

2023-2024 Annual REPORT

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PREPARED BY CHRISTINA NJONGWE

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

The GSA represents the collective voice of UCalgary graduate students at the university and within all levels of government.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



It is my honour to provide all graduate students with a report on the achievements and collaborations that mark our efforts to improve our community.

This year was not easy; every win was accompanied by the struggles we continue to face as graduate students and as an association.

However, as we organize to produce better outcomes for graduate students, we can be proud of the accomplishments we have made in just the last year:

- One of the central functions of the GSA is to provide affordable health and dental care for our members, and we now have an exciting new partner provider, Campus Trust. Switching from an insurance model to a trust model greatly expands the healthcare services covered, allowing graduate students to work with trusted providers and giving the GSA greater freedom in administering the plan, all at no extra cost to students.
- Through the Tuition and Fees Consultation process, we collectively advocated for a fair and affordable education amidst an affordability crisis. While the fight continues, this year we achieved significant wins: the first-ever reduction to a projected tuition increase at the institution, a university-funded "Food Hub" offering affordable meals, and a commitment from the Faculty of Graduate Studies to significantly raise minimum funding levels.

In part, these victories were made possible by our strengthening relationship with the Students' Union, and special thanks go to President Shaziah Jinnah Morsette and her team for their invaluable partnership.

 The GSA plays an outsized role in federal graduate student advocacy, as the sole graduate student member of the Canadian Alliance of Students' Associations (CASA). Building upon years of efforts from CASA and other graduate advocates, we successfully pushed Ottawa to more than double their investment in graduate student research by greatly increasing both the value and quantity of Tri-Council grants. Our advocacy wins are complemented by our efforts to improve graduate student well-being on campus, by hosting over 115 events (including PEER Beyond, day trips around the prairies, and popular board game and trivia nights) as well as leading over 78 projects through Quality Money (including a bike exchange program, community and edible gardens, and numerous graduate-led academic conferences). These initiatives are supported by our wonderful team of staff, who work tirelessly to bring them to fruition. Among other successes, these efforts resulted in our pub, the Last Defence Lounge, having its first-ever profitable year and winning Best Campus Bar from the Best Bar None (BBN) accreditation hosted by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission.

Throughout this year, the Graduate Labour Union (GLU) has been bargaining to secure a fair and equitable Collective Agreement for Academically Employed Graduate Students (AEGSs). While GLU has strengthened involvement through tireless organizing, bargaining continues with no deal in sight. The GSA stands in solidarity with our academically employed colleagues, and it is crucial that they have the support of all graduate students as bargaining continues into the Fall Semester.

In closing, I want to thank all graduate students for an incredible year and emphasize that the GSA is not just the executives and the senior leadership team, but all our members: all graduate students at the University of Calgary. These achievements and more were made possible only through our collective efforts. As the new year approaches, I cannot wait to see what we will accomplish together as we work towards an involved, inclusive, and organized Graduate Students Association.

James Steele GSA President 2023/2024



VISION

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

MISSION

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

What We Do

- Deliver valued services
- Advocate student priorities
- Build and connect community
- Offer growth opportunities

2023-2026 Priorities

Broaden and Deepen Student Engagement

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

Address Critical Barriers to Thriving

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

Grow Organizational

Capacities

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



Notable Advocacy Wins:

- \$124,050 increase in bursary funding
- 2% tuition cap for thesis-based graduate students
- Peer and GSA supports
- Three-week vacation for thesis-based graduate students
- Graduate student funding is a top priority for the UCalgary
- Food and housing task force established at UCalgary

Please note: These numbers do not include emergency and support bursary numbers as these funds are administered by the registrar's office.





2023-24 GSA & LDL STAFF

Daniella Ikurusi	Executive Director	
Lina Girgis	Human Resources Manager	
Christina Njongwe	Marketing & Communication Coordinator	
Taruneesh Sachdeva	Executive Coordinator	
Jaime Garcia	Student Engagement Coordinator	
Chantel Cadogan	Finance and Accounting Coordinator	
Allie Bishop	Administrative Assistant	
Andrew Kemle	Advocacy Advisor	
Matt Broughton	LDL General Manager	
Jim Doody	LDL Chef	
JR. Hamilton	LDL Front of House Supervisor	

LDL STAFF:

Brenton Leppke, Ellen Halvorson, Imad Kanaan, Cong Luo, Bailey Davidson, Mehreen Shabbir, Sophia Marlow, Chad Lariviere, Ethan-James Friesen, Lee Emma Doody, Jacob McKinney, Noah Furlani, Joey Saharchuk, Quinn Long, Renae Gross, Donald Adesegun, Elizabeth Eccles

2023-24 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



• Led the GSA's 2023-26 Strategic Plan Development

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

James Steele President



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

Kirsten Neprily VP Academic



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

- Expanded support for DGAs and GSGs for event and operational bursaries
- Advocated for underrepresented groups with the GSA SEEC Subcommittees
- Initiated peer support sessions for Iranian graduate students

Masume Akbari VP Student Life



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



VP External

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

Cameron Armstrong VP Finance and Services



FEDERAL ADVOCACY

through partnership with

CASA ACAE



Collaboration with CASA on Policy Development

- Worked with Trevor Potts, Senior Policy Advisor for the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), on re-writing graduate student policies within CASA's policy library.
- Collaborated with Trevor Potts and Matt Gerrits, CASA's Government and Stakeholder Relations Officer, on CASA's brief to the Department of Finance regarding the necessity to increase Tri-Council grants.
- Formulated graduate student-specific asks in CASA's Advocacy Document, including proposals for increases to Tri-Council grants.

Key Advocacy Issues

- Increase in Tri-Council grants
- Affordable housing for students
- Preservation of Fair Dealing in copyright laws
- Expansion of Graduate Student Associations within CASA

The GSA External Advocacy team achieved significant progress in policy development, financial support and housing initiatives through extensive collaboration with CASA and other stakeholders.

Successful Advocacy Outcomes

- The advocacy efforts contributed to Budget 2024, which increased the value of Tri-Council awards by approximately 50% from the previous year.
- Advocated, alongside CASA and the Quebec Student Union (UEQ), for additional funding for affordable housing, leading to Budget 2024 allocating more resources to Canada's Housing Accelerator Fund and removing GST on new student residences.

New CASA Policies

- Collaborated with Trevor Potts and the Federal Policy Committee to create and pass two new CASA policies:
- Housing policy
- Food security policy.

Ongoing Advocacy Initiatives

- Worked with Trevor Potts and Matt Gerrits on CASA's prospectus concerning the ongoing copyright review, emphasizing the importance of preserving Fair Dealing.
- Continued collaboration with Home Office staff to expand the number of Graduate Student Associations within CASA.

Notable Advocacy Partners

- Trevor Potts, Senior Policy Advisor, CASA
- Matt Gerrits, Government and Stakeholder Relations Officer, CASA
- Federal Policy Committee, CASA
- Quebec Student Union (UEQ)

PROVINCIAL ADVOCACY

Policy Development and Submissions

- Submitted the 2024 Budget Submission to the Treasury Board.
- Opened the Policy Library, which includes:
 - Soften the Blow
 - 2024 Budget Submission
 - UCGSA.01: Provincial Funding for Post-Secondary
 - UCGSA.02: Alberta Graduate Students Travel Incentive
 - UCGSA.03: Financial Aid and Student Loans
- Submitted three responses to major government initiatives:
 - The Alberta Innovates Catalyst Grant
 - The Alberta 2024 Budget
 - The Provincial Priorities Act (Bill 18)
- Wrote and submitted a joint open letter with the University of Alberta Graduate Students' Association (UAGSA) on Bill 18.

Housing and Social Services Initiatives

- Wrote and submitted "Soften the Blow," a white paper on Quebec's tribunal-based "soft rent control" model, to the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Ministry for Seniors, Community, and Social Services.
- Opened dialogue with the Canadian Centre for Housing Rights regarding the white paper and hosted a roundtable, with the Students' Union, on student housing issues.
- Supported the Council of Alberta University Students' (CAUS) Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Alberta survey.

Business and Community Engagement

- Opened dialogue with the Calgary Chamber of Commerce, alongside the Students' Union, to gain business support for:
 - Increasing operating grant funding for universities
 - Funding affordable housing projects for students
 - Discussing solutions to food security problems facing Calgarians.



Media and Advocacy Campaigns

- Attended a joint press conference with the Alberta New Democratic Party (ANDP) on the threat Bill 18 poses to research funding and academic freedom.
- Throughout this period, the GSA was interviewed or quoted by multiple media outlets regarding white papers and open letters.

Notable Advoccacy Documents

- Soften the Blow (white paper)
- 2024 Budget Submission
- UCGSA Policy Library.

Key Advocacy Issues

- Business support for university funding and student housing
- Implementation of Quebec's "soft rent control" model
- Student housing issues and food security
- Responses to major government initiatives
- Sexual and gender-based violence in Alberta
- Academic freedom and research funding (Bill 18).

INSTITUTIONAL ADVOCACY

Tuition and Fees Consultation Successes

Successfully received all of our asks in the tuition and fees consultation process, alongside the Students' Union (SU) including:

- Reduction of tuition increases for course-based international students
- A commitment from the university to enhancing transparency around tuition and fees
- A commitment from the university to close the Graduate Program Administrator (GPA) gap that emerged due to funding cuts
- Creation of an international student crisis taskforce
- Creation of an expanded Community of Discussion forum around student affordability concerns

Feedback and Responses to University Decisions

• Submitted a response to the university's Board of Governors (BoG) vote on tuition and fee increases.

Food and Housing Initiatives

- Launched a Food and Housing survey to provide the GSA and the university with hard data on multiple aspects of food and housing insecurity faced by students.
- The Food Hub, an initiative first put forward by the GSA and spearheaded by the GSA, SU, and the Centre for Career and Person Development (CCPD), opened this year.

Key Advocacy Achievements

- Reduction of tuition increases for international students
- Increased transparency around tuition and fees
- Addressing the Graduate Program Administrator gap
- Creation of support structures for international students
- Data collection on student food and housing insecurity
- Opening of the Food Hub initiative

Collaborative Efforts

- Collaboration with the Students' Union (SU)
- Partnership with the Centre for Career and Person Development (CCPD)

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MUNICIPAL ADVOCACY





HOUSING AFFORDABILITY INITIATIVES

Supported the Students' Union's (SU) rally defending rezoning to ensure new lots are, by default, zoned for high-density housing, aiming to improve long-term housing affordability. Submitted a letter to City Hall supporting the Affordability Taskforce's housing policy recommendations.



HEALTH AND DENTAL PLAN

STUDENTCARE

5,755 grad students and family members were served by the GSA Extended Health and Dental Plan!



1-2

Business days on average for response times to general inquiries **\$765,761** Dental Claims **306** Virtual Healthcare visits \$1,145,036

Health Claims

*September 2023 to March 2024 data

TRANSITION TO CAMPUS TRUST

After extensive feedback from the graduate community, starting September 1, 2024, the GSA transitioned to a new health and dental provider, Campus Trust. Campus Trust is a not-for-profit organization with a strong reputation in Alberta and across Canada, and offers a user-friendly platform that processes claims quickly and fairly.

Key Changes:

- \$100 wellness benefit
- Faster reimbursement within 2 business
 days
- No blackout period
- User-friendly platform that provides clear insights into your benefits, including dental, physiotherapy, prescription drugs, and more.



2024-25 Focuses:

- Improving Health and Dental Services by reducing wait time for inquiries
- Advocating with the UCalgary Student Wellness Services for more student mental health support.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

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

GSA Bursaries			
	2022-2023	2023-2024	Increased \$
# Approved GSA bursaries	88	253	
# GSA bursary applications		1632	
\$ Of GSA bursaries	\$128,950.00	\$253,000.00	\$124,050.00

*Please note that for the 2022-2023 period, the total amount of \$858,242 included the Emergency and Support Bursary funds, which are now managed by the Registrar's Office. As a result, these funds are not reflected in the GSA's annual report.

Professional Development Grant (PDG)			
	2022-2023	2023-2024	Decreased \$
# approved PDG	95	55	
# PDG applications	273		
\$ of PDG	\$57,931.00	\$36,938.00	-\$20,993.00



Increase in GSA bursaries

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Citizenship Awards			
	2022-2023	2023-2024	Increased \$
# Citizenship Awards	19	20	
\$ Citizenship Award	\$38,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$2,000.00



Quality Money (QM)			
	2022-2023	2023-2024	Increased \$
# QM projects supported 69		78	
\$ to projects	\$209,218.00	\$236,420.00	\$27,202.00



2024-25 Focuses

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



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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

Legacy Drag Show

The GSA^2 Subcommittee hosted its second Newbie Night: Drag Show at the end of March. This event was a charity show, and \$3,602 was raised for the Skipping Stone Foundation.

In-Person Events

Organized over 115 fun, innovative, and engaging events with the Student Engagement Coordinator and the Student Engagement and Events Committee.

Committee and Subcommittee Highlighted

Events

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



42% graduate students

attended GSA events 1,494 discounted tickets sold

115 social events

100 Professional Development events

Presenters at Peer Beyond 900

Graduate students attended Fall GradO in partnership with the FGS

78 Approved Quality Money projects **\$236,420** Total Quality Money invested in graduate student initiatives

65 Active Graduate Student Associations \$3,602 Raised for Skipping Stone Foundation in the Drag Show

2024-25 Focuses

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

VOLUNTEERING & LEADERSHIP



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

We sincerely thank the 299 volunteers of our 8 committees, 4 subcommittees, various working groups. You empower the GSA to support graduate students to reach their fullest potential.

299 volunteers

343 departmental leaders 104 GRC members

GSA GSA Leadership Award Colin MacKenzie, Chair of the Mental Health Wellness Subcommittee



VOLUNTEER EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Lauren Bowron Samantha McIntosh Parth Pandya Jessica Revington Caroline Luszawski



ACADEMICALLY EMPLOYED GRADUATE STUDENT SUPPORT

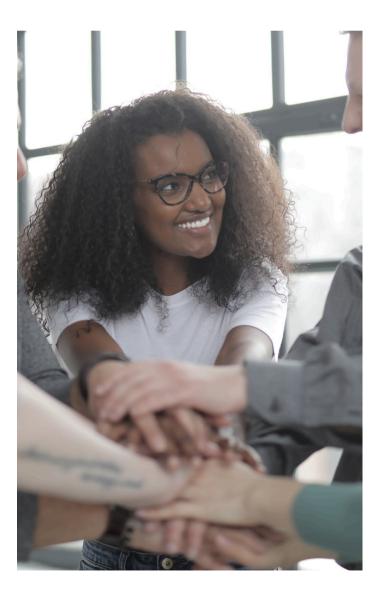
The GSA Graduate Labour Union (formerly known as the GSA Labour Relations Committee) represents, supports, and educates Academically Employed Graduate Students at the University of Calgary.



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



Karina Hincapie Martinez 2024-25 GSA AVP Labour Chair of the Graduate Labour Union



Notable Achievements:

- Developed a new logo and colour guide.
- Increased engagement through educative initiatives such as labour history lectures, and weekly socials
- Working to have shop stewards in most departments across campus
- Opened and launched the GLU office in MacEwan Hall.
- Offered 4 rounds of stewards training through the PSAC.
- Brought back General Members Meetings, holding one in October and one in February. Both with 40+ members in attendance.

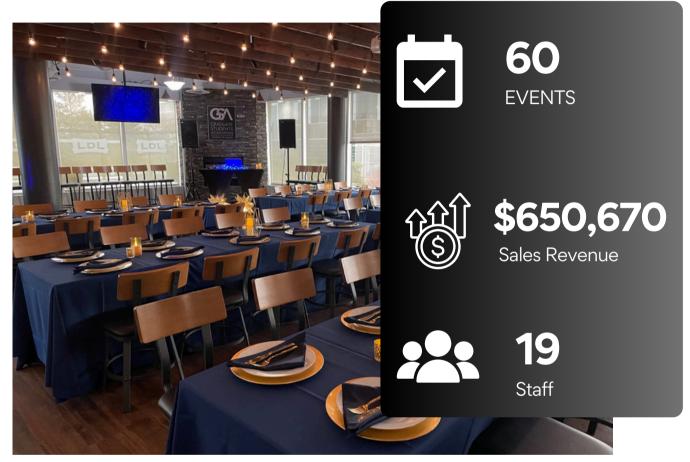
2024-25 Focus

 Negotiate a good deal for all Academically Employed Graduates in the collective bargaining.

LAST DEFENCE LOUNGE



The Last Defence Lounge (LDL) is a fully licensed restaurant operated by the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary, and located on the third floor MacEwan Student Centre (MSC 350).





Matt Broughton LDL General Manager

I want to start by thanking everyone who has supported the LDL over the past year. The LDL has once again had a fantastic year of unprecedented growth, achieving record breaking profitability. A special thank you to Chef Jim Doody for his work and all the dedicated staff here at the LDL.

The team at the GSA and LDL have worked tirelessly to ensure we maintain this trajectory amidst a difficult economic environment in the food service industry. Despite these challenges the LDL is committed to continuing to offer diverse and inclusive menus to accommodate as many tastes and budgets as possible. We've had the opportunity to share in the celebrations of so many student groups, faculties, and departments within the UCalgary community and with the expansion of our catering and events offerings we hope to enjoy many, many more during the upcoming academic year.

Without the continued support of the graduate student community and its partners on campus we would not have been able to achieve such lofty goals. I am very grateful to be part of such an amazing team and organization and am excited for the future of the of the LDL.

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

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Auditor's Report



GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2024, with comparative information for 2023

	2024		2023
Assets			
Current assets:			
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 3,035,901	\$	2,375,991
Accounts receivable	16,055		16,722
Inventory (note 6)	19,160		18,950
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,659,483		1,298,908
	4,730,599		3,710,571
Investments (note 3)	3,264,126		2,992,109
Property and equipment (note 4)	451,884		507,863
	\$ 8,446,609	\$	7,210,543
Current liabilities:	4 040 005	¢	000 045
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities (note 5)	\$ 1,219,605	\$	208,345
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities (note 5) Deferred revenue (health and dental premiums)	\$ 1,219,605 1,461,961 2,681,566	Ф	1,268,578 1,476,923
Deferred revenue (health and dental premiums)	\$ 1,461,961	Э	1,268,578
Deferred revenue (health and dental premiums)	\$ 1,461,961 2,681,566	ъ 	1,268,578 1,476,923
Deferred revenue (health and dental premiums) Net assets: Unrestricted	\$ 1,461,961 2,681,566 3,393,607	Э	1,268,578 1,476,923 3,095,555
Deferred revenue (health and dental premiums)	\$ 1,461,961 2,681,566	Ð	1,268,578 1,476,923 3,095,555 2,638,065
Deferred revenue (health and dental premiums) Net assets: Unrestricted	\$ 1,461,961 2,681,566 3,393,607 2,371,436	2	1,268,578 1,476,923

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

Approved on behalf of the Members:

President

VP of Finance & Services

GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Statement of Operations Year ended March 31, 2024, with comparative information for

2023

	2024	2023
Revenues:		
Graduate Students' Centre Lounge (Schedule 1)	\$ 653,426	\$ 518,816
Graduate Students' Association (Schedule 2)	5,605,150	5,342,549
	6,258,576	5,861,365
Cost of sales (Schedule 1)	206,555	173,824
General and administrative expenses:		
Graduate Students' Centre Lounge (Schedule 1)	441,305	390,209
Graduate Students' Association (Schedule 2)	5,679,628	4,929,622
	6,120,933	5,319,831
Excess of revenues over expenses before other items	(68,912)	367,710
Realized loss on disposal of investments	_	(8,768)
Change in unrealized gain (loss) on investments	102,648	(111,149)
Loss on disposal of property and equipment	(2,313)	_
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$ 31,423	\$ 247,793

See accompany notes to financial statements.



GET TO KNOW THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

If you had asked our new Executive Director at the age of five what he wanted to be when he grew up, he would have said, "just like my mom and dad." That dream has now come true. Graham's parents collectively worked on campus for over 50 years, and if you were around in the early '90s, you might have seen him climbing the giant rock on PD days.

Graham is thrilled to be the new Executive Director for the Graduate Students' Association. Over the past two decades, Graham has developed a diverse skill set in business operations, public engagement, management, policy, politics, higher education, and communications.

Before joining the GSA, Graham spent five years working for the member-based, not-for-profit tech organization Cybera, which includes all publicly funded post-secondary institutions. There, he supported strategic government relations and advocated on issues like rural broadband and digital inclusivity.

Prior to that, he served as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Calgary-Shaw as part of the Government Caucus. In this role, he helped combat Donald Trump's tariff regime against Canada while serving as the Vice President of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER). He also served as Chair for the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, responsible for the budgetary review of ministries such as Advanced Education and overseeing potential legislative changes, including the review of the abolishment of daylight saving time (he apologizes that you still have to change your clocks twice a year). During his time in government, he worked with his caucus to freeze tuition and maintain post-secondary funding growth based on inflation.

Graham also has experience in business management, having managed several restaurants in Calgary—skills that will complement the ongoing success of the Last Defense Lounge. He studied Television Broadcasting at Algonquin College and Political Science at Carleton University in Ottawa.

As Graham takes on this role, he looks forward to applying his skills to improve student engagement, deepen graduate students' ties to the university's overall success, enhance its role as a success factor within government, and grow the organization's capacity as UCalgary embarks on its most ambitious expansion of graduate students in the institution's history.

CONTACT US

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-25

Saaka Sulemana Saaka	GSA President - pres.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Alexandria Poppendorf	VP Academic - vpa.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Hunter Yaworski	VP External - vpext.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Nadia Ghazanfari	VP Student Life - vpsl.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Kaylee MacLean	VP Finance and Services - vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca

2024 - 25 GSA STAFF

Graham Sucha	Executive Director - gsaed@ucalgary.ca
Lina Girgis	Human Resources Manager - hr.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Christina Njongwe	Marketing & Communication Coordinator - gsaco@ucalgary.ca
Nicole Schmidt	Executive Coordinator - governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Allie Bishop	Student Engagement Coordinator - events.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Chantel Cadogan	Finance and Accounting Coordinator - gsaacct@ucalgary.ca
Isabel Martins	Administrative Assistant
Andrew Kemle	Advocacy Advisor - advocacy.gsa@ucalgary.ca