

Summary

Dear graduate students,

As we cross the halfway mark of our term, the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) continues to make steady progress on key priorities.

The Mintz Panel's report, to which the UCGSA contributed both testimony and a written submission, was released in October. Its recommendations, such as expanding non-repayable financial support, have potential benefits for graduate students. Following its release, we met with the Minister for Advanced Education to discuss the report's implications and share student perspectives.

After listening to your feedback, we advanced a comprehensive proposal through the Tuition and Fees Consultation Committee. GSA called for reducing international course-based tuition, better supporting course-based students through scholarships and paid work-integrated learning opportunities, family housing investment, and improved clarity on program tuition and fees.

In governance and planning, we sought membership input on draft bylaws, which are now under legal review, while parallel work has begun on updating policies. The development of the GSA Strategic Plan 2026–2029 is ahead of schedule, with membership engagement beginning soon. Additionally, we've launched a new institutional memory tool, an initiative that enhances operational efficiency and saves approximately \$10,000 annually.

Beyond campus, we continue to develop and strengthen our relationships with other student associations. By exchanging ideas on advocacy, governance, and student support, all associations gain valuable insights and align efforts on shared priorities.

Finally, we are preparing for federal advocacy through our partner Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA). We are working on advocacy briefs on federal issues that you shared with us. These include addressing housing, employment, and extended waiting times for study permit extension and post-graduate work permit approval.

Thank you for staying informed and engaged in shaping a stronger graduate community. For questions or ideas, please reach out at pres.gsa@ucalgary.ca

Irtaza Sohail
President, 2025–26

Annual Goals

Goal	Timeline	Update
New GSA Bylaws, policies and procedures	August – Review new bylaws September – Solicit membership feedback October – Implementation November – April – Writing supporting policies and procedures (subject to revision if further iterations are needed according to membership feedback)	Membership feedback was solicited via various means and bylaws draft was updated accordingly. Draft have been sent for legal review to ensure compliance with applicable legislation. Work has started on policy revisions.
GSA Strategic Plan 2026-2029	August – RFP creation November – Consultant selection December – February – Membership engagements March – Preliminary report April – Final report	Proposals were reviewed and consultant have been shortlisted. We are expecting to start membership engagements ahead of planned schedule.
Minimum Funding Standard Revision	According to FGS timeline	Complete. Details available on website.
Tuition & Fees Advocacy	September – Survey to determine if the graduate students understand the financial impact of their programs October – If program costs are ambiguous to students, proposal to make them clearer will be forwarded to TFCC (According to Tuition and Fees Consultation Committee timeline)	Comprehensive counterproposal presented to the university with following asks: 1. Capping course-based international tuition at 2% 2. Supporting course-based students by paid work-integrated-learning and scholarships 3. Investment in family housing 4. Increasing accessibility around tuition and fees 5. Improving Graduate Program Administrator support
Improve internal systems and organizational capabilities	November – April – Reviewing and improving GSA policies	New tool developed and launched for institutional memory, leveraging expertise of graduate students and saving ~\$10,000 per year.
Advocacy	Ongoing	See VP external report and GSA website.

Key Meetings / Events

Meeting	Date	Notes
International Student Services	Sep 4	International student advocacy needs
Strategic plan guidance with BVC	Sep 15	Importance of long-term objectives for GSA strategic plan
Ancillary services rates consultation	Sep 15	University proposal for rates increases
General counsel and VP P&C	Sep 16	Discussion on intellectual property, student supervisor relations and international student advocacy
FGS Dean	Sep 16	Discussion on governance, strategic plan and international student advocacy.

UAlberta GSA President	Sep 16	Discussed internship programs, scholarships for course-based students, TFCC, governance and advocacy
CASA chair	Sep 19	Federal and provincial advocacy strategies
Tuition and Fees Consultation Committee	Sep 22	University presented rationale behind increases and shared ancillary services rates
Townhall	Sep 23	Concerns about lack of TA positions for international students in first semester; request to expand co-op opportunities for grads.
GFC EC	Sep 24	UCalgary's 60th anniversary (April 2026) plans
FGS Council	Sep 25	Discussion on tri-agency scholarships for international students; governance modifications
Bylaws Virtual Drop-in Session	Sep 26	Students' feedback on bylaws.
Graduate College Oversight Committee	Sep 29	Review of governance structure. Potential for collaboration between GSA and graduate college.
TFCC Townhall	Oct 02	University justified fee increases; grad students raised concerns about MNIFs, Foothills gym costs, scholarships, and long-term financial planning.
Graduate Bursary	Oct 03	Trends; potential emergency bursary for parents affected by ATA strike.
UAlberta GSA President	Oct 05	Provincial budget submission and advocacy
FGS Dean	Oct 09	Discussion on minimum funding announcement
GFC	Oct 09	President's address. Transdisciplinary research.
CASA advocacy week prep	Oct 10	Discussion about expectations and UCalgary graduate students' concerns for federal advocacy.
GSA TFCC counterproposal	Oct 15	Counterproposal points in goals above.
FGS Dean	Oct 15	Expansion of paid work-integrated learning opportunities for graduate students
GFC EC	Oct 15	Feedback on student risk arising from international student concerns and housing.
QM advocacy	Oct 16	QM renewal advocacy strategy
Arch Awards	Oct 16	Promoting soft image of GSA
Minister for advanced education	Oct 20	Implications of Mintz panel report.
VP Student Experience	Oct 21	Graduate student housing, quality money renewal
President IGSA	Oct 21	Support for student events
TFCC presentation for BoG	Oct 22	Review TFCC narrative with BoG representative
CASA Lobby meeting 101	Oct 23	Training for lobbying for federal advocacy
CASA Mock meetings	Oct 24	Practicing lobbying for federal advocacy
CASA chair	Oct 27	Discussing on how to present UCalgary graduate students' specific concerns at federal level
AUArts SU	Oct 28	Federal advocacy situation update
UAlberta GSA President	Oct 28	Response to back-to-work for teachers
Annual report presentation	Oct 29	GSA audited financial statement review
CASA Executive Director	Oct 31	How to present UCalgary graduate students' specific concerns at federal level