf of the GSA
  - o Saaka Sulemana Saaka: Thank you for emphasizing that, GSA is not responsible for the protest or strikes, but members are free to protest (just not a GSA protest)
- AC Cameron: If you know any undergrad students, point them to SU for ways to get involved in Day of Action. Also, if you would like the GSA to do something, have to move it through the council [GRC]
- **Question:** Are there any plans for upcoming action regarding sustainability?
  - o AC Cameron: GSA's plate full with tuition issue; no current plans for climate-related protests or action, but would be happy to work on something with you, might also be good to plug ideas to Sustainability Committee
  - o **Comment:** Was recently in touch with famous Canadian environmentalist, wanted them to attend student event to give a talk but they refused because of standing of university in climate change issue

#### DGA Period - 7:22PM

- SCPA: end of March/April there will be three week long showcase festival
  - o Free tickets with code CYSFREE
  - o Also partnering with GSA<sup>2</sup> committee and putting on massive drag show
- CLARE: planning graduate student conference in May, want to circulate call for papers
- Math: putting on second (hopefully annual) math and stats student conference
  - o Includes students across Alberta, but can extend to students outside Alberta and in fields other than math and stats (e.g. physics, computer science, biology, etc.)

#### Announcements [BrettC Nelson] - 7:28PM

- Take advantage of LDL discounts
- Upcoming events in March (intersectionality symposium, board game night, DIY investing workshop, pet therapy, etc.)
- Vote in the GSA elections (Mar 13 and 14)
- DGA Food Drive (Mar 1 – Apr 16)
- Reminder to apply for GSA Emergency bursary, GSA Tuition Reimbursement Bursary and Canada Housing Relief

#### Other Business - 7:30PM

- **Question:** Is there any kind of limit to amount you can ask for in Quality Money applications?



- Cameron Armstrong: No cap on application, so should always submit Quality Money applications for more than you think you need, since have to submit again if want things not included in first application
- Comment from GRC member: If employing any grad students through Quality Money, can't be done through collective agreement. Encourage you to pay grad students a living wage, don't pay them any less than in Quality Money handbook
  - Saaka Sulemana Saaka: Quality Money program being reviewed, so good time to discuss that
  - Cameron Armstrong: Quality Money not meant to be a form of employment at all, so pretty rare to see applications that involve employment, meant to absorb operational expenses

**Meeting adjourned - 7:35PM**

Opposed: 0  
CARRIED