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Reporting Period: September – October 2025

Summary

Over September and October 2025, the GSA Vice-President External portfolio focused on advancing the collective voice of graduate students through local, provincial, and federal advocacy. Efforts included representing graduate students at key university committees, provincial roundtables, and national advocacy organizations such as CASA (Canadian Alliance of Student Associations). Major milestones this term included the successful launch and closure of the first comprehensive Advocacy Survey, the initiation of provincial advocacy coordination among Alberta's graduate student associations, participation in tuition and fee consultations, and engagement with civic leaders related to the October 20th municipal election, and federal stakeholders around housing, affordability, and student financial aid.

Annual Goals

Goal	Update
Comprehensive Advocacy Survey Early Fall 2025	The GSA launched its first comprehensive advocacy survey between mid-September and October 6, 2025, receiving 469 responses (a 6.1% response rate). The survey gathered data on student funding, housing, supervision, and affordability. This information will guide advocacy priorities for the coming year and will inform both provincial and federal policy submissions. Prize draws, including a MacBook and 20 \$20 LDL gift cards, encouraged participation and generated strong engagement.
Advocacy & Representation	Strengthen relationships with external organizations, policymakers, and University administration to amplify graduate student concerns. Advocating for improved funding policies, including increased minimum stipends and tuition support. Push for policies that enhance international student support, addressing admission complexities, visa concerns, and cultural integration
Community Engagement & Awareness	Organize forums and surveys to gather student feedback and ensure their voices are heard in external advocacy efforts. Increase awareness of advocacy initiatives through clear and consistent communication. Collaborate with student groups to support marginalized communities and promote equity-focused policies.
Policy & Institutional Change	Work with university leadership to improve research funding opportunities and reduce financial burdens. Advocate for sustainable and affordable housing options for graduate students, including municipal-level initiatives.

Strategic Partnerships & Networking	Expand collaborations with national and provincial student advocacy groups to strengthen lobbying efforts. Build relationships with industry leaders and faculty fundraising teams to create more professional development and career transition opportunities for graduate students.
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Meetings / Events

Meeting	Date	Notes
Campus Expo	Sept 4	Similar to an orientation event
Meeting with varsity courts stakeholder to discuss family housing	Sept 5	Varsity Courts will be demolished spring 2026 and students are worrying about how families, and especially women/mothers are being discriminated against
CASA GAC Meeting	Sept 8	Discuss Graduate Student issues to present to the CASA National advisory Committee (NAC)
CASA Federal Advocacy Issue – Financial Aid for Grad students	Sept 8	They are asking me to be a presenter to National Advisory Group on Student Financial Aid (NAGSFA) about Grad Student experiences
GSA Friends & Family Appreciation Event	Sept 8	
Provincial Advocacy Group – Standing Meeting	Sept 9	Alberta GSA board members are trying to form an unofficial group to work on provincial advocacy specifically on behalf of Graduate Students
CASA On the Road	Sept.10	CASA came to promote their services. We set them up on ES Main floor with a table, swag, and a banner and helped
Planning and Development Committee	Sept.10	Met at University District to learn about the next phases of the property's development.
Advocacy Committee Meeting	Sept.11	Discussion about having committee volunteers be nominated by existing committees (GSA2^, Mental Health, etc.) to participate in both. These people are already passionate.
GSA Executive with FGS Dean Quarterly	Sept.12	Discussion about UCGSA request for teacher's strike – all accommodation requests denied by Tara. Otherwise just

		provided updates on each portfolio's activities during the summer. Sarah mentioned upcoming advocacy initiatives.
UCPG - Board meeting and election	Sept.17	Sarah was officially approved on the board, instead of an observer. Discussions primarily were related to property development.
Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) Policy Committee Meeting	Sept.18	To discuss policy improvements for various academic items, including thesis-examinations.
CASA Professional Speakers Check-in	Sept.19	CASA wants a greater media presence. They want me to develop and prepare something about the student loan interest rate they can shop around to media outlets.
CASA Finance Review	Sept.19	A review of CASA's finances and explanation for budget. Feedback solicited about how they can improve services without increasing fees.
CASA check-in	Sept.19	To check in with how things are going for GSA advocacy and discuss next week's e-plenary.
CASA GIRC Consultation	Sept.22	CASA presenting their proposed adjustments to the Governance of the organization
Tuition and Fees Consultation Committee (TFCC)	Sept.19	Second round of discussions related to the proposed tuition and fees increases for the 2026-27 year.
Fall Food Security Fair	Oct. 1	13 educational booths focused on student resources (both on and off campus - CFB, Food Hub, Community Kitchen, nutritionist etc.) 7-9 vendors anticipated (must be selling something affordable)
GSA Advocacy Committee Meeting	Oct. 2	Discussion about ongoing advocacy issues, municipal election, forming the committee.
Meeting about the White Paper Press Release	Oct. 2	Discussion about how to handle media requests to speak about the White Paper

Ancillary Services Rates	Oct. 2	Presentation of the proposed rate increases and future plans for student residences, student mal plans, and campus parking
Mayoral Debate	Oct. 3	Watched the candidates for mayor debate issues impactful and important to post-secondary students.
Graduate Townhall	Oct. 6	To share updates on what the GSA has been working on.
Provincial Advocacy Week	Oct. 8	Discussion about whether we should travel to Edmonton in November or early 2026 for Provincial Advocacy MLA meetings
Minimum Funding Announcement Planning	Oct. 9	Discussion about whether to, and how to announce the new minimum funding agreement with Graduate students (since some faculties already have shared this info with students and we are getting questions)
Ward 7 Debate	Oct. 9	In MacEwan Ballroom, candidates faced questions from Julia Law (UCSU VP External, and the audience)
Tuition and Fee consultation Committee (TFCC)	Oct. 15	SU and GSA presented counterproposals for the 2026-27 Tuition and Fees proposal tabled by the University
UCalgary Government Relations monthly meeting	Oct. 15	Discussed the results of the Mintz Panel Recommendations to the Alberta Government, and the upcoming Municipal Election on Oct. 20 th
ii'taa'poh'to'p Working Circle 1	Oct. 15	Met with various campus stakeholders to discuss how to improve the experience of Indigenous students at UCalgary.
CASA – Advocacy week (Nov. 15) preparation	Oct. 16	Provided information about UCGSA Federal advocacy priorities
National Advisory Group on Student Financial Assistance	Oct. 16	Rehearsal of the 45 presentation we will give to NAGSFA in Ottawa (virtually) next week.
Alberta Graduate Advisory Group (AGAG)	Oct. 17	Met to discuss the provincial advocacy needs of Alberta university Graduate students.

Minister McDougall on Campus for tour and discussion	Oct. 20	Sarah missed due to migraine.
Campus Food Hub Steering Committee	Oct. 21	To discuss needs and plans for the Campus Food Hub and provided data that I can share at CASA Federal Advocacy week on food insecurity.
CASA – National Advocacy Committee (NAC) Monthly meeting	Oct. 22	To discuss National Advocacy priorities as well as the upcoming Advocacy Week in Ottawa
Killam Awards Ceremony	Oct. 22	Was the GSA representative at this prestigious award ceremony honouring this year's Killam Award Recipients
CASA National Advisory Group on Student Financial Aid (NAGSFA) Presentation Run-through 2	Oct. 23	Practice of 1-hour presentation for NAGSFA that will happen next week. We will be discussing the importance of funding Graduate Students in Canada
CASA Lobby Meeting 101	Oct. 23	Information session about what CASA advocacy week looks like and the structure of MP meetings.
Advocacy Team Meeting	Oct. 23	To discuss the importance and format of a specific advocacy related regular communication that will go out to membership.
CASA Mock Meeting	Oct. 24	Practice the structure of taking meetings with MP's during Advocacy Week in November 2025.
Mayor-elect Jeromy Farkas	Oct. 24	The mayor-elect called the student union/assoc. leaders of Calgary to meet and provide him with insights about the issues that are important to students.
Alberta Graduate Advocacy Group (AGAG)	Oct. 28	Discussion about approaching Provincial advocacy collectively this year

Other Business

By the end of October, advocacy survey results were being aggregated and analyzed to inform the GSA's upcoming strategic plan. The Advocacy Committee completed recruitment, onboarding eight volunteers assigned to thematic advocacy areas such as international students, mental health, and equity. The committee is also updating its Terms of Reference to better align with institutional advocacy needs and student priorities.

The VP External additionally monitored key policy developments, including the Government of Alberta's introduction of Bill 2 – the Back-to-School Act – which invoked the Notwithstanding Clause to impose a collective agreement on teachers. The GSA publicly expressed concern about the precedent this sets for workers' rights and collective bargaining in Alberta. At the same time, the portfolio continued to work closely with UCalgary's Government Relations team and Faculty of Graduate Studies to coordinate on issues such as minimum funding implementation and long-term affordability measures.

Across the two-month period, the VP External contributed more than 150 hours across meetings, events, and correspondence, reflecting the sustained commitment to advocacy and representation for all graduate students at the University of Calgary.