

## GSA Council Meeting CONSOLIDATED AGENDA

Monday, March 20, 2017 at 6:00 pm  
2-100 University Hall, Van Vliet Complex

The GSA acknowledges that the University of Alberta is situated on Treaty Six Territory and Métis homelands.

**Substantive material** is sent to all GSA Council members at least one week prior to the date of the meeting to give members abundant time to review (in accordance with the Standing Orders of Council). Any additional substantive material received after this mailing will be emailed as soon as possible.

**Reports** from committees, Directly-Elected Officers, and management are emailed the Friday before a Monday meeting so that the content is as current as possible.

### Speaker Sulya Fenichel in the Chair

A pizza dinner will be served at 5:15 pm.

#### OPEN SESSION

#### Attached Numbered Pages

1. Roll Call
2. Approval of the 20 March 2017 Agenda
3. Approval of the Minutes from the 27 February 2017 GSA Council Meeting  
*Attachment:*
  - i. Minutes from the 27 February 2017 GSA Council Meeting **3.0 - 3.11**
4. Changes in GSA Council Membership
  - i. Introduction of New Councillors (*If you are new to GSA Council, please let us know it is your first meeting*)
  - ii. Farewell to Departing Councillors (*If this is your last GSA Council meeting, or if your last meeting is approaching, please let us know*)

#### Councillor Announcements

5. Councillor Announcements

#### Action Items

6. GSA Health and Dental Plan Fees for 2017-2018  
**Sarah Ficko (GSA President) will present the item and introduce the guests.**  
Guests: Kristin Foster, Director of Partnership and Development, Studentcare, and Colten Yamagishi, Program Manager, Studentcare

#### *Attachments:*

- Cover Letter from the GSA President and GSA Vice-President Student Services to GSA Council **6.0**
- Outline of Issue **6.1**

**Reminder:** A Health and Dental 101 session was offered on Tuesday, March 14, from 1:30 PM to 2:30 PM. If you would like to arrange for a session on Monday, March 20, please contact [gsa.frontdesk@ualberta.ca](mailto:gsa.frontdesk@ualberta.ca)

7. Proposed Changes to GSA Policy on GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards  
**Ali Talaei (GSA Vice-President Student Services) will present the item.**

*Attachments:*

- Cover Letter from the GSA Vice-President Student Services to GSA Council 7.0
- Outline of Issue 7.1
- GSA Policy on Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards – Double Column of Recommended Changes 7.2 - 7.6

8. 2017 GSA General Election Results: To Receive For Information For Purposes of Transferring Banking Signing Authority  
**Sarah Ficko (GSA President) will present the item.**

*Attachments:*

- Outline of Issue 8.0

9. Motion Proposed by the Graduate Students of English Collective Concerning Discussion of Unionization  
**Sarah Ficko (GSA President) will present the item.**

*Attachments:*

- Outline of Issue 9.0
- Letter from the Graduate Students of English Collective 9.1 - 9.3
- Response from the GSA 9.4 - 9.6

**Elections, Appointments, Special Business, Updates**

10. GSA Council Elections

None at this time

**Discussion**

11. List of Questions to Ask Before Applying To Graduate Studies  
**Sarah Ficko (GSA President) will present the item.**

*Attachment:*

- List of Questions To Ask Before Applying to Graduate Studies 11.0 - 11.3

**Reports**

12. President (**Sarah Ficko, GSA President**)

- i. President's Report 12.0 - 12.5
- ii. GSA Board 12.6
- iii. GSA Budget and Finance Committee (**no meetings this reporting period**)
- iv. GSA Governance Committee (**no meetings this reporting period – GSA GC will meet in late March to discuss changes to GSA Bylaw and Policy on GSA Council, GSA Standing Committees, GSA Caucuses, and GSA Officers**)

13. GSA Nominating Committee (**Radim Barta, GSA Nominating Committee Chair**)

- i. GSA Nominating Committee Report 13.0

14. Vice-President Academic (**Firouz Khodayari, GSA Vice-President Academic**)

- i. Vice-President Academic's Report 14.0 - 14.1

15. Vice-President External (**Masoud Khademi, GSA Vice-President External**)

- i. Vice-President External's Report 15.0 - 15.1
- ii. GSA Awards Selection Committee (**no meetings this reporting period**)

<b>16. Vice-President Labour (Sasha van der Klein, GSA Vice-President Labour)</b>	
i. Vice-President Labour's Report	<b>16.0 - 16.1</b>
ii. GSA Negotiating Committee (no meetings this reporting period)	
iii. GSA Labour Relations Committee (no meetings this reporting period)	
<b>17. Vice-President Student Services (Alireza Talaei, GSA Vice-President Student Services)</b>	
i. Vice-President Student Services' Report	<b>17.0</b>
ii. GSA Student Affairs Advisory Committee (Joint Chair: Vice-President External) (no meetings this reporting period)	
<b>18. Senator (Jane Traynor, GSA Senator)</b>	
i. Senator's Report	<b>18.0 - 18.4</b>
<b>19. Speaker (Sulya Fenichel, GSA Speaker)</b>	
i. Speaker's Report (no written report at this time)	
<b>20. Chief Returning Officer (Carolina Martinez, GSA Chief Returning Officer)</b>	
i. Chief Returning Officer's Report	<b>20.0</b>
<b>21. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (Leigh Spanner, GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Chair)</b>	
i. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Report	<b>21.0</b>
<b>22. GSA Management (Courtney Thomas, GSA Executive Director)</b>	
i. Executive Director's Report	<b>22.0 - 22.3</b>

#### **Question Period**

- 23. Written Questions (none at this time)**
- 24. Oral Questions**

#### **Adjournment**

**GSA Council Meeting MINUTES**  
Monday, February 27, 2017 at 6:00 pm  
2-100 University Hall, Van Vliet Complex

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Sarah Ficko (President)	Ahmed Najar (Councillor-at-Large)	Amanda Radil (Ed Psych)	Mischa Bandet (Neuroscience)
Firouz Khodayari (VP Academic)	Christina Poletto (Anthropology)	David Li (Electrical & Computer Engineering)	Daniel Kyrz; Radim Barta (Oncology)
Sasha van der Klein (VP Labour)	Michael Woolley (Art & Design)	Lorna Sutherland (Elementary Education)	Ashley Bahry (Paediatrics)
Masoud Khademi (VP External)	Swai Mon Khaing (Biochemistry)	Kevin Kvas (English & Film Studies)	Andrew Woodman (Pharmacology)
Ali Taleai (VP Student Services)	Francesca Jean (Biological Sciences)	Neil Prather (History & Classics)	Hanin Aburasayn (Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences)
Sulya Fenichel (Speaker)	Graham Little (Biomedical Engineering)	Mohammed Abdul-Bari (Human Ecology)	Jay Worthy (Philosophy)
Preshit Verma (Deputy Speaker)	Katie Lafreniere (Business PhD)	Evgeniya Kuznetsova (Humanities Computing)	Stephen Hunter (Phys Ed & Rec)
Carolina Martinez (Chief Returning Officer)	Karl Roesner (Cell Biology)	Shivam Srivastava (Internetworking)	Drew Shepherd (Physics)
Darcy Bemister (Deputy Returning Officer)	Mengqi Fang (Chemical & Materials Engineering)	Faisal Hirji (Lab Medicine & Pathology)	Brayden Whitlock (Physiology)
Jane Traynor (Senator)	Anis Fahandj-Sadi (Chemistry)	Atticus Harrigan (Linguistics)	Michal Juhas (Psychiatry)
Michelle Campbell (Councillor-at-Large)	Wai Man Wong (Civil & Environmental Engineering)	Michelle Michelle (Math & Statistical Sciences)	Joshua Yong (Psychology)
Colin More (Councillor-at-Large)	Natalie Mahé (Communication Sciences & Disorders)	Masoud Aliramezani (Mechanical Engineering)	Kevin Lien (Public Health)
Nicole Noel (Councillor-at-Large)	Roshan Shariff (Computing Science)	Fahed Elian (Medical Genetics)	Maryse Ndilu Kiese; Owain Bamforth (Religious Studies)
Phil Oel (Councillor-at-Large)	Brette Harris (Earth & Atmo Sciences)	Melisa Silva (Medicine)	Stephanie Le (Resource Economics & Environmental Sociology)
Ned Onwugbufor (Councillor-at-Large)	Melody Li (East Asian Studies)	Jay Friesen (MLCS)	Antonio Bruni (Surgery)
Dasha Smirnow (Councillor-at-Large)	Marcia East (Ed Policy Studies)	David Parent (Native Studies)	Danika Jorgensen (Women's and Gender Studies)

**Guests:** B Soltannia (Mechanical Engineering); A Ahmed (Nominee; Civil & Environmental Engineering)

Speaker Sulya Fenichel in the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. Speaker acknowledged the Traditional Territory of Treaty Six and Métis homelands.

**Roll Call****1. Roll Call of Council Members in Attendance**



**Approval of Agenda****2. Approval of the 27 February 2017 Consolidated Agenda**

Members had before them the 27 February 2017 Consolidated Agenda, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. A Radil **MOVED**; M Khademi **SECONDED**.

K Kvas brought forward the following motion to amend the agenda.

**MOTION BEFORE COUNCIL:** Whereas the GSA is a democratic and transparent organization representing the interests of graduate students.

And Whereas the GSA submitted a pro-PSLA (Post-Secondary Learning Act) position alongside The Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC), which was also echoed in a letter from University Presidents to the Minister of Advanced Education, without adequate consultation with graduate students at the University of Alberta.

And Whereas the GSA's current position is an infringement upon the January 30, 2015 decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour v. Saskatchewan that sets a clear precedent for the GSA and other graduate students' collectives or associations to pursue union representation.

And Whereas this position is the representation of 62 graduate students of the approximately 15,000 within Alberta.

And Whereas the allotted consultation period, which the GSA initiated in the Special Bulletin of September 28, 2016, was inadequate because it concluded on October 4, 2016 and did not include robust consultation with graduate students.

And Whereas discussions of unionization were only presented and briefly discussed in GSA council during the September 26, 2016 meeting.

Be It Resolved That: GSEC [Graduate Students of English Collective] requests that the GSA conduct a town hall to survey graduate student interest in unionization, as well as make publicly available any letters, minutes, or documentation between the GSA and ab-GPAC pertaining to the GSA's position on unionization. I motion that discussions of such matters be added to the current agenda.

S Fenichel pointed out that she received an email on Friday, February 17 at 5:15 PM, following the first mailing, from the S Humble (Councillor, English & Film Studies) to bring this item to GSA Council. She added that after meeting with the GSA H Hogg, S Ficko, and J Tanguay, she decided that due to other pressing matters on the agenda, that this was already discussed at previous Councils, that there were multiple town halls hosted by the University, that students were asked to submit their feedback to the GSA and ab-GPAC, and that there were no open channels to Government to submit any feedback, this item should not be included.

B Whitlock asked if 15 minutes was a realistic length of time to have this discussion and why GSEC felt this sense of urgency. K Kvas responded that they had been trying to draw the attention of the GSA to these issues for months and had been repeatedly turned down and they felt it has not been discussed enough. He added that this issue is time and GSA election sensitive.

C More asked S Fenichel how this should work as the GSA President was not present but was deeply involved with the issue. R Barta stated that it was important for S Ficko (GSA President) to be here for the discussion but not necessarily the vote to hold the discussion. D Parent agreed. K Kvas pointed out that the topic at hand was to decide if further discussion was needed and this should only take fifteen minutes.

J Traynor asked S Fenichel about the projected length of today's meeting. S Fenichel estimated two hours and forty minutes

D Parent added that if we choose to add this agenda item later it could be tabled to another meeting. This vote would bring the discussion to the floor. S Fenichel verified that this was correct.

B Whitlock stated that if we accepted this motion and it took 15 minutes, he was willing to hear them out.

S Fenichel pointed out that a motion to amend the agenda requires a two-thirds majority vote in favour to be approved.

**MOTION:** Whereas the GSA is a democratic and transparent organization representing the interests of graduate students.

And Whereas the GSA submitted a pro-PSLA (Post-Secondary Learning Act) position alongside The Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC), which was also echoed in a letter from University Presidents to the Minister of Advanced Education, without adequate consultation with graduate students at the University of Alberta.

And Whereas the GSA's current position is an infringement upon the January 30, 2015 decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour v. Saskatchewan that sets a clear precedent for the GSA and other graduate students' collectives or associations to pursue union representation.

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42 Approved; 8 Opposed; 6 Abstained (D Smirnow, M Khademi)  
**APPROVED** as Amended.

### Approval of Minutes

#### **3. Minutes from the 23 January 2017 GSA Council meeting**

Members had before them the 23 January 2017 GSA Council Minutes, which had been previously distributed on 17 February 2017. A Radil **MOVED**; A Talaei **SECONDED**.

Motion **PASSED** unanimously.

### Changes in Council Membership

#### **4. Changes in GSA Council Membership**

##### **i. Introduction of New Councillors**

This was the first meeting for a number of Councillors: D Jorgensen (WGS); S Le (REES)

##### **ii. Farewell to Departing Councillors**

This was the last meeting for a number of Councillors: None

### Councillor Announcements

#### **5. Councillor Announcements**

D Jorgensen announced that the Faculty of Arts Academic Strategic Plan Working Committee was looking for feedback from the University community as they mapped the direction for the next five years. She added that there was a short survey in *Anthology* and she encouraged graduate students to participate. She added that a draft Plan would be submitted on May 25.

### Action Items

#### **6. Annual Operating and Capital Budget (2017-2018) and Restricted and Other Funding Budget (2017-2018) AND Annual Operating and Capital Three-Year Budget/Business Plan (2017-2020) and Restricted and Other Funding Three-Year Budget/Business Plan (2017-2020)**

Sarah Ficko (GSA President) will present the item.

- i. **MOTION BEFORE COUNCIL:** That, having been recommended by the GSA BFC and GSA Board, GSA Council **APPROVE** the Annual Operating and Capital Budget (2017-2018) (found on pages 6.6 to 6.14 in the attached

material in the “2017-2018 Budget for Approval” **column bordered in red on each page**) and the Restricted and Other Funding Budget (2017-2018) (found on page 6.28 in the attached material in the “2017-2018 Budget for Approval” **column bordered in red**).

- ii. **MOTION BEFORE COUNCIL:** That, having been reviewed and advised upon by the GSA BFC and recommended by the GSA Board, GSA Council **RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION** the Annual Operating and Capital Three-Year Budget/Business Plan (2017-2020) and Restricted and Other Funding Three-Year Budget/Business Plan (2017-2020) (pages 6.6 to 6.14 and 6.28 in the attached material).

S Ficko noted that the financial team had been working on the budget since November, that GSA Budget and Finance Committee (GSA BFC) had reviewed it twice and that GSA Board had reviewed it once. She indicated that this was a conservative budget as we were unsure of next year’s student enrollment (it may increase). She highlighted that there are increases in opportunities to return money back to graduate students including an increase from \$100 to \$200 of GSA Council Remuneration and increase of the money available for the GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Award.

C Thomas added that the GSA financial team was confident in the budget as it achieved a positive bottom line and it would build up the Stabilization Fund. She added that the GSA BFC did a lot of work on this budget. She also indicated that the GSA office offered two Budget 101’s prior to the meeting for GSA Councillors interested in learning more about the budget and that more sessions could be offered if there was an interest.

1. **MOTION:** That, having been recommended by the GSA BFC and GSA Board, GSA Council **APPROVE** the Annual Operating and Capital Budget (2017-2018) (found on pages 6.6 to 6.14 in the attached material in the “2017-2018 Budget for Approval” **column bordered in red on each page**) and the Restricted and Other Funding Budget (2017-2018) (found on page 6.28 in the attached material in the “2017-2018 Budget for Approval” **column bordered in red**). S Ficko **MOVED**. M Khademi **SECONDED**.

Motion **PASSED** unanimously

2. **MOTION:** That, having been reviewed and advised upon by the GSA BFC and recommended by the GSA Board, GSA Council **RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION** the Annual Operating and Capital Three-Year Budget/Business Plan (2017-2020) and Restricted and Other Funding Three-Year Budget/Business Plan (2017-2020) (pages 6.6 to 6.14 and 6.28 in the attached material). S Ficko **MOVED**. M Khademi **SECONDED**.

Motion **PASSED** unanimously

## 7. GSA 2016-2017 Budget and Expenditure (Quarterly) Report

Sarah Ficko (GSA President) will present the item.

**MOTION BEFORE COUNCIL:** That GSA Council **RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION** the GSA 2016-2017 Budget and Expenditure (Quarterly) Report.

S Ficko noted that the GSA continued to be in good financial health and that additional details could be found in the attached documents. C Thomas added that the cover letter pointed out any over or under expenditures and that this information was used as a reference to build the 2017-2018 GSA Budget.

**MOTION:** That GSA Council **RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION** the GSA 2016-2017 Budget and Expenditure (Quarterly) Report. S Ficko **MOVED**. A Talaie **SECONDED**.

Motion **PASSED** unanimously

## Elections

### 8. GSA Council Elections

Radim Barta (Chair of the GSA Nominating Committee) presented the first item. Sulya Fenichel (GSA Speaker) presented the second item.

R Barta explained that GSA Council was voting on one nomination for the GSA Appeals and Complaints Board, for which there were four vacancies. The GSA Nominating Committee (GSA NoC), after interviewing the nominee, saw no reason not to forward this nominee to GSA Council for consideration.

S Fenichel presented the same candidate for the GSA NoC, as the GSA NoC should not present a nominee to GSA Council for their own committee.

a. GSA Appeals and Complaints Board

Nominee for GSA Appeals and Complaints Board:  
Ahsan Ahmed (Civil & Environmental Engineering)

b. GSA Nominating Committee

Nominees for GSA Nominating Committee:  
Ahsan Ahmed (Civil & Environmental Engineering)

**For Discussion**

**9. “The Doctoral Dissertation – Purpose, Content, Structure, Assessment”**

S Ficko presented the item and she noted that the discussion about the purpose of the PhD had been ongoing for a couple of years. She indicated that at the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies (CAGS) Conference in November, the question “what is a PhD, why do we get one, and what is its value” was posed. She added that CAGS had been sending a document around for feedback and that a number of questions were discussed in a workshop session at FGSR Council last month but that she would like to broaden the discussion. She presented the questions for discussion and she explained that these could be used as a starting point to discuss the purpose of graduate studies. GSA Council was invited to break into small groups to discuss the following questions:

1. Why did you pursue grad studies?
  - If you’re a Masters student, are you planning on pursuing a PhD? Why/why not?
2. What are some of the knowledge/training gaps that have emerged for you progress through your program?
3. How do you think your committee could help you with this?
4. Who should serve as supervisors?
5. What does “supervision” mean to you and what form should it take?
6. What would your program ideally look like (ie. broken into courses/research/service or perhaps teaching/research/service)?
7. How could you most effectively demonstrate the work you’ve undertaken for your dissertation (ie. written or in some other format)?

After the small group discussion, each group shared the highlights of their discussion.

Group 1:

1. Some students thought it would be cool to get paid to do cool stuff and research, were unsatisfied with other jobs, and felt that grad school would open new opportunities. Some programs were not taught at the undergrad level.
2. Professional development was lacking; many professors had not had non-academic jobs and are not helpful. The new Individual Development Plan (IDP) might help in the long term. Supervisors shouldn’t get in the way; you may need to go elsewhere to gain soft skills. Working as part of a group was an important soft skill – maybe supervisors could facilitate this to help improve management and communication skills.
4. This is field-dependent; someone with a PhD who knows what they are doing; co-supervision might be helpful.
6. Programs should have less course-work, or at least more relevant courses.

Group 2:

2. Some knowledge gaps discussed were a direct result of the political climate in the US (restricted from visiting a collaborator in the US). A lack of transparency in knowledge areas such as project management and planning was noted. Mentorship was helpful, as was working with other graduate students.
3. Your committee could help by delegating supervisor activities from grad student to grad student.
4. Supervisors should be experts in the field, although not necessarily with a PhD, but some competency should be required. They should challenge you and provide expertise.
6. Programs should look like lab research with an outreach/knowledge translation component. Group did not agree on how much coursework should be required. Teaching would be a useful requirement.

Group 3:

Group discussed their very different backgrounds, and the benefits of courses vs. no courses and how this impacted engagement with peers to build soft skills. Candidacy could be formatted differently but they found that regardless of their different fields, the exams were similar and also a more positive experience than anticipated. Being able to effectively demonstrate the work undertaken in dissertations was not necessarily captured in all research. Required knowledge translation would only work for some disciplines. Supervision could look different and mean different things across disciplines. Dissertations should be about intellectual pursuits but how do we apply what we learn in academia into knowledge translation? The IDP does not make everyone happy in how it is set up – what are the competencies that the University would like to see graduates gain and how do you demonstrate those competencies?

Group 4:

1. Most pursued graduate studies to increase their job potential; most in the group will not pursue PhDs for any reason other than more teaching opportunities.
3. Most supervisors do not have time for grad students; industry specific training is missing. Committees should have more interaction and provide more input.
4. Supervisors should have PhDs; they should mentor, advise, give feedback, and set goals and expectations from the start.
6. Programs should be a combination of a written component and something else.

Group 5:

1. Most in the group pursued grad studies for career and job prospects; a BSc would not get you the jobs you want. It was also a chance to discover something new that no one had before. Self motivation was important.
2. Gaps included a research emphasis without teaching training even though you were expected to do it.
3. Your committee should offer opportunities or courses to improve your teaching skills, increase professional development, and build soft skills.
4. Supervisors should provide guidance in your research to see how you are doing and open up new directions, with an emphasis on teaching or soft skills.
6. Program should not be focussed exclusively on research; there should also be service components and soft skills.
7. A written dissertation is a good catch all but there should be more room for non-traditional styles.

Group 6:

1. Pursued grad studies to expand skills for jobs and teaching; no one in the group plans to do a PhD.
2. While statistical and hard technical skills are acquired, soft skills are missing.
- 4/5. Supervisors should be knowledgeable, organized, and provide focus. They should work closely and be more hands-on.
6. Across disciplines, there should be courses in the first year and research in later years.
7. Papers and presentations should be more accessible.

Group 7:

Many pursued graduate studies because it was a requirement of their profession or they enjoyed the area of research. The main gap identified was in professional development. A committee should be a source of support and should engage with students regularly. Supervisors should be people who like teaching that are interested in mentorship, and can provide translations and help navigate. Many in the group were happy with the opportunities they had had. Work could be demonstrated in a book or youtube video.

Group 8:

Many pursued graduate studies for employment opportunities as there was not much available for a BSc in Biology; further work within the field was also cited, and to contribute to research. Some gaps identified were the need to learn skills related to the field such as how to be a better scientist or how to work in a lab. Committee does not play a large role in guiding the student to achieving their goals; the supervisor's role was more supportive. Mentors make good supervisors but your mentor does not need to be your supervisor.

Group 9:

Many felt graduate studies would be a stepping-stone to something further down the road such as a job, teaching, or specialization. They discussed the aspects of helping others, bringing what you have learned to others, and gaining a better understanding of your field.

4. Supervisors should not be robots but should be personable and reasonable; they should support each other's goals. They should also be well respected and genuine.
2. Gaps included a lack of multidisciplinary experience, which decreased preparedness for future jobs and that your studies may be dependent on your supervisor's interests rather than your own.
3. Your committee should offer experiences with outside sources and suggestions for direction.

4/5. Supervision depended on the person - everyone had different preferences. Some students wanted hands on, some wanted hands off. Everyone wanted someone who treated them like a professional and offers a balance of guidance and freedom.

Group 10:

1. Most pursued graduate studies to improve career opportunities and for the chance to diversify and strengthen their skillsets beyond their training.

2. A gap identified was the expectation that students will have a given knowledge/skill set in a certain area and then the supervisor passed this off to other professors and the student was left to fill in the gaps on their own. There was a lack of support in every day life.

4/5. The landscape for training was changing and supervisors needed to be open to graduates finding alternative means of filling the soft skills gaps. Supervisors might be either hands on or hands off – both types strengthened group members as students, depending on their need.

7. The “publish or perish” mentality was viewed as negative and did not demonstrate one’s ability – there could be more effective metrics.

Group 11:

Everyone in the group was working toward a Masters degree, both course-based and thesis-based, because they wanted to become more marketable, had general interest, or an idea for a research project. Some might not do a PhD, as they wanted to get back into industry and applied the skills they had learned. It would also be a financial hardship to continue on to a PhD. As already stated regarding supervisor, you do not want a robot; you want someone who was willing to take the journey with you.

Group 12:

1. Some pursued graduate studies because they had a positive undergraduate experience that inspired them; grad school was a rite of passage in some disciplines; others cited curiosity, service, and the desire to experience research in Canada as their reasons for pursuing grad studies. Continuing on to a PhD depended on the project and the supervisor.

2. Gaps were dependent on the type of supervision needed by the student, variations in guidance, did not know they had a say in the selection of their committee.

4/5. Many felt the relationship between the student and supervisor was vague, lacking in firm structure, and could be an impediment or an asset. A vague structure could accommodate interdisciplinary studies. Having more than one supervisor could put the student in a place to link expertise and be more conducive to studies and transferrable skills; but this could also re-establish a power imbalance. Supervision is dependent on one person’s character. Some supervisors are interested in building their own skills rather than their students’ skills. Sometimes it is hard to align your interests; students must stand their ground and speak truth to power.

Group 13:

Some pursued graduate studies because they did not see any job opportunities without it. They wished to add knowledge and give knowledge and affect change. Some courses were not useful. Committees could provide more support in the transition from undergrad; there should be more communication. Supervisors should be professors, not assistant professors, as they have more knowledge and experience. Supervision should help you reach goals and protect you. Programs should focus more on getting teaching experience and allow more time to do research. Dissertations could be in different forms – videos, vlogs, or podcasts.

## 10. Discussion Item Proposed by GSEC

K Kvas read the following statement:

“WHEREAS: Whereas the GSA is a democratic and transparent organization representing the interests of graduate students.

AND WHEREAS the GSA submitted a pro-PSLA (Post-Secondary Learning Act) position alongside The Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC), which was also echoed in a letter from University Presidents to the Minister of Advanced Education, without adequate consultation with graduate students at the University of Alberta.

AND WHEREAS the GSA’s current position is an infringement upon the January 30, 2015 decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour v. Saskatchewan that sets a clear precedent for the GSA and other graduate students’ collectives or associations to pursue union representation.

AND WHEREAS this position is the representation of 62 graduate students of the approximately 15,000 within Alberta.

AND WHEREAS the allotted consultation period, which the GSA initiated in the Special Bulletin of September 28, 2016, was inadequate because it concluded on October 4, 2016 and did not include robust consultation with graduate students.

AND WHEREAS discussions of unionization were only presented and briefly discussed in GSA council during the September 26, 2016 meeting.

Be It Resolved That: GSEC requests that the GSA conduct a town hall to survey graduate student interest in unionization, as well as make publicly available any letters, minutes, or documentation between the GSA and ab-GPAC pertaining to the GSA's position on unionization. I motion that discussions of such matters be added to the current agenda."

He added that GSEC wanted the GSA to conduct town hall on the right to strike and that they distributed an open letter to that effect.

S Fenichel noted that the letter that was distributed to GSA Council as a hand out was not a GSA official document and that the GSA was not provided with this letter in advance of the meeting. D Parent asked if the GSA requested to see the letter prior to the meeting. S Fenichel noted that the understanding of communication with the English and Film Studies Councillor was that the discussion would be to inform GSA Council about the content of the letter. K Kvas noted that the letter was also available on [Arts Squared](#), a blog for the Faculty of Arts. He noted that the University of Alberta was the only university in the country where its academic population did not have the right to strike and that this impeded the constitutional right of association. He added that the GSA process to handle the review of the right to strike was rushed, discussions on the subject were limited, and that it had been very difficult to receive any sort of transparent information from the GSA Board. He added that the ab-GPAC response to the government was based on 62 replies to the survey and noted that this sample size was not enough to assert any position. He also added that the ab-GPAC response was not voted on by GSA Council. He indicated that current legislation was discriminatory of academically-employed graduate students based on their source of income. He noted that there was not enough debate in GSA Council with respect to the possibility of unionization and the associated budget. He stated that the GSEC demanded that the GSA organized town hall on the subject.

S Ficko read the following statement:

"I am cognizant that we need to discuss the Motion at hand but I would like first to briefly address a recently published series of two opinion pieces in *The Gateway* as I think these matters intersect.

These opinion pieces centered on the subject of labour consultation and legislation as it applies to graduate students, how it was felt that the GSA managed consultation on this issue, and about how it is felt that I - as your sitting GSA President - have failed to adequately do my job for various reasons.

I would like to state unequivocally and for the record that I admire the op-ed author's passion and dedication to his subject. He is, as I am - and as are all members of the GSA - a full time student pursuing graduate studies and is effectively pursuing his advocacy efforts "extra-to-load." While there is a case to be made for carefully and methodically offering my perspective on all that has been offered in the opinion pieces, I will instead say that - particularly at this point in history when our democracies are being challenged in so many ways - if more people would take that "extra-to-load" time to invest themselves in issues that most affect our well-being and potential success as graduate students, we would have an even more vibrant and productive political discourse on this campus.

Ultimately, I *am* an elected official who for the past two years has been compensated for her support, negotiation, and advocacy efforts on behalf of graduate students at the University of Alberta. My salary is paid by fees collected from graduate students and I hold my seat because I was elected by graduate students. As such, and unlike the author of the opinion piece in question, I am not able to pursue only one advocacy issue at a time and am inherently, and deeply, responsible to making the most effective use of GSA Council's time and energies. All GSA Presidents are faced with three basic facts in their terms: (1) That they will inherit issues from previous terms that require ongoing attention; (2) That they have particular strengths and interests themselves that they wish to address during their terms; and (3) That issues will arise during their terms that were completely unanticipated.

Turning now to the matter at hand, which echoes many of the themes raised in the op-ed, the authors of the letter that was handed out to you are quite right, we did only receive 62 responses out of 17,000 graduate students who were surveyed about labour-related issues. He is right again, that in any truly scientific venture this is a very low amount of data from which to draw conclusions. But in political data, statistics do not simply have 'actual' value, they also

have representational value. And, what the authors of the letter may not know, given their more singular focus and passions, is that approximately one month after the survey about labour, those same 17,000 students were surveyed on the issue of tuition and funding and 1200 of them responded, with most responses coming in within the first few days after the survey opened. In other words, that so few people responded to the first topic, and more than 19 times as many people responded to the second topic cannot just be viewed through a scientific lens. Those numbers must be viewed through a representational lens as well. More students cared about issues of tuition and funding than they did about labour and there is no amount of politicking or issue-framing (biased, unbiased, negligent, or deliberate) in which my team could have engaged - particularly given the constant demands on us to attend to multiple programs and advocacy efforts at once with limited and finite resources - that could account for such a wide difference in response rate other than the baseline interest levels of the graduate students themselves.

It is also important to be mindful that we are charged with representing all graduate students on campus – and at any given time only about 50% or less of those individuals serve as TAs or RAs. Each of us in our opinions represents others who share them, this is the essence of any polling that ever occurs, so I respect that the authors of this letter are not alone in their views and, as I said, I am glad they are finding ways to continue to voice their concerns. I was not, however, elected to only represent them.

Speaking to the specifics of the Motion made earlier, I think it is important to ask what the authors of the letter think would be gained by holding further consultation sessions when, first of all, there was such minimal interest in attending the ones already held or participating in the other avenues of feedback generation that the GSA engaged in and, secondly, given the reality that the government has closed feedback collection on this issue.

Simply put, while the authors of this letter feel it is irresponsible of us to only use 62 responses to develop a position, I'm curious what else I'm supposed to do, given we emailed all approximately 17,000 graduate students in Alberta, and only 62 were engaged enough to want to respond.

I would also like to remind Council that, in addition to the consultation sessions that the GSA did, the University and government also hosted town halls on this issue and individuals were invited to submit feedback directly to government. Members of this province's government are elected officials – any member of the public is free to contact them at will and submit their thoughts. I would encourage interested parties to do just that.

Finally, I pride myself on being as accessible to the GSA's constituents as possible. I encourage any interested parties to contact me and/or submit feedback to me, even if they chose not to submit said feedback directly to the government. I am happy to do what I can to pass that feedback along to the appropriate parties and can, likewise, generate a list of all GSA-related consultation that occurred on the subject of labour. That list can itself be substantiated by our fully archived records of GSA Council meeting materials (minutes, letters, reports etc) and newsletters/special bulletins."

S van der Klein noted that she supported S Ficko's statement and noted that the GSA did the best they could do at the time with the information they had received. M Khademi also noted that he supported S Ficko.

K Kvas suggested that the lack of responses to the survey might have been caused to the short time (one week) available to provide an answer. He added that the GSA did not submit a separate answer than the one from ab-GPAC and that the GSA members did not have enough time to make their voice heard. He noted that all their suggestions to have a forum for a discussion on the right to strike and unionization were repressed by the GSA. He added that the GSEC's efforts to have access to the ab-GPAC's reply took three months. He added that this issue was related to a constitutional right and that it should be possible for students to unionize. He indicated that at his past university with any issues or concerns he had regarding the Collective Agreement, he would include his union representative on any correspondence and get very quick responses as opposed to here where the GSA is not helpful and the Collective Agreement is not enforceable.

D Parent asked what he meant by repressed and K Kvas noted that the GSEC's attempted to add this discussion item on the agenda for the October GSA Council and that this demand was denied. S Ficko noted that the request was sent the Friday before the October GSA Council meeting and that, according to GSA Council Standing Orders, substantive agenda items are meant to added to the First Mailing of Council materials or are added to the agenda at the discretion to the Speaker. She added that when they received this request from the English and film Studies the GSA had asked to meet with GSEC and that there was no follow-up to this request hence the discussion was not added to the agenda. Additionally, with respect to the low responses received for the survey, S Ficko noted, again, that the responses to a similar survey on the topic of of tuition and



funding had gone out to the same students with a much higher response rate; that for the issue of labour, the GSA had used the responses received and that she could not force graduate students to fill the survey.

D Bemister noted that there was clearly a group that was pro-union but that at the September GSA Council meeting, GSA Council did not want a union nor the right to strike. K Kvas noted that he was not in attendance at the September GSA Council meeting but that, according to the minutes of the meeting, GSA Council was split on the question and that this was not reflected in the ab-GPAC position.

N Prather noted that the timeline had not been up to the GSA and he added that the issue was a more complicated when it came to graduate students due to the nature of the work. He asked if S Ficko was aware of the timeline of the government in terms of presenting new legislation. S Ficko noted that she had been told spring and she added that at after the reception of the government's proposal many conversations about the right to strike and unionization would be had with GSA Council and graduate students as a whole. N Prather also asked if it would be possible to request an extension to present feedback and S Ficko replied that any requests could be made.

A Najar noted that the impression he had at the September GSA Council meeting was that the right to strike could potentially be dangerous and that caution needed to be used. He suggested providing GSA Council with more information and even inviting a guest to GSA Council with knowledge on the subject to give further explanation.

C More asked to clarify if the discussion was about having further discussion on the right to strike in GSA Council or holding town hall on the issue. K Kvas noted that he was interested in having the GSA hold town hall but that GSEC was open to more consultation. C More then noted that he had been active in the GSA for many years now and that as such he had a pretty good understanding. He explained that there were two separate issues that were discussed: the possibility of unionization and the recourse to strike when negotiations were unsuccessful. He added that currently under the *Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA)* the parties were sent to binding arbitration. He noted that he believed that binding arbitration was safer for graduate students. He indicated that last year during the first round of consultation by the government the timeline was even shorter and that no broad consultation was done and that S Ficko did far more than he had with regards to consultation. He specified that the government, when they were gathering feedback, did not want to hear from separate organizations but was looking for a consensus within graduate students. He added that this point in the process was not the right time for consultations as the decision was not with the Ministry of Advanced Education anymore. This ministry, which consulted, gathered feedback from stakeholders, then forwarded the information collected to the actors in the government responsible of reviewing the *PSLA*. He indicated that even if the GSA was to consult broadly and modify their stance on the question, it would be hard to determine where to forward this new position. He added that it was more productive to wait for the government proposal and then broadly consult with graduate students for direction on how to advocate (for or against the proposal). He also cautioned GSA Council with regard to creating too wide transparency as the simple release of documents – read without context – can create more misunderstanding than it might offer clarification.

D Smirnow agreed with Colin and suggested exercising caution on the question of sharing documents. She noted that she also had been active in the GSA for a long time and that she thought that the GSA's consultation process had been well done. She added that the right to strike was not the end of the issue and that it was important to increase students' engagement.

N Prather agreed with A Najar in regards with providing more information to GSA Council, possibly from an expert, followed by a discussion and then holding town hall.

There was procedural discussion with respect on how to move forward with this discussion.

A Harrigan noted that he agreed that the consultation was well handle by the GSA in the fall but he disagreed that now was not the time to have further discussion on the subject.

M Khademi indicated that, following the consultation on the right to strike legislation, the GSA and the ab-GPAC consulted all graduate students on the funding and tuition review and that more than 1200 responses were received and most of them in the first five days of the opening of the survey. He specified that there were many issues faced by graduate students that needed to be addressed and that the GSA and the ab-GPAC did the best they could. He also thanked K Kvas for deeply caring about his fellow graduate students.

D Jorgenson suggested tabling this discussion. N Prather suggested tabling the discussion until the March GSA Council meeting. D Smirnow asked what was on the agenda for this meeting and it was noted that currently the items were changes to the Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards Policy, the 2017-2018 GSA Health and Dental Plan fee, and a discussion

about questions for students applying to graduate studies. K Kvas noted that he did not want this to be delayed more than it had already been. A Radil suggested the April GSA Council meeting or wait for the government to present a proposal. J Worthy noted that it would not be good to delay too much as the issue related to not having *already* had a discussion and suggested to table it until next month to allow for a clarification of the demands associated with the discussion.

**MOTION:** That the GSA Council **TABLE** the current discussion. D Jorgenson **MOVED**. B Harris **SECONDED**.

**29 APPROVED; 13 Opposed; 5 Abstentions (M Khademi)**

S Fenichel suggested that the GSA Board meet with the GSEC to clarify the discussion that would resume at March Council.

## Reports

### **11. President**

#### **i. President's Report:**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition S Ficko stated that, as mentioned, at the next GSA Council meeting she would like to have a discussion about questions for prospective graduate students and noted that she had had discussion on the subject with FGSR and that it would also be discussed at the FGSR Council meeting in April.

S Ficko noted that the Winter Chill Out event was a very successful event that was well attended. She also thanked members for answering the questions about Mental Health that was circulated to GSA Council in her report and in the second mailing email. She added that the mQlicker session would be open until the following day and invited members to encourage their colleagues to also participate.

#### **ii. GSA Board**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted.

#### **iii. Budget and Finance Committee**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted.

#### **iv. GSA Governance Committee**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted.

### **12. GSA Nominating Committee**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition R Barta stated that the remaining positions for the GSA ACB would be advertised in the GSA Newsletter. He added that there were also vacancies on two external committees.

### **13. Vice-President Academic**

#### **i. Vice-President Academic's Report:**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition F Khodayari stated that the FGSR Policy Review Committee was reviewing the Exam policy (ie, the policies on the defense exams for both Masters and PhD students, and the policy on the candidacy exams for PhD students). F Khodayari invited GSA Councillors with suggestions or comments to contact him.

### **14. Vice-President External**

#### **i. Vice-President External's Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition M Khademi stated that the GSA Awards and Selection Committee finalized the recipients of the GSA Recognition Awards, he congratulated the recipients, and thanked the GSA ASC members.

#### **ii. GSA Awards Selection Committee's Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted.

**15. Vice-President Labour****i. Vice-President Labour's Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted. S van der Klein encouraged GSA Councillors who had not done so already to book a labour consultation meeting with her on the current GSA Collective Agreement in preparation of the upcoming negotiations.

**ii. GSA Negotiating Committee**

No meetings this reporting period.

**iii. GSA Labour Relations Committee**

No meetings this reporting period.

**16. Vice-President Student Services****i. Vice-President Student Services' Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition A Talaei encouraged members to vote in the U-Pass referendum noting that the U-Pass was cheaper than having to pay for a monthly pass.

A Talaei also noted that the working group on Scholarly Writing Support at the University would be holding town hall on March 7 and March 8, and invited interested graduate students to attend.

**ii. GSA Student Affairs Advisory Committee**

No meetings this reporting period.

**17. Senator****i. Senator's Report – when was this circulated**

No written report at this time. J Traynor noted that the next Senate meeting was that Friday and that she would have a report next month.

**18. Speaker****i. Speaker's Report**

No written report at this time.

**19. Chief Returning Officer****i. Chief Returning Officer's Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition C Martinez stated that the voting in the 2017 GSA General Election and the U-Pass Referendum would start at 10:00 AM on Tuesday, February 28 and would close at 10:00 AM on Thursday, March 2. She urged GSA Council to vote and to encourage your fellow students to vote.

**20. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee****i. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted.

**21. GSA Management****i. Executive Director's Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 24 February 2017. The report stood as submitted. In addition C Thomas echoed C Martinez and urged everyone to vote and noted that all graduate students would receive an email around 10:00 AM with the voting instructions.

**Question Period****22. Written Questions**

None at this time.

**23. Oral Questions****Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 pm.



Dear Council Colleagues,

At our Council meeting on March 20 you will be asked to consider a recommendation from the GSA Board regarding the 2017-2018 GSA Health and Dental Plan Fee (hereafter referred to as the "fee").

As members may be aware, the cost of the Plan is driven by usage, and we are pleased that graduate students continue to use the benefits of the Plan. Based on the projections provided to us by Studentcare (our broker and the Plan administrator), we are happy to report that the proposed increase to the fee for 2017-2018 is less than 2%, or \$7.41, per Plan member. This projected increase is inclusive of the \$2.77 per member subsidy from the GSA Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund (HDPRF) that GSA Council approved for 2016-2017 and also reflects increases based on the usage of the Plan. Should GSA Council approve the attached proposal, the fee paid by graduate students for the Plan would be \$500.36/year for 2017-2018; the Plan will operate on a breakeven basis in 2017-2018 with no drawdown of the HDPRF. The fee will be pro-rated for students who start their program in January.

We want to thank you in advance for your consideration of this proposal involving one of the GSA's most important services to graduate students. We would be happy to answer any questions you have at the meeting, but also encourage you to send us questions before then as you consult with your colleagues – questions can be directed to the Vice-President Student Services at [gsavpsse@ualberta.ca](mailto:gsavpsse@ualberta.ca). Kristin Foster, Director of Partnership and Development (Studentcare), and Colten Yamagishi, Program Manager (Studentcare) will also be in attendance at the March meeting to present information on the GSA's Plan and associated usage rates, and answer any questions that members may have.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ali Talaei'.

Ali Talaei, GSA Vice-President Student Services 2016-2017

and

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Ficko'.

Sarah Ficko, GSA President 2016-2017

## Outline of Issue (GSA Council)

### GSA Health and Dental Plan Fee for 2017-2018

#### Suggested Motion for the GSA Council:

**MOTION:** That the GSA Council **APPROVE**, on the recommendation of GSA Board, that the GSA Health and Dental Plan Fee be set at \$500.36/annum, effective September 1, 2017, with collection from graduate students to begin September 1, 2017.

#### Background:

The key driver for cost increases to the GSA Health and Dental Plan is usage. There is an overall projected less than 2% increase in premiums for 2017-2018, resulting in a proposed fee increase of \$7.41. Should GSA Council approve this increase, the fee paid by graduate students for the Plan would be \$500.36 (\$286.61 for Health fee and \$214.74 for Dental – the 2016-2017 amounts were \$280.70 for Health and \$212.25 for Dental).

As was reported to GSA Council on several occasions, the GSA Board embarked on a comprehensive overview of the Plan in the summer, fall, and winter of 2016-2017. This review included a series of town halls, consultations with GSA Council, a phone survey conducted by Studentcare, and extensive discussions by the GSA Board. The feedback generated indicated broad satisfaction with the Plan.

**The table below shows the breakdown of projected premiums, actual premiums, and the fee charged to graduate students from 2008-2009 to 2016-2017.** Any differences between the actual premium and the fee paid by graduate students reflects either payment into the GSA Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund (HDPFRF) of the positive difference between premium and fee or, when the difference is negative, use of the HDPFRF to offset cost to students.

Plan Year	Projected Premium	Actual Premium	HDP Fee Paid by Students	Use of HDPFRF*
2008-09	\$326.63	\$329.61	\$329.64	+ \$0.03
2009-10	\$345.93	\$330.70	\$346.12	+ \$15.42
2010-11	\$361.75	\$360.00	\$360.00	--
2011-12	\$384.15	\$384.12	\$378.00	- \$6.12
2012-13	\$405.00**	\$376.08	\$396.90	+ \$20.82
2013-14	N/A***	\$376.08	\$396.90	+ \$20.82
2014-15	\$414.05	\$413.16	\$396.90	- \$16.26
2015-16	\$440.37	\$440.28	\$428.65	- \$11.63
2016-17	\$495.76	\$495.72	\$492.95	-\$2.77
2017-18	\$500.36	<not known until final invoice>	\$500.36	--

\* A positive figure indicates payment **into** the HDPFRF; a negative figure indicates **use of** the HDPFRF

\*\* High jump in premium resulted in a request for proposals and switch to Desjardins as the plan provider

\*\*\* No projected premium necessary because of two-year guaranteed premium rate

#### Jurisdiction:

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section M: GSA Health and Dental, GSA Policy, GSA Health and Dental Plan and GSA Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund, Section M.POL.6.1:

*"Fee(s)" shall refer to the amount of money paid by enrolled graduate students for the Plan. The amount of the Fee includes both Plan premiums and administrative overhead. The Fee may include an amount for the replenishment of the Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund (see GSA Policy, GSA Health and Dental Plan and GSA Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund, Section 8, Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund)."*

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section M: GSA Health and Dental, GSA Policy, GSA Health and Dental Plan and GSA Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund, Section M.POL.9.1:

*"The GSA Board is mandated to oversee the implementation, administration, and performance of the GSA Health and Dental Plan, and to make recommendations to GSA Council regarding the Plan (quoted in GSA Policy, Standing Committees, Section 2, GSA Board, 2.2.c)."*

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section M: GSA Health and Dental, GSA Policy, GSA Health and Dental Plan and GSA Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund, Section M.POL.10.1:

*"Any increase in the Fee or modification of coverage must be approved by GSA Council on the recommendation of the GSA Board. Any increase in the Fee exceeding 15% of the previous year's Fee must also be put to a referendum."*



Dear GSA Council Colleagues,

March 10, 2017

The attached double column proposal before you for consideration relates to GSA Policy on Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards (AGSA).

As you may be aware, this is the only award offered by the GSA not funded by the Graduate Student Support Fund, which the GSA negotiates for with the University. As a consequence, the funding for AGSAs is much more limited than that available for other GSA awards and bursaries, such as the GSA Child Care Grant, the GSA Academic Travel Award, and the GSA Emergency Bursary. Currently the AGSA offers a maximum of \$1,500 to academically-related graduate student groups to offset the cost of hosting academic events but because the overall amount of available funds is limited, the GSA is only able to fund approximately 3 to 4 groups per granting period; the demand is much greater than this. Fortunately we were able to add funding to this budget line in the 2017-2018 budget that GSA Council approved in February, which will help us to fund more groups. Now this proposal recommends the elimination of the stipulation that applications be submitted six weeks in advance of an event. The specific rationale for this is explained in the attached proposal but, in summary, after hearing directly from several graduate student groups and looking back over several years of application data held by the office, we believe that removing this requirement will aid in ensuring that groups with events scheduled later within a given funding period will have enhanced access to available funds.

Additionally, in response to graduate student feedback, this proposal recommends that newly formed academically-related groups have access to modest, one-time start up funds to help them launch. This parallels funding available to student groups available through Student Group Services for which academically-related graduate student groups are ineligible.

In sum, we believe this proposal will enhance the experience of academically-related graduate student groups and be a benefit to their members.

I look forward to discussing this proposal further with you at the March meeting of GSA Council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ali Talaei'.

Ali Talaei, GSA Vice-President Student Services

Outline of Issue (GSA Council)**GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards: Proposed Changes to GSA Policy, GSA Grant Application Policy and Information****Suggested Motion for GSA Council:**

That GSA Council **APPROVE**, on the unanimous recommendation of the GSA Board, changes to GSA Policy, GSA Grant Application Policy and Information, as shown in the attached double column document and effective April 1, 2017.

**Background:**

This proposal was reviewed by the GSA Board on February 22, 2017 and then again on March 1, 2017, when it was also recommended to GSA Council for approval.

The below statistics illustrate the numbers of applications received in each of the four granting periods in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, prior to the granting period being closed due to insufficiency of available funds.

Period	# of Applications	Date Closed
Apr 1 – Jun 30	4	Closed on April 7, 2016
Jul 1 – Sept 30	3	Closed on August 24, 2016
Oct 1 – Dec 31	4	Not Closed
Jan 1 – Mar 31	4	Closed on January 30, 2017

See the attached cover letter to GSA Council from the GSA Vice-President Student Services for background information.

**Jurisdiction:**

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section F: GSA Standing Committees, GSA Policy, GSA Board, Section F.POL.3.2.a

*"The GSAB is the senior administrative authority of the GSA as delegated to it by GSA Council."*

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section P: GSA Grant Application Policy and Information, GSA Policy, GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards, Section P.POL.3.10.a

*"GSA ASGA policy is subject to GSA Council approval and cannot be changed without GSA Council's approval — excluding editorial revisions/clarifications."*

Prepared by L Hareuther, J Tanguay and C Thomas for GSA Council 20 March 2017

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**GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards: Proposed Changes to GSA Policy, GSA Grant Application Policy and Information**

Current Policy ( <i>deletions noted by a strikethrough</i> ) and Proposed Changes ( <i>additions underlined</i> )	Rationale/Background
<b>P.POL.3 GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards</b>	
P.POL.3.1 Sponsor/Purpose	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.1.a The GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Award (ASGA) is provided by the GSA to support the academic activities of graduate student groups by <u>offering modest start-up funds for the formation of new Academically-Related Graduate Student Groups and providing funding to offset the costs of seminars, guest lecturers, colloquia or other academic events.</u>	<i>There is currently a lack of start-up funding for which academically-related graduate student groups can apply for.</i>
P.POL.3.2 Eligibility Criteria	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.2.a Must be registered as a GSA <u>group</u> <del>Academically-Related Graduate Student Group</del> through Student Group Services (SGS).	<i>Editorial to reflect that the titling “Academically-Related Graduate Student Group” is the GSA’s rather than SGS’s (ie, SGS just presents the option to register as a GSA group, rather than as a GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group).</i>
P.POL.3.2.b Requires confirmation of the Department Chair (or designate) <u>or the University Administrator of the non-departmental unit the group is affiliated with</u> attesting that the event for which the funding is requested is academic in nature and that they support the event.	<i>Editorial change to clarify current practice.</i>
P.POL.3.2.c Requires confirmation of the Department Chair (or designate) <u>or the University Administrator of the non-departmental unit the group is affiliated with attesting that the new Academically-Related Graduate Student Groups for which start-up funding is requested is academic in nature.</u>	<i>Consonant with the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds and to ensure that the department is aware of the group’s formation.</i>
P.POL.3.3 Application Information	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.3.a GSA ASGAs are offered on a first-come, first-serve basis. See below.	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.3.b The GSA will offer awards ( <u>both start-up funds and event funding</u> ) until allocated funding is expended in the specified period (ie April 1 – June 30; July 1 – September 30; October 1 – December 31; January 1 – March 31).	<i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds.</i>
P.POL.3.3.c If all available funds have been expended in the specified period, no additional applications will be accepted during that period.	<i>No change.</i>



Current Policy ( <i>deletions noted by a strikethrough</i> ) and Proposed Changes ( <i>additions underlined</i> )	Rationale/Background
<b>P.POL.3 GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards</b>	
<p>P.POL.3.3.d ASGA applications for <u>event funding</u> can be submitted at <u>any point in the funding period (specified below) in which their event will take place, provided they are submitted <del>only</del> be submitted no more than six (6) weeks before the <del>academic</del> event (as determined from the date the application is received). Applications received after the <del>academic</del> event has occurred will not be eligible.</u></p>	<p><i>Proposed removal of the stipulation that applications must be submitted no more than 6 weeks before an event. In busy granting periods when funding goes quickly at the start of the period, and due to the small amount of overall funds available, groups with events scheduled later in a granting period are often unable to apply for funds – this issue is not a concern with respect to Academic Travel Awards which, while also having a stipulation that applications must be submitted no more than 6 weeks in advance of the proposed academic event, have more associated funds (drawn from the Graduate Student Support Fund (funded by the University) as opposed to ASGAs, which are funded from the GSA’s operating budget).</i></p>
<p>P.POL.3.3.e An Academically-Related Graduate Student Group may apply for start-up funds at <u>any point during any of the periods specified above, provided funds remain as per Section P: GSA Grant Application Policy and Information, GSA Policy, Section P.POL.3.3.c, above.</u></p>	<p><i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds.</i></p>
<p>P.POL.3.3.e <del>f</del> The Academically-Related Graduate Student Group is responsible for the completeness of their application.</p>	<p><i>No change except renumbering.</i></p>
<p>P.POL.3.4 Applying for a GSA ASGA</p>	<p><i>No change.</i></p>
<p>P.POL.3.4.a Applications must be completed online through the GSA website.</p>	<p><i>No change.</i></p>
<p>P.POL.3.5 Allocation Policy</p>	<p><i>No change.</i></p>
<p>P.POL.3.5.a Academically-Related Graduate Student Groups are <u>only eligible to receive start-up funds once; funds will be allocated to a maximum of \$250.</u></p>	<p><i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds.</i></p>
<p>P.POL.3.5.a <del>b</del> <u>c</u> There is no limit to the number of <u>GSA ASGA applications for events</u> that can be submitted within the fiscal year but a maximum of one (1) application may be submitted per event.</p>	<p><i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds.</i></p> <p><i>Renumbering.</i></p>
<p>P.POL.3.5.b <del>c</del> <u>d</u> Funding for an event will be allocated at 100% of shortfall up to a maximum of \$1500 per fiscal year (April 1 – March 31) and a maximum of one (1) GSA ASGA <u>for events</u> may be allocated to an Academically-Related Graduate Student Group in a fiscal year.</p>	<p><i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds.</i></p>
<p>P.POL.3.5.e <del>d</del> <u>e</u> In the event that multiple GSA ASGA applications are received and insufficient</p>	<p><i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student</i></p>

<b>Current Policy</b> ( <i>deletions noted by a strikethrough</i> ) and <b>Proposed Changes</b> ( <i>additions underlined</i> )	<b>Rationale/Background</b>
<b>P.POL.3 GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards</b>	
funds remain for the specified period, the award will be given to a graduate student group that has not recently received a GSA ASGA.	<i>groups to apply for start-up funds.</i>  <i>Renumbering.</i>
P.POL.3.5. <del>4</del> <u>e</u> GSA ASGAs <u>event applications</u> will be awarded only for allowable expenses, using the University's regulations on allowable expenses as a guideline (UAPPOL, Hospitality, Working Sessions/Meetings and University Employee Functions Procedure). In cases of dispute, the VPSS (or designate) will decide on allowable expenses.	<i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds.</i>  <i>Renumbering.</i>
P.POL.3.6 Appeals Policy	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.6.a Any appeals of denied applications must be received by the GSA within ten (10) working days.	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.6.b Appeals must state the grounds for the appeal in writing.	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.6.c Appeals will be reviewed at arm's length by the VPSS (or designate) and two GSA Councillors (including Speaker and CRO) selected by the President (or other DEO if there is a conflict of interest). All decisions are final and binding. Appeal decisions will normally be made within twenty (20) working days.	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.7 Budget Allocation Policy	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.7.a Funds will normally be distributed as follows:	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.7.a.i 5% of the total annual GSA ASGA budget will be held back as contingency funding and	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.7.a.ii Of the total annual GSA ASGA budget, 1/4 will be allocated in the April 1 – June 30 period; 1/4 in the July 1 – September 30 period; 1/4 in the October 1 – December 31 period; and 1/4 in the January 1 – March 31 period.	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.7.a.iii If the funds have not been completely expended near the end of the fiscal year, a decision will be made by the GSAB on the best way to expend the funds.	<i>No change.</i>

<b>Current Policy</b> ( <i>deletions noted by a strikethrough</i> ) and <b>Proposed Changes</b> ( <i>additions underlined</i> )	<b>Rationale/Background</b>
<b>P.POL.3 GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards</b>	
P.POL.3.8 Office Procedures	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.8.a Applications will be reviewed by the GSA office for eligibility and completeness (see Section P: GSA Grants, Awards, and Bursaries, GSA Policy, GSA Grant Application Policy and Information, Section P.POL.3.2, and others above) using the following checklist:	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.8.a.i The application information is complete and required documentation has been submitted or confirmed,	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.8.a.ii <del>The event has been organized by an</del> The Academically-Related Graduate Student Group <u>making the application is</u> registered through SGS,	<i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds.</i>
P.POL.3.8.a.iii <del>If the application is associated with an event, the</del> The Academically-Related Graduate Student Group has confirmed in the application that the planned event is an academic activity,	<i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds.</i>
P.POL.3.8.a.iv The application has been verified and <del>approved by</del> the Department Chair (or designate) <del>in support of the event</del> has confirmed that the event or group ( <u>if the application relates to start-up funds</u> ) is academic in nature <del>in support of the event</del> ,	<i>Editorial clarification related to the proposed change to allow academically-related graduate student groups to apply for start-up funds.</i>
P.POL.3.8.a.v There are sufficient funds available in the ASGA budget in the specified period that the application is received, and	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.8.a.vi The criteria in the Allocation Policy (Section P: GSA Grants, Awards, and Bursaries, GSA Policy, GSA Grant Application Policy and Information, Section P.POL.3.5, above) have been met.	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.8.b Applicants who are ineligible or whose application is incomplete will be contacted by email to provide an opportunity to attempt to resolve the issue.	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.8.c All applications will be reviewed by the VPSS (or designate).	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.8.d Applicants and Department Chairs will be notified by the GSA by email once processing has been completed and a decision has been made.	<i>No change.</i>

<b>Current Policy</b> ( <i>deletions noted by a strikethrough</i> ) and <b>Proposed Changes</b> ( <i>additions underlined</i> )	<b>Rationale/Background</b>
<b>P.POL.3 GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards</b>	
P.POL.3.9 Interpretation of GSA ASGA Policy	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.9.a The GSAB will be consulted about any concerns and questions raised by the GSA office about interpretation of this policy. The GSAB's decision is final and binding.	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.10 Changes to GSA ASGA Policy	<i>No change.</i>
P.POL.3.10.a GSA ASGA policy is subject to GSA Council approval and cannot be changed without GSA Council's approval — excluding editorial revisions/clarifications.	<i>No change.</i>

Outline of Issue (GSA Council)

**2017 GSA General Election Results: To Receive For Information For Purposes of Transferring Banking Signing Authority**

**Suggested Motion for GSA Council:**

That GSA Council **RECEIVE FOR INFORMATION** the results of the 2017 GSA General wherein the following graduate students were duly elected as President, Vice-President Academic, Vice-President External, Vice-President Labour, and Vice-President Student Services:

<b>President</b>	<b>Babak Soltannia</b>
<b>Vice-President Academic</b>	<b>Firouz Khodayari</b>
<b>Vice-President External</b>	<b>Masoud Khademi</b>
<b>Vice-President Labour</b>	<b>Sasha van der Klein</b>
<b>Vice-President Student Services</b>	<b>Chenyang Feng</b>

**Background:**

The 2017 GSA General Elections official results were announced to all graduate students by the Chief Returning Officer on Friday, March 3, 2017.

GSA Council is now asked to **receive for information** the results, to be set out in the Minutes. The GSA's bank requires that the names of the newly Directly-Elected Officers appear in the Minutes in order to transfer signing authority on May 1, 2017.

**Jurisdiction:**

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section K: Finances, GSA Policy, Budget Principles, Practices, and Procedures, Section K.POL.6.1:

*"Signing Authority*

- K.POL.6.1.a Financial documents related to the Unrestricted Operating Budget requiring signature, including but not limited to cheques and investment instructions, require two (2) signatures: either any two (2) Directly-Elected Officers (DEOs), or any one (1) DEO and one Director.*
- K.POL.6.1.b The President, at least two (2) Vice-Presidents, and at least two (2) Directors will each as individuals have authority as signing officers for the GSA.*
- K.POL.6.1.c Wherever possible, it is preferable for one of the signatories to be the President."*

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section I: Elections, GSA Policy, Elections, Section I.POL.14:

*"Upon completion of the ballot count, the CRO will announce provisional results, ie results that are subject to appeal for twenty-four (24) hours from the time the provisional results are released and which may, in addition, be affected because of earlier complaints not yet resolved. Results will be made official only when the GSA's process of dealing with alleged breaches of GSA Elections Bylaw or Policy and any appeals within that process are exhausted."*

Prepared by L Hareuther, J Tanguay, and C Thomas for 20 March 2017 Council

Macintosh HD:Users:gsaad:Google Drive:320 - Council:Meetings:2016 - 2017:March 2017:First Mailing:GSA Council 20 March 2017 Item 8 - Outline of Issue GSA General Election Results.docx

## Outline of Issue (GSA Council)

### Motion Proposed by the Graduate Students of English Collective Concerning Discussion of Unionization

#### Background:

GSA Council members will recall that this matter was first raised to GSA Council at the February 27, 2017 meeting. At that meeting, the Departmental Councillor for English and Film Studies motioned that discussion of the GSA's and Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council position in unionization be added to the GSA Council agenda. The Motion carried and there was extensive discussion (both substantive and procedural) prior to the matter being deferred to the March 20, 2017 meeting. Following the February 27 meeting, the GSA met with members of the Graduate Students of English Collective (GSEC) to clarify what aspects of the discussion they would like to advance at the March meeting of GSA Council. Following that discussion, GSEC requested of the GSA Speaker that the following Motion and attached letter (also distributed to members of GSA Council on February 27) be brought forward. A GSA response has also been provided.

#### Suggested Motion for the GSA Council:

The Graduate Students of English Collective motions that the GSA Council **DISCUSS AND CONSIDER DIRECTING** the GSA Board to engage in further education and consultation of graduate students regarding their rights to unionize and freedom of association.

#### Jurisdiction:

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section C: GSA Council, GSA Bylaw, GSA Council, Section C.BYL.1.1:

*"The mandate of the GSA Council is to fulfill all responsibilities listed in Section 95 of the Post-Secondary Learning Act."*

Standing Orders of GSA Council:

*"**Agenda:** (...) Councillors who wish to place an item on the Agenda should contact the Speaker."*

Standing Orders of GSA Council:

*"**Motions:** A Motion is a formal proposal that the GSA Council take certain action. To move a Motion, the member of GSA Council is recognized by the Speaker (ie raise your hand). A Motion must be seconded; a second simply indicates that the seconder agrees that the Motion should be debated and not that the seconder necessarily favours the Motion."*

February 27, 2017

An open letter to:

**Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC)**  
[abgpacchair@gmail.com](mailto:abgpacchair@gmail.com)

**Graduate Students' Association (University  
of Alberta)**

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Edmonton AB T6G 2E1  
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**The Honourable Marlin Schmidt**

Minister of Advanced Education  
Office of the Minister  
Advanced Education  
403 Legislature Building  
10800-97 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6  
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Dear fellow stakeholders:

This open letter was written on behalf of the Graduate Students of English Collective (GSEC) at the University of Alberta (U of A). It is our formal statement of objection regarding the U of A Graduate Student Association's (GSA) stance on the continued infringement upon our constitutional and human rights to legal organization by the *Post-Secondary Learning Act* (PSLA). The purpose of this letter is twofold: to inform stakeholders across the province that the pro-PSLA position taken by the lobby group ab-GPAC, which was also echoed in a letter from University Presidents to the Minister of Advanced Education, cannot be representative of graduate students; and to call for the GSA at the U of A to conduct transparent and robust consultation regarding the pursuit of union representation.

As it currently stands, the January 30, 2015 decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of *Saskatchewan Federation of Labour v. Saskatchewan* sets a clear precedent for the GSA and other graduate students' collectives or associations to pursue union representation. Yet, the President of the GSA at the U of A co-authored an official statement with ab-GPAC, claiming that graduate students across the province would prefer to remain under the PSLA and thereby forfeit their constitutional right to freedom of association. While we are aware that the GSA initiated a consultation with graduate students in its Special Bulletin of September 28, 2016, this email allowed less than a week for responses. This was insufficient consultation with the GSA membership at large. Moreover, the pursuit of union representation was discussed only once amongst GSA councillors in their September meeting. There was no clear consensus on that matter, and the GSA's position regarding unionization was never put to a formal vote. Instead, ab-GPAC and the GSA Board expressed to the Minister of Advanced Education that maintaining the PSLA in its current form "is the only option that can allow graduate students to function in all of their roles without harsh and undue consequences"<sup>1</sup> because of their precarious relationship to the University as their employer. This position was taken after receiving only 62 responses from graduate students across the province. Ab-GPAC represents at least 15 000 graduate students in Alberta, 7 000 of whom are enrolled at the U of A. Therefore, the GSA Board members who sit on ab-GPAC should not have considered 62 respondents a representative sample of either the province or the U of A when it comes to the important decision of whether or not graduate students should be able to form or join unions.

GSEC is dismayed by the GSA Board's unwillingness to inform the GSA Council or membership of its position on unionization. In not taking a position independent of ab-GPAC, the GSA has failed in its mandate to represent its constituents. Furthermore, neither of these groups has made any effort to be transparent. It took ab-GPAC three months to respond to GSEC's requests for its official statement and the GSA has not disclosed to GSEC any documentation related to their decision-making process. The PSLA infringes upon the Canadian constitutional right to freedom of association and discriminates against all academic workers based on source of income — a protected ground under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*. The most direct consequence of this infringement for graduate students is that they remain under the false impression that they cannot pursue union representation. This is a critical issue that necessitates fair and accurate consideration of graduate students' views and adequate discussion regarding unionization options. While the official consultation deadline on the issue of unionization passed on October 17, 2016, we believe there is no official end date for democratic engagement.

The GSA Board has acted undemocratically when constitutional and human rights are at stake. Whether for or against unionization, graduate students should have been given a fair

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<sup>1</sup>Sarah Ficko et al. "ab-GPAC Labour Relations Response —Graduate Students." Oct. 17, 2016.



chance to weigh in on this debate, which is changing the landscape of labour relations in Alberta. GSEC acknowledges that unionization is a complex issue. To understand the costs, benefits, risks, and rewards of unionization requires time and effort on individual and institutional levels. GSEC members, and all GSA members, deserve to enjoy the full range of constitutional and human rights. These rights should not have been surrendered.

In accordance with this position, we call on the GSA to:

- **Conduct transparent representation through fair and democratic consultation.** Such consultation would include a town hall and also adequate time for conducting surveys, interviews, meetings, or any other means of allowing graduate students at this institution the opportunity to voice their opinions on the issue at hand.
- **Make publicly available any letters, minutes, or documentation between the GSA and ab-GPAC pertaining to the GSA's position on unionization.**

We trust that proper consultation and representation are the goals of the U of A GSA and other stakeholders. We look forward to working with the GSA to initiate and to facilitate a more formal and transparent consultation process because all 7 000 graduate students at the University of Alberta deserve full expression of their constitutional and human rights.

We, the undersigned,

**Graduate Students of English Collective (GSEC)**

Department of English & Film Studies  
3-5 Humanities Centre  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB T6G 2E5

**Points of Contact:**

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Kevin Kvas, Labour and Equity Committee Chair

[kvas@ualberta.ca](mailto:kvas@ualberta.ca)

Shaina Humble, GSA Representative

[shumble@ualberta.ca](mailto:shumble@ualberta.ca)



Dear GSA Council Colleagues,

With respect to both the Motion before GSA Council and the accompanying letter circulated by the Graduate Students of English Collective (GSEC), the GSA would like to provide the following points of information. Please note as well that the majority of these points, in brief, were also shared with GSEC at a March 8, 2017 meeting.

Firstly, we would like to provide a brief point of information.

We feel it is important to note that GSEC conflates the issue of 'unionization' with the 'right to strike'. Ab-GPAC's labour submission was a response to questions around changing legislation to potentially incorporate the right to strike in favour of the currently proscribed binding arbitration in the *Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA)*. Unionization is not a requirement or guaranteed outcome of having the right to strike, and is therefore, a separate conversation. Likewise, the reality is that the right to strike typically comes into play in the context of a stalemate in bargaining negotiations as opposed to being something that can be utilized at other times (ie, there are distinctions to be made between striking and protesting, as well as the role of unionization in all of this).

Turning now to the specific request contained in the letter and Motion from GSEC, the GSA is called upon to engage in further consultation.

A high level summary of the consultation process engaged in to date is as follows:

- November 23, 2015 – the GSA President reported to GSA Council that the government had solicited feedback.
- January 18, 2016 – there was some discussion in GSA Council including updates on the government consultations and general discussion of the mechanics of a strike.
- February 22, 2016 – the GSA Vice-President Labour and President both reported (in writing) to GSA Council on this matter and indicated that, in accord with its GSA Council-approved terms of reference, “the GSA Board decided an examination of how the legislation would affect unionization was best handled by ab-GPAC;” while there was discussion at GSA Council concerning ab-GPAC's role in providing feedback to the government on this issue, only one member in attendance suggested that the GSA should submit an individual position to government.
- March 21, 2016 – the GSA President reports to GSA Council that ab-GPAC had engaged in a phone conversation with the Minister of Advanced Education concerning the right to strike issue; in this conversation they are informed that a second round of government consultations would take place over the summer.
- September 26, 2016 – despite anticipating that the second round of consultations would begin in the summer, the GSA President informed GSA Council that the process was only initiated at the end of August and so this was now the first opportunity to discuss the matter with GSA Council. During the meeting, GSA Council engaged in small group discussions (groups were constituted by the approximately 60 Councillors in attendance at that meeting) on the issue. The GSA President provided GSA Council members with a detailed overview of process thus far (and a list of relevant meetings for the labour consultation was included in the GSA President's report to GSA Council), the major issues at play, and also informed members of the various means through which they could offer feedback to government – the government's deadline to receive feedback (October 17) was clearly communicated to GSA Council members:

The GSA President stated “at this point, we are developing responses to submit to the government, both as individual GSAs and for ab-GPAC. A longer briefing document developed by the Labour Relations Committee of ab-GPAC, along with a series of questions and scenarios that people will be asked to complete and submit, is being developed with the intention of sharing it with all graduate students through a GSA Special Bulletin. If you would like to submit feedback directly to the government, they have developed a discussion guide and an online form to submit further feedback <http://PSLALabourRelations.alberta.ca>, and will also be hosting consultations on campus on Sept 29 from 3-5 pm or 7-9 pm in the Council Chamber <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/registration-for-post-secondary-labour-consultation-sessions->



[edmonton-registration-27355466938](#). This is a very important topic, and I encourage you to investigate it further as you think about the pros and cons of these changes, how it can affect you directly and affect the other students in your departments and faculties, and as you consider any potential long term effects on future students.”

- September 28, 2016 – a GSA Special Bulletin was sent to all graduate students inviting them to provide feedback on the issue (by filling out a survey generated by ab-GPAC, by submitting feedback directly to government, and/or by attending one of four town halls, two of which were held on the U of A campus).
- September 29, 2016 – a summary of the GSA Council meeting held three days earlier was sent to all GSA Council members and they are asked to share it with graduate students in their departments; means to provide feedback either to ab-GPAC or directly to government are noted; two Stakeholder Consultation meetings with the government were held at the U of A (phone in options were available).
- October 4, 2016 – two stakeholder consultation meetings with the government were held at the University of Calgary (phone in options were available).
- October 6, 2016 – the GSA offered a Collective Agreement/Labour 101 Session (1 graduate student attended).
- October 13, 2016 – the GSA President met with one graduate student who requested more information after answering the survey questions. This was the only such request received.
- October 15, 2016 – the final response submitted from a U of A graduate student prior to the government deadline was received.
- October 24, 2016 – a list of meetings related to the labour consultation was included in the GSA President’s report to GSA Council.
- November 14, 2016 – GSA representatives from each of the province’s four GSAs (as individual GSAs, not members of ab-GPAC) were invited to attend a roundtable discussion with the government consultant hired to make recommendations on changes to the legislation and government representatives for the labour consultation review. The government also invited one individual (they had been willing to invite up to four individuals) who submitted feedback directly to them to meet – without disclosing this person’s identity, we can confirm that they strongly disagreed with ab-GPAC’s position on this issue, and relayed that message directly to government at that meeting, so government has heard an opposing opinion on this issue.
- November 21, 2016 – a list of relevant meetings for the labour consultation was included in the GSA President’s report to GSA Council.
- February 28, 2017 – During a Student Leaders meeting with the provincial government, student leaders were informed that the government consultant for the labour review had submitted recommendations back to the government and they are working on drafting new legislation; no group or union can see or review the suggested legislation until after it is passed by Cabinet (expected release date is spring 2017).

Please note that throughout the process outlined above (and after relevant deadlines to submit feedback had passed) the GSA only heard directly from two graduate students and one departmental group about this issue. We have endeavoured to be as responsive as possible to these inquiries, responding in full via email, setting up meetings as needed, etc.

In their letter, GSEC rightly points out that only a small number of graduate students opted to provide feedback. Given that over 16,000 out of approximately 17,000 graduate students chose not to respond despite multiple attempts to solicit feedback from them, ab-GPAC, by necessity, developed a response with the information provided. In addition to considered the feedback



received and, frankly, the general lack of engagement on this issue, ab-GPAC also relied upon its members' extensive knowledge of graduate student issues from across the province and country.<sup>1</sup>

It is also important to contextualize the amount of feedback that was received on this issue against the much higher level of engagement that was seen when the GSA solicited feedback related to the government's review of post-secondary tuition and funding in Alberta. As I noted last month to GSA Council, approximately one month after the survey about labour, those same 17,000 graduate students were surveyed on the issue of tuition and funding and 1,200 of them responded, with most responses coming in within the first few days after the survey opened. In other words, that so few people responded to the first topic, and more than 19 times as many people responded to the second topic suggests that, simply put, graduate students seemed to care more about issues of tuition and funding than they did about labour. There is no amount of politicking or issue framing (biased, unbiased, negligent, or deliberate) in which my team could have engaged - particularly given the constant demands on us to attend to multiple programs and advocacy efforts at once with limited and finite resources - that could account for such a wide difference in response rate other than the baseline interest levels of the graduate students themselves.

Given the above, the question we believe needs to be asked regarding further consultations is "to what end until we hear from government," given that the government has closed receipt of feedback, is in the process of drafting changes to the legislation, and that individuals or groups could, if interested, send feedback directly to government at any point (whether it would be considered we can't comment on, but these are elected officials to whom any feedback about any issue can be directed)?

In conclusion, we think it is important to note that we must be mindful, pending a response from government on this issue, that this whole matter will likely by necessity open right back up again. The GSA currently has an obligation under the *PSLA* to represent all graduate students (not just academically-employed ones, which is approximately half our membership at any given time). Based on the parameters of the new legislation, the full membership of the GSA will need to consider whether the GSA as an organization should divest itself of the representation of graduate students in employment-related matters in favour of a union (this discussion will need to be informed by questions of administrative costs to the GSA, current staffing levels, the necessity for expert knowledge, the funds necessary to develop a strike fund or pay union dues, etc). This will result in several layers of both internal discussion (for example, the GSA would likely want to engage a consultant as well secure a legal opinion) and consultation and education in the form of town halls for all graduate students and dialogues with GSA Council (involving in both instances, we imagine, having various experts on hand to answer questions), and possibly culminating in a referendum to enable graduate students to vote on whether or not they wish to unionize. Likewise, should government draft legislation which preserves the current status quo, the GSA will still need to communicate this back to graduate students (via the newsletter, discussions in GSA Council, and potentially through the holding of town halls and other consultation sessions).

I look forward to discussing these matters when we meet and thank GSEC for their level of engagement with this important issue, notwithstanding the areas on which we disagree.

Regards,

Sarah Ficko

GSA President, 2016-2017

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<sup>1</sup> Further to this point, and offered here solely as an informational aside, many matters of concern for graduate students (such as funding packages and supervision issues) are outside of collective bargaining and remain concerns for graduate students in both unionized and non-unionized environments. This point was clearly apparent at the most recent GU15 meeting, where graduate student leaders from across the country discussed issues of labour and unionization. Non-Albertan graduate student leaders involved in this meeting suggested that GSAs in Alberta could likely advocate more strongly by addressing both labour and academic issues as they are frequently intertwined, rather than having two (or more) separate entities trying to address each issue individually.

### Questions To Ask Before Applying To Graduate Studies

These suggested questions are offered as a guideline to promote thinking and reflection about graduate school. Potential students are encouraged to use their own discretion, personal situations, and preferences to determine which questions best suit their decision-making processes. Please note that these questions are designed as a tool for potential graduate students and not to be incorporated into graduate school applications.

#### **Definition of a Graduate Student (from the Graduate Students' Association Strategic Work Plan 2016-2017)**

A graduate student is a junior colleague who contributes to their field of study in pursuit of an advanced degree through collaborative work with the professoriate and senior colleagues in research, teaching, administrative, and learning environments of the University.

#### **Self-Assessment/Questions To Ask Yourself**

- Why am I interested in going to grad school (eg, Do I have a burning question to answer, friends/family suggested it, is it 'just' something to do, do I need it for professional development purposes, etc)?
- Is the project I will be working on/courses I will be taking something that interests me (advice from other graduate students: make sure you find a project you're interested in and don't pursue graduate studies 'just because;' seriously evaluate your reasons for wanting to pursue such studies)?
- How do I learn best (eg, from reading books, talking, lectures, seminars)?
- How do I like to be managed/supervised? Do I like to have someone I talk with regularly or is a hands-off approach better? Can I work with a micromanager? An absent/busy advisor?
- What are my strengths (eg, coming up with ideas, following through on an idea, conducting experiments, doing literature reviews and finding resources nobody else can find, analyzing data, writing, giving oral presentations)?
- What have I not tried before?
- What are my weaknesses? Am I able to ask for help?
- Do I know how to give and receive constructive feedback?
- How will my life change going back to school? How will it impact my family, my finances? What are the opportunity costs of this decision?
- Am I planning a family, and if so how might that affect my program and time to completion?
- If I have children, do they need daycare or other supports that will require some flexibility in my schedule?
- What kind of flexibility or schedule do I need to have a positive work-life balance?
- Do I see myself staying in academia, getting a career elsewhere, or have not thought much about this?
- What kind of skills do I want to develop during my graduate program?
- What skills, experiences, and qualities will I need to start on my desired career path?

- What kind of activities do I want to get involved with outside of my research/program?
- Do I have any physical or mental health issues/illnesses? What resources or supports do I need access to, to help me succeed through the transition into grad school and during my program?
- Have I lived in Canada before? Edmonton? What are my expectations if I'm moving to a new province or country? How will I develop a social support network, and what do I need to be comfortable in this new environment?
- How will I find safe and affordable housing? Do I want to live within walking distance of campus or am I comfortable living further away?
- Would I be comfortable travelling for extended periods, potentially on my own, to pursue research for my degree and to attend events such as conferences?
- Where do I want to live after I'm done my program?
- Will I be able to communicate proficiently in the language of the institution?

#### **General questions/thoughts about grad studies**

- What are times to completion in the department/faculty – average, mode, maximum, minimum?
- What are the funding options associated with my program/degree, including how much funding is available how long it lasts for, what is required to get such funding (eg, will I have to serve as Teaching Assistant or a Research Assistant, is it mandatory or expected that I'll apply for scholarships, is funding guaranteed and how important is that to me, if I get a scholarship, will I get a top up from my supervisor or the department, etc)?
- What courses will I be expected/required to take?
- Will I be expected/have the opportunity to teach/TA?
- What is the student community like in the department/faculty?
- What are living expenses in Edmonton and how do they fit with my lifestyle?
- How much are tuition and fees for domestic/international students and how do they change annually? If I'm an international student, will the department help offset the International Differential Fee?
- How many graduate students in the department typically go into debt and by how much?
- What are my rights as a graduate student?
- Are there opportunities for alternative/experiential learning that fit with my interests?
- What are the milestones I'll need to achieve and by when?
- What is FGSR at the U of A? How is it different from my home faculty? The GSA?
- What if my graduate degree doesn't result in an employment opportunity?

**Questions To Ask a Potential Advisor/Supervisor** (*setting out clear expectations, at the outset of the relationship, for both potential graduate students and supervisors, may potentially help reduce issues or conflicts*)

- What is your work style?
- What are the work requirements for the lab group? Is work-life balance important to you? How many hours do you expect your students to work each week, and does it have to be in a lab or office or can it be my choice? How many days off do I get each year?
- Where will I have office space, if any? Do you supply a computer? Does the department? Access to printing? Is it free or do I have to pay for it?
- How much time do you spend with students and how often do you meet? Are they individual or group meetings or both?
- What makes a good fit in your lab or seminar group (if applicable)?
- How do you prefer to communicate with your students?
- How do you work through conflict with students?
- How many students have you supervised to completion? How many have been unsuccessful?
- What are past students doing now? Are you proud of them/stay in touch?
- What are job expectations in academia and outside of it for someone in this degree? Do you expect your students to stay in academia?
- What opportunities are there for professional development?
- How long do students normally take to complete a degree in your lab (if applicable)?
- How are students funded for research and travel?
- Do all your students receive a guaranteed stipend for the length of their degree?
- How often are students expected to present their research? In what venues, and in what forms?
- Do your students have to apply for grants/scholarships to offset the costs of their projects?
- What kind of projects are other students working on? Will I have the opportunity to collaborate/be expected to help them?
- How is authorship determined for publications; IP for projects?
- If I want to do an alternative form of a dissertation, are you willing to try a non-traditional format?
- What's the best thing about being an academic/professor?
- If you retire/move universities, what happens to your students?
- What about my project interests/excites you?

- Can you tell me a little about the structure of my advisory committee, its members, function, and their role in my candidacy exam (if applicable)?
- What are your specific expectations of my proposal?
- How do you define 'teaching' or 'Teaching Assistant'? How do you define 'research' or 'Research Assistant'?

### **Questions To Ask Other Graduate Students Who Work With Your Desired Supervisor**

- Is this person ok to work with? What is their work style, how often do you meet, are they supportive?
- What kind of help do you get for your work? Do they give constructive criticism? Have you had issues with communication?
- Are you happy here? Have you ever felt harassed or bullied?
- Do you collaborate with other students in your lab?
- What kinds of problems have you had with your supervisor? How did they help work through the problem?
- Were the courses manageable?
- Do most people complete their milestones on time?
- Have you had enough funding to live on?
- Is your supervisor supportive of professional development or other experiential learning opportunities?

This website has some good resources about 'types' of supervisors:

[http://www.postgrad.com/editorial/advice/exams/examinations\\_examiners\\_supervisors/get\\_the\\_most\\_from\\_your\\_post\\_graduate\\_supervisor/](http://www.postgrad.com/editorial/advice/exams/examinations_examiners_supervisors/get_the_most_from_your_post_graduate_supervisor/)



**GSA President  
Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Sarah Ficko  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear Councillor Friends and Colleagues,

Three weeks flies by! Today I'm thinking about the old expression 'if March comes in like a lamb it will go out like a lion' (and vice versa...) as I look out at all the snow we've had in the past few days. I know some people prefer cold temperatures, but I'm ready for some spring flowers and warm weather right about now! Below you'll find some of the key topics I've been working on organized under the theme headings from our Strategic Work Plan.

**Advocate**

***Board of Governors (BoG), BoG Committees, and General Faculties Council (GFC)***

As President, I sit on the Board of Governors (BoG), the highest decision making authority on campus, as well as on four of the seven BoG committees (no students sit on the BoG Audit, Human Resources and Compensation, or BoG Investment committees). As legislated by the *Post-Secondary Learning Act*, the University has a bicameral structure where the BoG oversees financial and business decisions while General Faculties Council (GFC) oversees academic affairs (though the BoG also sees the same material after approval at GFC). The BoG, BoG committees, and GFC normally each convene 4-6 times each between September and May. In February and March, topics that are being discussed and approved in open session by the BoG include the Comprehensive Institutional Plan (annual report to government), meal plan fees for 2017-2018 for residents in Lister and Peter Lougheed Hall, several new mandatory instructional support fees, and updates to the Helping Individuals at Risk policy (with a 350 page meeting package!). At GFC, topics being addressed on March 20 include recommendations from the Scholarly Writing Committee, the new Sexual Violence policy and procedure, and an update from the *ad hoc* committee on academic governance and delegated authority.

***ab-GPAC (Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council) Update***

The Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) has been quite busy this month. On February 28, the ab-GPAC Chair (Yangyang) and I attended the Student Leaders meeting with the provincial government. Topics of discussion included:

1. An update on the tuition, funding, and Student Aid reviews and the current status for each,
2. A presentation by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers (ACAT), who have recently launched a new website to assist with transferring credits between institutions in the province ([www.transferralberta.alberta.ca](http://www.transferralberta.alberta.ca)),
3. An update from the student representatives on the Provincial Mental Health Task Force, which included a request for information on barriers to improving student mental health, institutional or provincial policies that are negatively affecting student mental health and wellness, and suggestions on how to improve student mental health and wellness at each institution,
4. An update that the labour consultant hired by the government has now provided recommendations to them with respect to amending the labour legislation and the government is in the process of drafting legislative changes, *and*
5. A presentation by the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC), which oversees and supports institutions offering high quality programs to students.

On March 2, Yangyang (as ab-GPAC's Chair) was invited to attend the Speech from the Throne to open the third session of the 29<sup>th</sup> Legislature. On March 7 we had a Board of Directors meeting where we approved the recently completed audit, formally introduced our new Executive Director Nicole van Kuppeveld, and discussed elections and transitions for May. On March 16 Nicole attended the provincial government's budget release, which announced a 2% increase in the base operating grant for the U of A for 2017-2018; however, as expected by the University, the government will not be bridging the gap created by the freeze in tuition as was done last year. I can also report more on this orally.

Coming up, the ab-GPAC Board of Directors will be meeting with the Minister of Advanced Education on March 21 to discuss issues and areas of concern specifically affecting graduate students, and the federal government will be releasing its budget on March 22. Lastly, the ab-GPAC Executive Director will begin working to update the website, and will be meeting with all directors to discuss their roles and responsibilities this year in preparation for the transition in May.

### ***Residence Association Fees Collection***

As Masoud reports, the GSA has had many discussions with the Students' Union (SU) over the past year (as well with representatives from various residence associations that include graduate students) with respect to the collection of residence association fees. The SU is currently collecting these fees for undergraduate students but not for graduate students – the deeper background to this is that these fees used to be collected by the University but they have refused to continue to do so, necessitating that the SU and GSA work towards a solution. The GSA and SU are working on an agreement to a series of principles that would allow the SU, in close collaboration with the GSA, to collect association fees for graduate students living in residences (this would then allow those graduate students to continue to remain as members of these associations and take advantage of the benefits and opportunities they offer). Students would be able to opt-out of these fees and referenda would be conducted in each residence in 2017-2018 to confirm the amounts collected.

### **Engage**

#### ***GSA Elections***

I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who came out to the forum and who voted this year in the GSA elections. We had a record number of people attend the forum! My congratulations to the incoming team of Babak, Sasha, Masoud, Firouz, and Royle. We have already started transition training to prepare the new people for their roles, though it is a bit more challenging this year as Babak is in the US until May 15 for research purposes as his visa was delayed earlier this year due to the US travel ban. You will meet the new team at the May meeting of GSA Council, but feel free to offer your congratulations in advance!

#### ***Questions to Ask Before Starting Grad School***

The decision to start grad school is one that should not be taken lightly and, as I mentioned last month, we've been working on a document that can be used by prospective students who are considering starting a graduate program. As you'll see in the agenda item, it is currently broken down into four sections: i) Self-Assessment (eg reasons why I want to attend grad school), ii) General Questions About the University/Department, iii) Questions For a Potential Supervisor, and iv) Questions To Ask Other Students of That Supervisor. Feel free to share this document with students in your department before March 20 for feedback (what they like, what they think is missing, how helpful they would have found it, any cultural sensitivities to consider, etc), or afterwards as well. We'll be presenting it to Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Council in April for discussion, before hopefully making it available to potential students on the FGSR website.

## Support

### ***Student Homelessness***

As I reported last month, the group from the Dean of Students, Community Social Workers Team, Aboriginal Student Services Centre, and the GSA met again this month to continue the conversation on student homelessness. The next steps will be to develop a proposal that can be shared with senior administration, as well as collecting some preliminary statistics from the Community Social Workers and the Aboriginal Student Services Centre on number of students they serve in this capacity and their needs. We also plan to reach out to other groups on campus (SU, UAI) as well as to colleagues in the city about improving and coordinating support. Future work will then involve developing a survey that can be sent out to students to assess how widespread the issue/need currently is, and coordinate with Advancement to ask for donations to support this initiative. The group will be meeting again in a few weeks, and if you have ideas, suggestions, or experiences to share, please feel free to email me directly.

### ***GSA Governance Committee***

The GSA Governance Committee (GSA GC) will be reviewing proposed changes to GSA Bylaw and Policy on GSA Council, GSA Standing Committees, GSA Caucuses, and GSA Officers. The changes are mostly housekeeping matters (such as providing a clear statement about the mandate and duties of CALs and including them (as elected positions) in the jurisdiction of the GSA Appeals and Complaints Board, getting rid of the GSA Student Affairs Advisory Committee – a committee that hasn't met in over 5 years, etc). Proposed substantive changes will be presented to GSA Council for approval, hopefully at the April GSA Council meeting. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask me as Chair of the GSA GC or Sasha as Vice-Chair. Please also note that the three other members of the GSA GC are some of your fellow Councillors and you can also direct any feedback to them.

## Sustain

### ***Creating a Respectful and Welcoming Environment for Indigenous Peoples***

This month I was honoured to be invited to attend a performance called *New Blood: Reconciliation in Action*. Sara Solvey, a Master's student in Secondary Education, has spent the last year fundraising to bring this dance group from Strathmore High School to campus. It was a very moving performance looking at the early life of Siksika Chief Vincent Yellow Old Woman. The play is told through a mix of music, dance, spoken word, and traditional Blackfoot dancing and drumming, and begins by showing the Chief's connection to nature and the spirit world, how that connection was broken when he was forcibly taken away to a Residential School, but how his animal spirit in the play (the hawk) kept trying to reach him, until he eventually escaped. It then shows how he overcame his anger and pain and re-learned his heritage and culture. Throughout the play, the background scenery is beautiful pieces of indigenous artwork (see the picture below). Following the performance, there was a Q&A session with the students. It was interesting hearing how being part of the play has helped students from both indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds understand each other better. One woman in the audience is a residential school survivor and the play moved her to tears. Another member of the audience did not even know that many indigenous children had been forcibly removed from their homes for years, losing their language and heritage in the process. It shows there is still a huge need for education about residential schools, and plays like this one are an important way of helping non-indigenous people understand and feel the pain of thousands of upon thousands of indigenous peoples. I strongly encourage you to watch the play if you ever have the opportunity!



*Opening scene from 'New Blood'*

On March 15, I attended the official launch of Indigenous Canada – a new, free, 12 module Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) that has been developed by the Faculty of Native Studies in partnership with various indigenous people to tell their history and current issues in their own words. The course can be accessed at <https://www.ualberta.ca/courses/indigenous-canada>. The evening was a celebration of the two years of hard work to bring this course to fruition and the many, many people who participated and helped in its creation. As part of the celebration, there were performances by Cree singers, drummers, male and female dancers, and an Inuit throat singer and everyone was invited to participate in a round dance!

On March 28, indigenous graduate students at the U of A are invited to come together in SAB 2-15 to get to know each other and discuss the formation of a new student group. Please [RSVP](#) or contact Teddy Carter ([tscarter@ualberta.ca](mailto:tscarter@ualberta.ca)) and David Parent ([dnparent@ualberta.ca](mailto:dnparent@ualberta.ca)) for more information.

### ***Mental Health and Wellness***

As I've mentioned the last few months, it is often harder to maintain a healthy mind and body during the winter months. There are many resources available on campus on our website at <http://www.gsa.ualberta.ca/Services/MentalHealth.aspx> or through the University at <https://www.ualberta.ca/current-students/wellness/mental-health>. I encourage everyone to take a few minutes and check in with their friends and neighbours on a regular basis.

Last month, I asked Councillors to fill out a few questions about mental health and wellness on campus using MQlicker. I compiled the responses to help inform the discussion on graduate student mental health needs at the Board of Governors Safety, Health, and Environment Committee meeting (let me know if you'd like to see them). It was probably one of the most interesting discussions the committee has had all year. Heather Zwicker, interim Dean of FGSR, and Andre Costopoulos, Dean of Students, identified issues including supervisory issues, career planning, professional development, and supportive writing environments as areas that cause significant stress to grad students, and discussed how they are beginning to address these issues to decrease stress and help grad students to feel supported. I highlighted issues of power imbalances, the unpredictable and insufficient funding, and the need for better communication of expectations. I also noted

that grad students are often older and have external demands such as child care, family demands, greater health and wellness concerns (and costs), and/or they may be caring for their parents. Better supports for grad students need to take these various factors into account.

### **Upcoming Activities and Events**

This semester has lots on the go! I've included a list of dates with some upcoming activities below.

#### ***March***

- February 28-March 2, GSA Elections
- March 20, GSA Council
- March 24, GSA Awards Night
- March 31, Stress Buster and GSA Coffee Break
- March 28, Indigenous Grad Students Meeting
- March 30, Shut Up and Write! Event

#### ***April***

- April 11, FGSR Graduate Teaching Award Event
- April 13, Tentative GSA event - Let Go Of Your Mind – improv style event (watch or participate, and then mix and mingle with fellow grads)
- April 13, 3 Minute Thesis Finals
- April 24, GSA Council
- April 28, GSA Coffee Break

#### ***May***

- May 1, New team of DEOs start their term
- May 15, GSA Council

\*Lots of information about other events, workshops, and speakers can be found at <https://www.ualberta.ca/events>

Warmest regards,

Sarah  
GSA President

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between February 27, 2017 and March 20, 2017. The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

February 28	Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) Representatives at the Student Leaders' Meeting
February 28	Board Finance and Property Committee (BFPC)
March 1	Board Safety, Health, and Environment Committee (BSHEC)
March 1	Phone Call with S Hossack, University of Calgary GSA President
March 2	Meeting with Heather Zwicker, Interim Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR)
March 2	Funding Announcement: Canada Foundation for Innovation's John R. Evans Leaders Fund
March 6	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Dean Selection Committee
March 6	Diversity, Inclusivity, Identity, Human Rights Meeting
March 7	"New Blood" Performance
March 7	Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) Board of Directors Meeting
March 8	Meeting with the Students' Union
March 8	GFC Academic Planning Committee (GFC APC)
March 8	Meeting with Graduate Student Group
March 9	Meeting with W King, Senior Advisor Safe Disclosure and Human Rights
March 9	Meeting with B Soltannia, Incoming GSA President
March 9	Meeting with K Zwicker and S Wolgemuth, Office of the Dean of Students
March 10	Meeting with Andre Costopoulos, Dean of Students
March 10	Student Homelessness Discussion
March 13	Residence Life Task Force (RLTF) Meeting
March 15	Meeting with Residence Services
March 15	Indigenous Canada Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) Launch
March 16	Meeting with Steve Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
March 16	Phone call with Provincial Government
March 16	Board of Governors' (BoG) Dinner
March 17	Board of Governors (BoG) Meeting
March 17	Board of Governors' (BoG) Luncheon
March 20	General Faculties Council (GFC)

**GSA Board  
Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
 From: Courtney Thomas, Executive Director and Coordinator of the GSA Board; Heather Hogg, Director of Operations; Julie Tanguay, Associate Director; and Lisa Hareuther, Assistant Director  
 Date: March 17, 2017

The GSA Board (GSAB) reports regularly to GSA Council by listing its agenda items, Motions/agreements, and main items of discussion. Motions of Agenda approval and approval of the Minutes are not included unless there were amendments made. Closed session items are not minuted. Open session Minutes are available upon request. The President, Vice-Presidents, Director of Operations, Associate Director, and I will be happy to answer any questions or provide more information at the GSA Council meeting. Also see the weekly Management Reports to the GSAB in Item 22 (Executive Director's Report to GSA Council) on pages 22.1-22.3.

**1 March 2017 GSA Board Meeting**

Main Agenda Items:

GSA Academically-Related Graduate Student Group Awards: Proposed Changes to GSA Policy; Follow-Up From GSA Council; and Questions to Ask Before Accepting a Position as a Graduate Student.

Motions and Agreements:

Members **AGREED** to approve the Agenda of March 1, 2017, which had been previously distributed, after adding "Follow-up From GSA Council" as a closed session discussion item. SF **MOVED**. MK Seconded. **CARRIED**.

**MOTION:** That the GSA Board **RECOMMEND** to GSA Council, for approval, changes to GSA Policy, GSA Grant Application Policy and Information, as shown in the attached double column document, to take effect on April 1, 2017 pending the approval of GSA Council. SF **MOVED**. SvK Seconded. **CARRIED**.

Members **AGREED** to move in **CLOSED SESSION**.

Members discussed **Follow-up From GSA Council**.

Members **AGREED** to move out of **CLOSED SESSION**.

**8 March 2017 GSA Board Meeting**

Main Agenda Items:

GSA Health and Dental Plan Fees for 2017-2018; Questions to Ask Before Applying to Graduate Studies; Student Groups Procedure Proposal; and Letter from K Friese Re: U of A Pride Week.

Motions and Agreements:

Members **AGREED** to approve the Agenda of March 8, 2017, which had been previously distributed, after adding "Student Groups Procedure Proposal" and "Email from K Friese Re: U of A Pride Week" as discussion items. SF **MOVED**. SvK Seconded. **CARRIED**.

**Motion:** That the GSA Board **RECOMMEND TO GSA COUNCIL** that the GSA Health and Dental Plan Fee be set at \$500.36/annum, effective September 1, 2017, with collection from graduate students to begin September 1, 2017. AT **MOVED**. SF Seconded. **CARRIED**.

Members **AGREED** that the GSA would sign on to the statement of support for Pride Week and that SF would respond to K Friese.

**15 March 2017 GSA Board Meeting**

Main Agenda Items:

GSA Academic Travel Awards, Child Care Grants, and Emergency Bursaries: Reallocation of Graduate Student Support Fund Rolling Opening Balances, GSA Board Policy: Recommended Revisions, and Letter of Understanding between the SU and the GSA re: Residence Associations Fees Collection.

Motions and Agreements:

**Motion:** That the GSA Board **APPROVE** the reallocation of the amounts remaining in the budgets and contingency budgets for Academic Travel Awards, Child Care Grants, and Emergency Bursaries (approximately \$113,000 in total) as follows: \$5,000 to the budget line for Emergency Bursaries, 35% of the remainder to the budget line for Academic Travel Awards, and 65% of the remainder to the budget line for Child Care Grants. SF **MOVED**. MK Seconded. **CARRIED**.

Members **AGREED** to support the draft letter of understanding with the SU and for MK to include updates on the SU/GSA partnership with respect to the collection of Residence Associations fees in his report to GSA Council.

Members **AGREED** to move in **CLOSED SESSION**.

Members discussed **Meeting with a Graduate Student Group**.

Members **AGREED** to move out of **CLOSED SESSION**.

Members **AGREED** to move in **CLOSED SESSION**.

Members discussed **Meeting with W King**.

Members **AGREED** to move out of **CLOSED SESSION**.

Members **AGREED** to move in **CLOSED SESSION**.

Members discussed **GFC Materials**.

Members **AGREED** to move out of **CLOSED SESSION**.

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**GSA Nominating Committee  
Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Radim Barta  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear Council Colleagues,

The report from the GSA Nominating Committee (GSA NoC) this month is a summary of discussions/decisions the GSA NoC has made since its last report, together with a list of all vacancies filled and those which will be filled shortly. Please note as well that the GSA NoC will be meeting in-person on March 31, 2017.

GSA Policy governing the GSA NoC is located in GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section E: Nominating. As provided for in its Terms of Reference, the GSA NoC has been conducting business via e-mail.

Sincerely,

Radim Barta, Chair, GSA NoC

**GSA Standing Committees**

No items to report at this time.

**Bodies External to the GSA**

GSA Council has delegated to the GSA NoC the responsibility of filling positions on all committees external to the GSA. Normally, all vacancies are advertised. According to GSA Policy, "advertising may be waived in instances where, in the GSA NoC's view, it is urgent to fill a vacancy" (GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section E: Nominating, GSA Policy, Nominating, Section E.POL.5.2).

**1) Sexual Assault Response Implementation Committee (SARIC) "Assessment" Subcommittee (1 Graduate Student Position)**

This position was advertised in the GSA Newsletter on February 24, 2017 and March 3, 2017. The deadline to receive nominations was Monday, March 6, 2017 at 12:00 PM (noon). Three (3) nominations were received and **Sehrish Punjani (Nursing)** was elected by the GSA NoC to serve on the SARIC "Assessment" Subcommittee.

**2) Festival of Teaching Steering Committee (1 Graduate Student Position)**

This position was advertised in the GSA Newsletter on February 24, 2017 and March 3, 2017. The deadline to receive nominations was Monday, March 6, 2017 at 12:00 PM (noon). One (1) nomination was received and **Heather Larson (Physical Education and Recreation)** was elected by the GSA NoC to serve on the Festival of Teaching Steering Committee.

**3) General Faculties Council (GFC) Standing Committees (Up to 6 Graduate Student Position)**

The GSA NoC ran advertisements in the GSA Newsletter on March 3 and March 10, 2017 for five (5) GFC Standing Committees with a deadline of March 14, 2017 at 12:00 PM (Noon). The GSA NoC makes recommendations to the GFC Nominating Committee (GFC NC) on the nominations received, but the GFC NC ultimately elects the representatives. The GSA NoC only received nominations for one of the GFC Standing Committees, and recommended **Andrews Tawiah (Rehabilitation Science)** for the 2017-2018 term on the GFC APC.

**Current Vacancies**

No items to report at this time. Vacancies on the GSA Board, GSA Appeals and Complaints Board, GSA Elections and Referenda Committee, as well as vacant Council Elected Officer and CAL positions will be advertised in the upcoming month.



**GSA Vice-President Academic  
Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Firouz Khodayari  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear Council Colleagues,

Spring is the season in which we can refresh ourselves just like nature. I hope we all start spring full of energy. As Vice-President Academic, I attended several meetings and have been involved with some discussions during the last month, of which I will share the highlights with you in this report.

**Signature Areas Development Panel**

Last November, a signature areas development process was launched by the University. All members of the campus community were invited to submit proposals by January 28. The panel (which I am a member of) received 57 proposals, reflecting a wide range of research activities from across multiple faculties at the University of Alberta. Since January, the Signature Areas Development Panel, co-chaired by the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Steven Dew and Vice-President (Research), Lorne Babiuk, has met several times to conduct initial analysis and synthesis of the proposals and group them into larger themes. In the current stage, a Campus Forum focused on the development of signature research and teaching areas has been organized for Thursday, March 23, Noon – 1 pm in Council Chambers, 2-100 University Hall, Van Vliet Complex (where we hold our GSA Council meetings). All stakeholders of the University (including graduate students) are invited to attend.

At the Campus Forum, the co-chairs and members of the panel will provide an update on our work to date, including a discussion of emerging thematic clusters. The steps that are anticipated next will also be reviewed. I invite all graduate students to join us and provide your input and advice as this process continues to unfold.

I am happy to answer any questions or comments that you might have regarding this report. Also, I would be more than happy if you would like to share your suggestions or concerns regarding any academic related issues you have encountered at the University.

Thanks,

Firouz Khodayari, GSA Vice-President Academic

## 14.1

*Please find below a list of meetings I attended between February 27, 2017 and March 20, 2017.  
The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.*

February 28	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Policy Review Committee
March 1	Statutory Deans' Council
March 1	GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (GFC CLE)
March 6	GSA Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Council Caucus
March 6	GFC Nominating Committee (GFC NC)
March 6	GFC Executive Committee (GFC Exec)
March 8	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Council
March 10	Signature Areas Development Panel Sub-Group Meeting
March 15	Signature Areas Development Panel
March 15	GSA General Faculties Council (GFC) Caucus
March 20	General Faculties Council (GFC)

**GSA Vice-President External  
Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Masoud Khademi  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear Council Colleagues,

I hope you are doing well in each and every aspect of your lives, and are enjoying the warm weather we have had the past few days. As we are heading into the start of spring next week, and the flowers and trees start to blossom again, I hope many wonderful things blossom in your lives too.

During the past month, I attended meetings to discuss the Student Groups Policy and Procedure. After the Students' Union (SU) proposed the need to review the current Student Groups Policy and Procedure to the Office of the Dean of Students (DoS) last year, the DoS office decided to review this policy and come up with a new version to address the SU's concerns and suggestions. The DoS office sent a series of new policy and procedure drafts for both the SU and the GSA to review. The DoS office also set a meeting to directly hear the GSA's feedback on the draft policy and procedure. Consequently, we went over the new document and shared our thoughts with both the SU and DoS representatives in two separate meetings. The conversation around this remains ongoing and any proposed changes will eventually move through the University's governance structure.

As Sarah reports, the GSA is also working with the SU on a Letter of Understanding which outlines the principles by which the SU will collect Residence Association fees from graduate students living in residences. Graduate students can opt-out of Residence Association fees and the amounts will be approved via referenda in 2018. This follows a decision from the U of A to stop collecting fees for Residence Associations. The SU, who have been collecting fees for Residence Associations from undergraduate students for the past year, offered to assist with the process of fee collection for graduate students living in residences. The SU will also include proportional representation from the GSA on the SU's Audit Committee, which works to approve the disbursements of Residence Association fees, following review of their budgets.

The Residence Life Task Force (RLTF) held its final meeting, which I attended in March. In this meeting we reviewed and revised the final report of the task force, which will now be sent to the Office of the President. In this report we developed some suggestions and future plans, based on the results of the survey (for more information regarding this survey and RLTF, please refer to my previous reports).

As I mentioned in my last report, during the past couple of months, I was involved with the Vice-President (University Relations) Advisory Search Committee. Due to the confidentiality of this search process, most of the content of these meeting cannot be reported. However, I can say the search process is in its final stages and the committee aims to select the new VP University Relations before the summer.

As always, if you need more information or have any questions regarding the meetings that I attended this past month, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,  
Masoud Khademi, GSA Vice-President External

*Please find below a list of meetings I attended between February 27, 2017 and March 20, 2017. The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.*

March 1	Vice-President (University Relations) Advisory Search Committee
March 7	Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) Board of Directors Meeting
March 8	Meeting with the Students' Union (SU)
March 9	Meeting with K Zwicker and S Wolgemuth, Office of the Dean of Students
March 13	Residence Life Task Force (RLTF) Meeting
March 14	Vice-President (University Relations) Advisory Search Committee
March 15	Meeting with Residence Services
March 18	Alumni Council Retreat

**GSA Vice-President Labour  
Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Sasha van der Klein  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear Council Colleagues,

Let me start off with a thank you! I'm very happy to be re-elected as VP Labour for next term, so that I can follow through with work I have started in both the labour and the mental health portfolios.

This month I've been continuing my **labour consultations**. You have really given amazing feedback and raised the right kind of questions about the Collective Agreement, so a great thank you for booking meetings with me. Furthermore, I continue to work on several compliance-related matters. FGSR and I have also been working to organize a series of lunch sessions focused on the topic of **managing up**. The preliminary date for the first session will be May 4, so keep an eye on the GSA newsletter!

Regarding the **Mental Health Portfolio**, Jane Slessor (Community Social Work Team), Jason Murray (Counselling and Clinical Services), and I gave a presentation during the Student Advisors Conference on Friday March 3. During the session, we touched on the innovative collaborative structure the **Days of Action Committee** uses to link communities across the campus and between campuses, through the specific "Days of Action", such as World Suicide Prevention Day. The collaborative structure is unique and has already created valuable connections between student organizations, such as the GSA, and U of A services. On that same topic, the next Day of Action is the [International Day of Happiness](#), which will take place on March 20. Through this website, you will be able to award your friends or colleagues with a happiness award. Two [Friendship Benches](#) will be installed in the Rutherford Atrium, which are intended to inspire peer-to-peer conversations about mental health in order to reduce stigma and encourage more people to seek help.

I will keep the [link](#) to the labour consultations calendar in my reports for now, so if you haven't booked a meeting yet, it's easy to access! Also, please make sure if you book a meeting and can't make it at the last time to shoot me a short email, as this helps me with planning.

That was March! Let me know if you have questions, and feel free to contact me at any time.

Thanks,

Sasha van der Klein, GSA Vice-President Labour

*Please find below a list of meetings I attended between February 28, 2017 and March 20, 2017. The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.*

February 28	Meeting with a Graduate Student
February 28	Meeting with a Graduate Student
February 28	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 1	Meeting with J Slessor, Community Social Work Team
March 1	Meeting with a Graduate Student
March 1	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 1	Meeting with a Graduate Student
March 2	Vice-President (Research) Advisory Search Committee
March 2	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 3	Meeting with a Graduate Student
March 3	Presentation at the Student Advisor's Conference
March 3	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 3	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 7	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 7	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 7	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 8	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Council
March 8	Meeting with a Graduate Student Group
March 9	Meeting with the Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights
March 9	Meeting with Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Concerning the Managing Up Series
March 10	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 14	Vice-President (Research) Advisory Search Committee
March 14	Meeting with a Graduate Student
March 14	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 14	Labour Consultation with a Graduate Student
March 15	Meeting with a Graduate Student
March 15	Days of Action Committee
March 20	Canadian Mental Health Association Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST) Training

**GSA Vice-President Student Services  
Report to Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Ali Talaei  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear Council Colleagues,

Hope all is fine and you are doing well. I would like to take the opportunity to wish you a happy spring. I am afraid to let you know that, due to some academic commitments, I will not be able to attend the Council meeting on March 20 so I am writing this report to let you know about the activities I have been involved in during the past few weeks.

First, I would like to thank all of you for voting in the GSA General Election and Referendum. This year's voter turnout was very good. Second, I would like to inform you that the U-pass referendum passed with more than 91% 'yes' votes. As a result, we will enjoy great transit prices for the next 4 years.

For the last two steps of the Provost's Advisory Working Group on Scholarly Writing Support, we have had two town halls and consultation with community members. The feedback received and the final report will be discussed at various governance bodies, including General Faculties Council (GFC) on March 20.

Last but not least, the GSA Health and Dental Plan fee for 2017-2018 is on the March 20 GSA Council Agenda. Last year almost to the day, I was writing my Council report with the news that there would be an approximately 20% increase in the Health and Dental Plan fee. Today, I am delighted to inform you that the increase in the GSA Health and Dental Plan fee is expected to be minimal (i.e. less than 2% inclusive of the \$2.77 subsidy which was provided to members last year from the GSA Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund). As I reported several times during the past few months, during the comprehensive consultation process with different stakeholders, which included discussion with GSA Council, online and telephone surveys, and several town halls, that the GSA Board embarked upon it was concluded that the majority of members are happy with the Plan. As a result, this year there are no proposed changes in coverage. However, there were some additional benefits negotiated by Studentcare for members, including a 30% discount on services delivered by dentists in the dental network (it was previously 20%) and a partnership with Rexall which includes a 10% discount off the total cost of prescriptions (taken off the student co-pay), up to a \$40 cap, and a 20% discount on all private label products sold at their locations. Please contact me if you have any questions about the Plan.

Sincerely,

Ali Talaei, Vice-President Student Services

*Please find below a list of meetings I attended between February 27, 2017 and March 20, 2017:*

March 7	Scholarly Writing Support Town Hall
March 8	Scholarly Writing Support Town Hall
March 9	Meeting with Representatives of the Dean of Students
March 10	Meeting with Andre Costopoulos, Dean of Students
March 15	Campus Food Bank (CFB) Board Meeting
March 16	U-Pass Administration Committee Meeting
March 17	ONEcard Student Advisory Group Meeting

**GSA Senator**  
**Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Jane Traynor  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear Council Colleagues,

Senate Plenary was held on March 2 and 3. During this session we listened to an extremely interesting talk on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the role of the University of Alberta in AI research from Dean Jonathan Schaeffer. We also received an update on the plans for the University's "signature programs," which are being pursued as part of the new institutional strategic plan, *For the Public Good*.

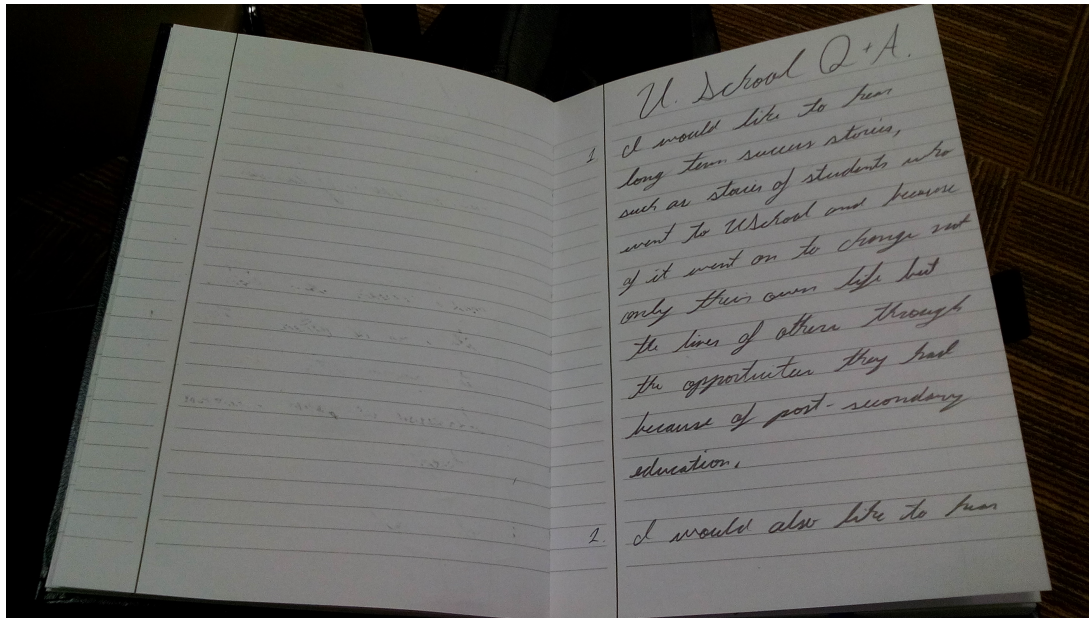
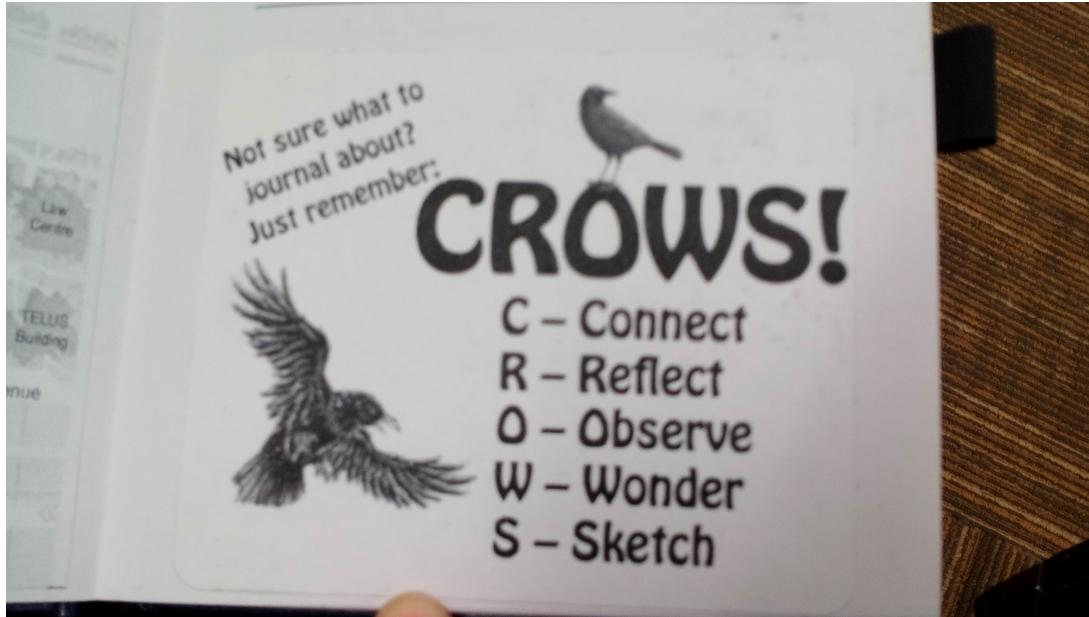
We also received updates from the Dean of Students, André Costopoulos, on the latest metrics surrounding student mental health on campus and continued our reflections on the role of Senate in responding to the Dialogue on Racism from our last Plenary session. If you have any feedback on the role you believe the Senate should take in regards to racism on campus, please do not hesitate to let me know as the discussion is ongoing. Finally, during this Senate Plenary, we were asked to journal as a means of providing feedback on the sessions. This also helped us to gain a better understanding of some of the methods used in the USchool classroom. I have included photos of my journal for you to peruse at your leisure.

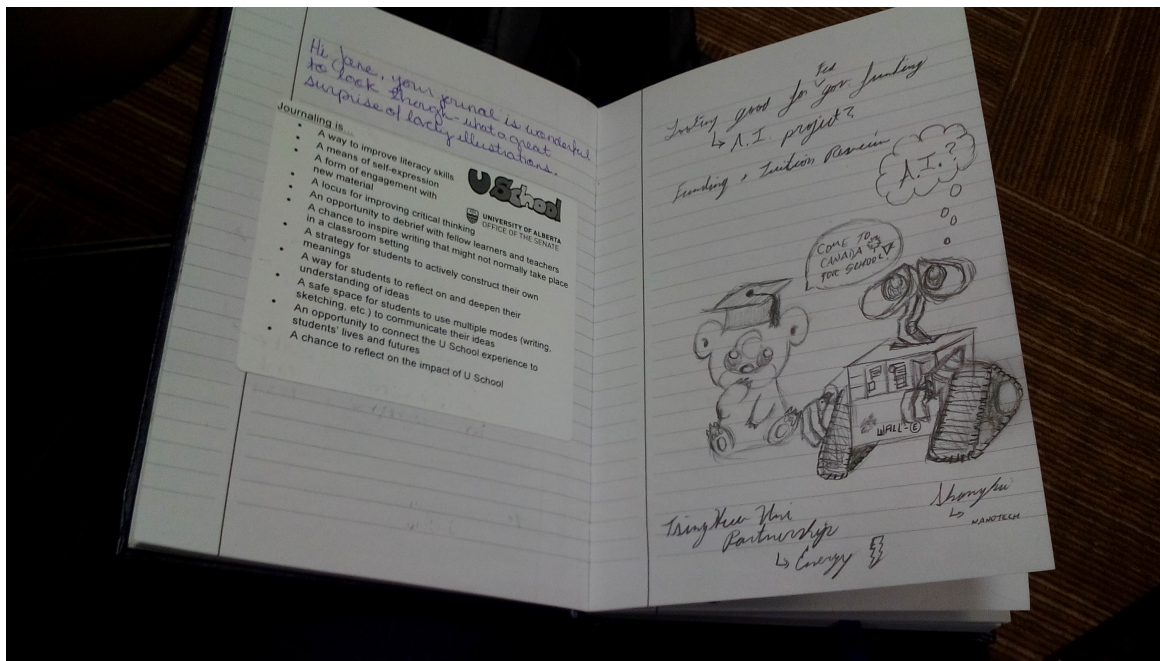
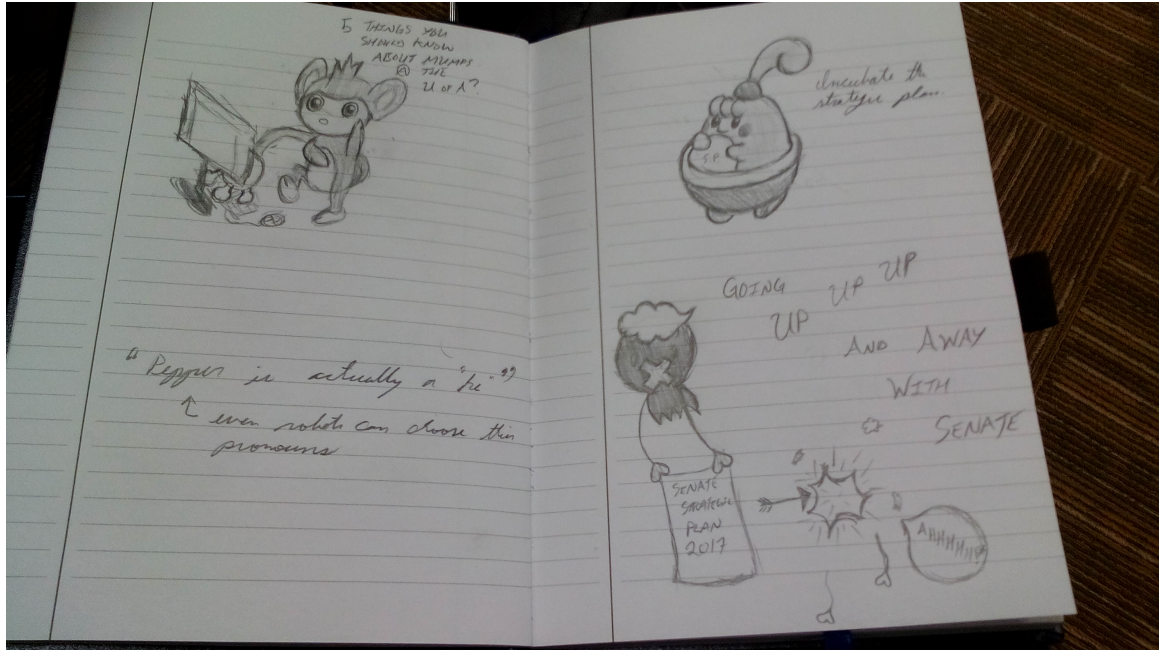
On March 13 I attended another Honorary Degrees Committee meeting. As of that morning, all but three honorary degree recipients for Spring 2017 convocation have been confirmed. I also had a Community Connection and Engagement Committee meeting where we decided to create a working group to help determine the direction in which Senate should best respond to the Dialogue on Racism. I will be a part of this working group until the end of May. Additionally, if there are any local communities (eg, aboriginal, not-for-profit, rural, or ethnic) that you would like to put the Senate in contact with, please do not hesitate to contact me!

If you have any upcoming events that you would like to have Senate representation at or if you have an initiative you feel should be brought to the attention of the Senate, please do not hesitate to contact me.

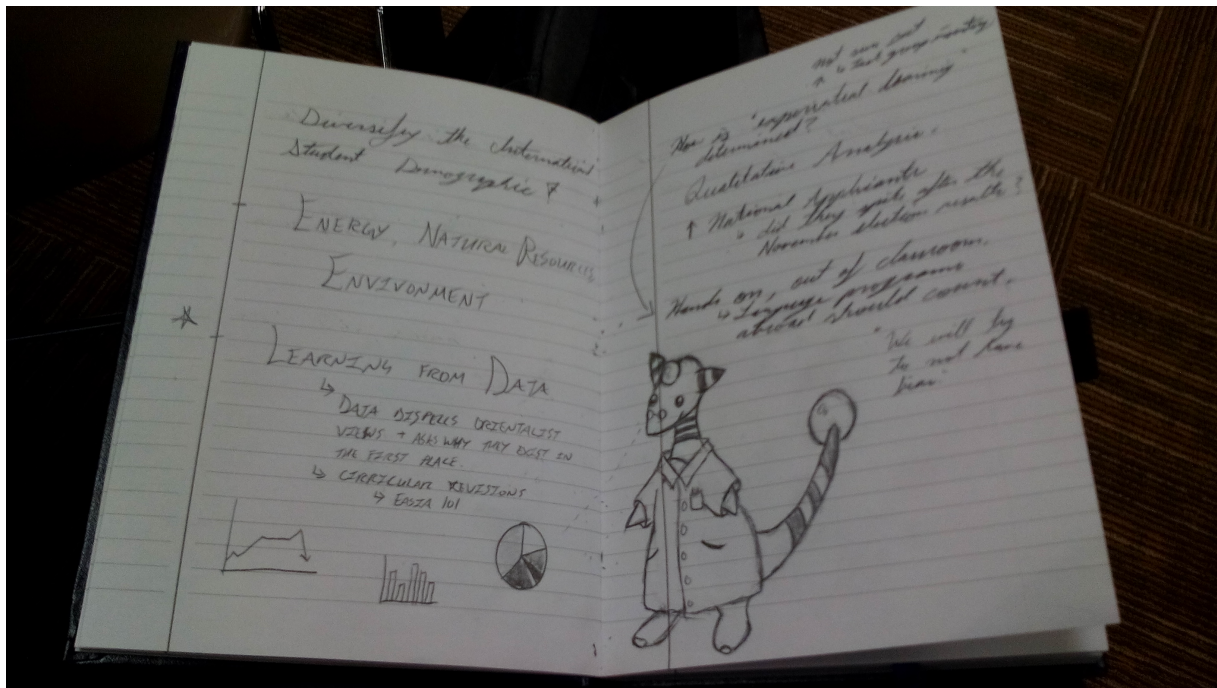
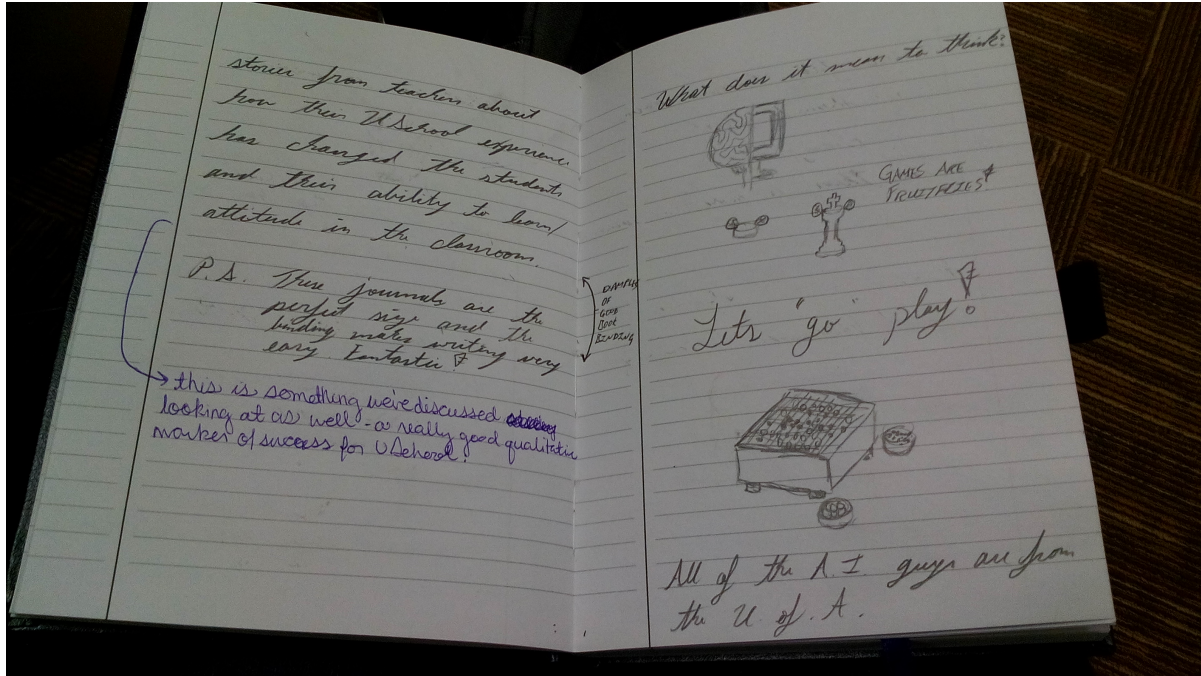
Jane Traynor, GSA Senator

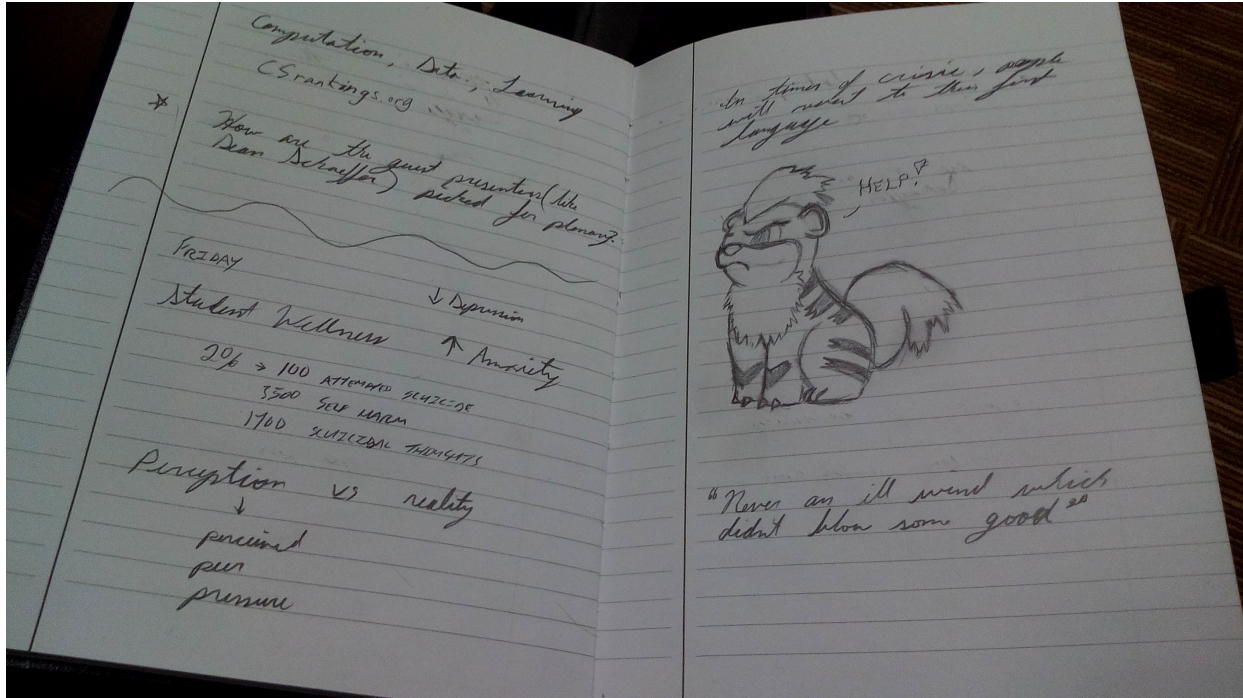












**Chief Returning Officer**  
**Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Carolina Martinez  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear Council Colleagues,

The report below serves as the written report that GSA Policy (Section D: GSA Officers, GSA Policy, Officer Portfolios, Section D.POL.10.5.f.ii) notes the CRO will provide following the GSA General Election and any referendum. This report also serves as my procedural reports, as required by GSA Policy (Section I: Elections, GSA Policy, Elections, Section I.POL.15.1 and Section J: Referenda, GSA Policy, Referenda, Section J.POL.17).

I am happy to report that there were no complaints or issues in the 2017 GSA General Election and the U-Pass Referendum and that the official results were released twenty-four (24) hours after the release of the provisional results.

We had a very successful turn-out for both events, especially for the U-Pass Referendum.

The total voter turnout for the 2017 GSA General Election was 9.7%, with:

- Total Eligible to Vote: 8,319
- Total Eligible Ballots Cast: 803

The total voter turnout for the U-Pass Referendum was 17.9%, with:

- Total Eligible to Vote: 8,319
- Total Eligible Ballots Cast: 1,489

Moving forward, the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (GSA ERC), as noted in the GSA ERC's report, met on March 14, 2017 to discuss and debrief on several matters, including:

- Methods to increase interest among graduate students with respect to running for Directly-Elected Officer and Councillor-at-Large positions;
- Imposing a deadline for candidates to submit their bio and resume forms;
- Whether to continue producing individual videos of candidates based on viewing numbers;
- GSA General Election Forum: length, location, time, and inviting the *Gateway* to attend the forum;
- Increasing voter turnout: postering and boosting Facebook posts; *and*
- GSA Bylaw and GSA Policy on referenda

I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Carolina Martinez, Chief Returning Officer

**GSA Elections and Referenda Committee**  
**Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Leigh Spanner  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear Council Colleagues,

The GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (GSA ERC) met on March 14, 2017 to debrief the 2017 GSA General Election and the U-Pass Referendum. Please find below a list of items that were raised and discussed by the GSA ERC at this meeting, which was chaired by the GSA ERC Vice-Chair, Sarah Prescott. Discussion of these items was informed by questions raised by candidates, by GSA Council, by the office support team during this year's election, and by two surveys conducted by the GSA ERC to 1) the General Election Forum attendees and 2) the candidates in the 2017 GSA General Election. This list is also included in the CRO's report.

- Methods to increase interest among graduate students with respect to running for Directly-Elected Officer and Councillor-at-Large positions;
- Imposing a deadline for candidates to submit their bio and resume forms;
- Whether to continue producing individual videos of candidates based on viewing numbers;
- GSA General Election Forum: length, location, time, and inviting the *Gateway* to attend the forum;
- Increasing voter turnout: postering and boosting Facebook posts; *and*
- GSA Bylaw and GSA Policy on referenda

I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,  
Leigh Spanner, Chair of the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee

**GSA Executive Director  
Report to GSA Council for the March 20, 2017 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Courtney Thomas  
Date: March 17, 2017

Dear GSA Council Members,

Over the past month the office support team has been focused a variety of projects and matters; I highlight a few of them below.

**Transition**

Now that the 2017 General Election has concluded, we are planning for our annual transition between Directly-Elected Officer teams. This typically occurs toward the end of March and consists of several intensive training sessions for newly elected officials, followed by a month of “job shadowing” in April.

**GSA Awards Event**

This is one of two major events that the GSA holds each year (fall orientation for new graduate students being the other). The planning for this event begins in February and occupies a fair amount of staff time and resources.

**Training/Orientations for New GSA Appeals and Complaints Board Members and New Councillors-at-Large**

As noted in GSA Policy, GSA Appeals and Complaints Board members receive training in procedural fairness and we have been engaged with arranging these. Likewise, this year we are developing some orientation sessions for new Councillor-at-Large (consisting of a review of the Standing Orders of GSA Council, a Budget 101, and an overview of GSA Council annual work plans). I'd like to remind members of GSA Council that if they want, at any time, to arrange for a 101 session (Budget 101, Health and Dental 101, GSA Services 101, Governance 101, or GSA 101), they are welcome to contact the office.

**GSA Health and Dental Plan Fees for 2017-2018**

The annual setting of the GSA Health and Dental Plan fee for the coming year is always a challenge for the GSA because the timing of when we go to the Board of Governors with our fees (which they approve the collection of) differs from the timing of insurers. Studentcare typically approaches the GSA in late February/early March and provides projected premiums for the coming year based on actual claims made and paid between September 1 and February 28. The GSA Board reviews these projections in detail and, if a recommendation to utilize the GSA's Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund is involved, by the GSA Budget and Finance Committee also reviews them. A recommendation is then brought to GSA Council and we then have a short couple of weeks to formally submit our fees out to the Board of Governors. It looks like usage and claims have stabilized over last year, however, which is good news.

As always, very happy to answer any questions.

Courtney



### Management Report to the GSA Board, March 1, 2017

The following issues have dominated management's attention in the weeks since the last GSA Board meeting on February 22, 2017:

#### Strategic

- **Main Issues Dealt With in the Past Week:** Early planning for Transition; discussions concerning the right to strike legislation and consultations with graduate students; opening of the voting period for the GSA General Election and U-Pass Referendum; GSA General Election Forum; GSA Council meeting and associated action; ongoing work on an issue associated with the GSA Health and Dental Plan and an issue associated with a graduate student group; and review of proposed changes to the University's Student Groups Procedure.
- **Bylaw and Policy Review:** Ongoing review of several GSA Bylaws and Policies (GSA Officer Portfolios, Academically-Related Graduate Student Groups (proposal has been developed and reviewed by the Vice-President Student Services and once by the GSA Board, pending a recommendation from the GSA Board it will be presented to GSA Council), GSA Standing Committees, etc) and working on recommended updates and revisions to GSA Board Policy.
- **Graduate Student Groups:** Ongoing strategizing related to student groups and residence associations following discussions by the GSA Board and with the SU; relationship building and maintenance with Student Group Services; and discussions concerning SU and Dean of Students initiatives on student groups.

#### Grants and Operations

- Planning for **GSA Awards Night** and upcoming **GSA Coffee Breaks**.
- Transfer of content to **Sitecore 3** (to be completed in March) and populating a Google Group (with assistance and support from IST) to be used for voting in the GSA General Election and U-Pass Referendum.
- Facebook = 930 likes (up 5 from February 22); Facebook posts reached 819 users this week and our "post engagement" count was 421. Twitter = 727 followers (up 5 from February 22); our tweets earned 2,000 "impressions" over the last week.

	Total Amount Available This Period	Total Amount Remaining This Period (Post-Processing)	Number of New Applications Since Last GSAB	Total Number of Applications This Period
<b>ATAs</b>	\$98,705.42	\$58,913.75	16	88 (16 pending processing)
<b>CCGs</b>	\$99,137.50	\$28,137.50	2	54 (4 pending processing)
<b>ASGAs</b>	\$4,368.15	\$ 0 <b>CLOSED</b>	0	4 (1 pending processing)
<b>EBs</b>	\$34,543.00 (no periods)	\$27,414.97	0	12 (0 pending processing)

#### Week in Review – Office Operations:

- Supporting the **work of the GSA Nominating Committee** (vacancies on the Festival of Teaching Steering Committee and the Sexual Assault Response Implementation Committee (SARIC) "Assessment" Subcommittee) and **support for the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee** and its work planning for the 2017 General Election and U-Pass referendum.
- Planning for winter term **GSA Coffee Breaks and Awards Night**.
- Forward planning for **Directly-Elected Officer transition** in March/April.



### Management Report to the GSA Board, March 8, 2017

The following issues have dominated management's attention in the weeks since the last GSA Board meeting on March 1, 2017:

#### Strategic

- **Main Issues Dealt With in the Past Week:** Wrapping up the GSA General Election and U-Pass Referendum; planning for Transition; discussions concerning the right to strike legislation and consultations with graduate students; preparing for the first mailing of GSA Council; training sessions for GSA ACB members; ongoing work on an issue associated with the GSA Health and Dental Plan; review of proposed changes to the University's Student Groups Procedure and meeting with the SU; HR work; designing training sessions for new CALs; and preparing for the fiscal year end.
- **Bylaw and Policy Review:** Ongoing review of several GSA Bylaws and Policies (GSA Officer Portfolios, GSA Standing Committees, etc) and planning for some meetings of the GSA Governance Committee, and working on recommended updates and revisions to GSA Board Policy.
- **Graduate Student Groups:** Ongoing strategizing related to student groups and residence associations following discussions by the GSA Board and with the SU; relationship building and maintenance with Student Group Services; and discussions concerning SU and Dean of Students initiatives on student groups, as well as suggestions for changes to Student Groups Procedure from a GSA member.

#### Grants and Office Operations

- Planning for GSA Awards Night and upcoming GSA Coffee Breaks.
- Planning for Transition.
- Development for tracking graduate student advocacy issues.
- Google Drive clean up and file organization.
- Supporting the work of the GSA Nominating Committee (vacancies on General Faculties Council standing committees) and support for the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee and its work planning for the 2017 General Election and U-Pass referendum.
- Transfer of content to Sitecore 3 (to be completed in late March/early April) and associated staff training.
- Facebook = 933likes (up 3 from March 1); Facebook posts reached 1,115 users this week and our "post engagement" count was 340. Twitter = 729 followers (up 2 from March 1); our tweets earned 2,800 "impressions" over the last week.

	Total Amount Available This Period	Total Amount Remaining This Period (Post-Processing)	Number of New Applications Since Last GSAB	Total Number of Applications This Period
<b>ATAs</b>	\$98,705.42	\$53,766.89	12	99 (13 pending processing)
<b>CCGs</b>	\$99,137.50	\$22,137.5	3	57 (3 pending processing)
<b>ASGAs</b>	\$4,368.15	\$0 <b>CLOSED</b>	0	4 (0 pending processing)
<b>EBs</b>	\$34,543.00 (no periods)	\$27,414.97	0	12 (0 pending processing)

### Management Report to the GSA Board, March 15, 2017

The following issues have dominated management's attention in the weeks since the last GSA Board meeting on March 8, 2017:

#### Strategic

- **Main Issues Dealt With in the Past Week:** GSA Elections and Referenda Committee meeting; preparing the first mailing of GSA Council; meeting with a departmental group; review of proposed changes to USPPOL policy and procedure on graduate student groups; planning for Transition and meeting with the incoming President; discussions concerning the right to strike legislation and consultations with graduate students; Health and Dental 101 sessions (updating slides); preparing for a meeting of the GSA Governance Committee; HR work (payroll); designing training sessions for new CALs; and preparing for the fiscal year end.
- **Bylaw and Policy Review:** Ongoing review of several GSA Bylaws and Policies (GSA Officer Portfolios, GSA Standing Committees, Caucuses, CALs, GSA Appeals and Complaints Board, etc) and planning for some meetings of the GSA Governance Committee, and working on recommended updates and revisions to GSA Board Policy.
- **Graduate Student Groups:** Ongoing strategizing related to student groups and residence associations following discussions by the GSA Board and with the SU; relationship building and maintenance with Student Group Services; and discussions concerning SU and Dean of Students initiatives on student groups.

#### Grants and Office Operations

- Planning for GSA Awards Night (catering, space booking, rehearsal, certificates, floral arrangements, etc) and upcoming GSA Coffee Breaks.
- Planning for Transition – complicated this year by some absences.
- Development of a tracking system for graduate student advocacy issues (at the data entry phase).
- Supporting the work of the GSA Nominating Committee (vacancies on General Faculties Council standing committees) and support for the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee.
- Transfer of content to Sitecore 3 (to be completed in late March/early April) and associated staff training.
- Facebook = 933 likes (up 3 from March 8); Facebook posts reached 937 users this week and our “post engagement” count was 53. Twitter = 730 followers (up 1 from March 8); our tweets earned 3,044 “impressions” over the last week.

	Total Amount Available This Period	Total Amount Remaining This Period (Post-Processing)	Number of New Applications Since Last GSAB	Total Number of Applications This Period
<b>ATAs</b>	\$98,705.42	\$49,941.89	8	107 (10 pending processing)
<b>CCGs</b>	\$99,137.50	\$20,137.5	2	59 (3 pending processing)
<b>ASGAs</b>	\$4,368.15	\$ 0 <b>CLOSED</b>	0	4 (0 pending processing)
<b>EBs</b>	\$34,543.00 (no periods)	\$24,959.97	1	13 (1 pending processing)