

Monday, October 21, 2024
Held in-person in 2-100 Council Chambers
 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

<p><i>The GSA and the University of Alberta reside on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis. This territory is a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Anishinaabe, Dene, Ojibway, Saulteaux, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community. In acknowledging this traditional territory and its significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived and continue to live upon it, we recognize its longer history that reaches beyond colonization and the establishment of European colonies and recognize the GSA's ongoing collective responsibility in working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) peoples and what that means for the work of the GSA as it aims to practice the principles of being Good Relations with FNMI peoples, Nations, communities, and lands.</i></p>
<p><i>The GSA's confidentiality practices are outlined below and can be summarized as follows: information arising in a closed session of GSA Council or a committee, information about identifiable individuals, or information otherwise marked or indicated as confidential, needs to stay that way. Discussions that are off the record or confidential often involve personal information, information on negotiations, business information, or other information of a similar nature.</i></p>
<p>GSA SPEAKER: Farhan Khalid in the Chair</p> <p>DEPUTY SPEAKER: None at this time</p>
<p>CLOSED SESSION: Discussion of matters pertaining to the business interests of the GSA will occur in Closed Session</p>

Time	Item #	Title	Presenter(s)
6:00	-	Land Acknowledgement	F. Khalid, GSA Speaker
1 min	1	Approval of the Agenda for October 21, 2024 GSA Council	F. Khalid, GSA Speaker
1 min	2.0-2.10	Approval of the GSA Council Minutes of September 23, 2024 GSA Council	F. Khalid, GSA Speaker
2 min	3	Changes in GSA Council Membership	F. Khalid, GSA Speaker

10 min	4	Announcements	
15 min	5	<u>PRESENTATION ITEMS:</u> CASA Presentation	Wasiimah Joomun, CASA Executive Director
20 min	5.0	GSA's Proposal for the Utilization of Tuition Fee Offset	H. Arshad, President
15 min	6 6.0 6.1-6.3 6.4 6.5	<u>ACTION ITEMS</u> A. GSA Governance Committee-Recommended Bylaw Changes - September 23 Second Reading a. Outline of Issue b. Recommended Bylaw Changes B. GSA Governance Committee-Recommended Bylaw Changes - October 21 First Reading a. Outline of Issue b. Recommended Bylaw Changes	H. Arshad, President H. Arshad, President
15 min	7 7.0-7.2 7.3-7.4 7.5-7.6	<u>ELECTIONS</u> A. GSA Deputy Speaker: a. One GSA Member Position B. Appeals & Complaints Board: a. Two Councillor Positions C. Governance Committee: a. One Councillor Position	T. Wang, NoC Vice-Chair Four nominations received. Three nominees NoC-approved. One nomination received and NoC-approved. One nomination received and NoC-approved.
30 min	8	<u>INFORMATION PIECES</u> Reports: A. GSA President: Haseeb Arshad a. President's Report b. GSA Board Report c. GSA Budget & Finance Committee Report d. GSA Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee Report e. GSA Governance Committee Report f. Third-Party Investigation Letter B. Vice-President Academic: Rija Kamran C. Vice-President Student Life: Benjamin Kucher D. Vice-President Student Services: Saad Iqbal	8.0-8.3 8.4 8.5 None at this time 8.6 8.7-8.10 8.11-8.13 8.14-8.17 8.18-8.21

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Vice-President External: Parman Mojir Shaibani F. Associate Vice-President Labour: Muneeb Raja G. GSA Senator: Ola Mabrouk H. GSA Speaker: Farhan Khalid I. Chief and Deputy Returning Officers: Sophie Shi and Zain Patel J. GSA Nominating Committee Vice-Chair: Tianxu Wang K. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Chair L. GSA Management, Executive Director: Lewie Moodley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8.22 8.23-8.24 None at this time None at this time None at this time 8.25 None at this time 8.26-8.29
	9	<p>Question Period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Written Questions (May be submitted to the GSA Speaker before 4:00 PM on Thursday, October 17, 2024) B. Oral Questions 	
		Adjournment	

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6:00 PM - 9:00 PM

The GSA and the University of Alberta reside on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis. This territory is a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Anishinaabe, Dene, Ojibway, Sauteaux, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community. In acknowledging this traditional territory and its significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived and continue to live upon it, we recognize its longer history that reaches beyond colonization and the establishment of European colonies and recognize the GSA's ongoing collective responsibility in working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) peoples and what that means for the work of the GSA as it aims to practice the principles of being Good Relations with FNMI peoples, Nations, communities, and lands.

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GSA SPEAKER:

Farhan Khalid in the Chair

DEPUTY SPEAKER:

None at this time

CLOSED SESSION:

Discussion of matters pertaining to the business interests of the GSA will occur in Closed Session

IN ATTENDANCE:

Council-Elected Officials:

- GSA Speaker: Farhan Khalid
- Chief Returning Officer: Sophie Shi
- Deputy Returning Officer: Zain Patel
- Senator: Ola Mabrouk

GSA Executives:

- GSA President: Haseeb Arshad
- VP Student Life: Benjamin Kucher
- VP Student Services: Saad Arslan Iqbal
- VP External: Parman Mojir Shaibani

Departmental Councillors:

1. Ning Dai, Biochemistry
2. Samantha Tan, Biological Sciences
3. Vishnu Pillai, Business MBA
4. Yousef Haidar, Chemistry
5. Andy Cheng, Cell Biology
6. Kiera Greenaway, Civil & Environmental Engineering
7. Cassandra Baragar, Communication Science & Disorders

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● AVP Labour: Muneeb Raja <p>Councillors-At-Large:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Georga Boffen Yordanov 2. Margaret DeCoste 3. Christine Hymanyk <p>Guests:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mary Cheuk 2. Pam Hung 3. Aeshwarye Aggarwal 4. Cassandra Cowan 5. Jagrat Ruparel 6. Olumide Adaolowo 7. Paula Mazur 8. Masoud Mirimoghaddam 9. Joseph Onguene 10. Amber Yu <p>Regrets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rija Kamran, VP Academic ● Ibrahim Khodabocus, ERC Vice-Chair ● Gurparkash Singh, Biomedical Engineering Councillor ● Connor Oborn, Medical Genetics 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Michelle Bey, Dentistry 9. Alissa Watson, Drama 10. Shaun Woudstra, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences 11. Ajibola Adigun, Educational Policy Studies 12. Jennie Burton, Elementary Education 13. Nathan Lamarche, English & Film Studies 14. Zoe Wagner, Human Ecology 15. Amber Smith, IGSA 16. Tamara Semeria Maitret, Laboratory Medicine & Pathology 17. Dalia Cristerna Roman, Linguistics 18. Emma Heidebrecht, Neuroscience 19. Rebecca Reif, Obstetrics & Gynecology 20. Raj Somasundaram, Paediatrics 21. Fulin Wang, Pharmacology 22. Indiresk Akil Mangra-Bala, Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences 23. Grace Essuman, Physiology 24. Savannah Ribeiro, Political Science 25. Cheryl Pan, Psychology 26. Kathryn Short, Public Health 27. Matt Ball, Renewable Resources 28. Samantha Knapp, Sociology 29. Ivan Ma, Surgery <p>Alternate Departmental Councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fleur Issac, Biological Sciences ● Chirag Thakur, Business MBA ● Mohamadi Amirmahdi, Chemical & Materials Engineering ● Dana Villareal, Digital Humanities ● Reyna Alvarez, Drama ● Zeynep Oyku Ozturk, Educational Policy Studies ● Dante Terino, Medical Microbiology & Immunology ● Leo Remillard, Oncology ● Mahnoor Shoukat, Ophthalmology
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Time	Item #	Title	Presenter(s)
6:05	-	Land Acknowledgement	F. Khalid, GSA Speaker
1 min	1	Approval of the Agenda for September 23, 2024 GSA Council HA MOVED. BK SECONDED. Motion PASSED.	F. Khalid, GSA Speaker
1 min	2.0-2.12	Approval of the GSA Council Minutes of August 19, 2024 BK MOVED. SI SECONDED. Motion PASSED.	F. Khalid, GSA Speaker
2 min	3	Changes in GSA Council Membership Joining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Devinder Singh, Economics Councillor ● Yousef Haidar, Chemistry Councillor ● Dante Torino, Alternate Medical Microbiology & Immunology Councillor ● Nathan Lamarche, English & Film Studies Councillor ● Ajibola Adigun, Educational Policy Councillor ● Zeynep Oyku Ozturk, Alternate Educational Policy Councillor ● Ivan Ma, Surgery Councillor ● Mahnoor Shoukat, Alternate Ophthalmology Councillor ● Alissa Watson, Drama Councillor ● Reyna Alvarez, Alternate Drama Councillor 	F. Khalid, GSA Speaker
10 min	4	Announcements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction of Parman Mojir Shaibani, VP External 	
	5	<u>PRESENTATION ITEMS</u> A. Micro-Grants Process Presentation Presented by Vice-Provost (EDI) Carrie Smith Smith, the Vice Provost for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, along with her colleague Tim IRA, the Portfolio Initiatives Manager, introduced the Mutual Aid Project Microgrants, a new initiative designed to address community needs in light of recent events, including the police's forced encampment removal. This program is part of the broader	C. Smith, Vice-Provost EDI

	<p>"Moving Through Conflict" framework and aims to foster healing and tackle systemic inequities through mutual aid principles. The microgrants will support a range of community-led projects that emphasize collective care, storytelling, and conflict resolution. Eligibility for these grants is broad, requiring at least three members from the University of Alberta to collaborate, thereby ensuring a diversity of voices and perspectives. The application process is straightforward and open-ended, encouraging submissions as the initiative aims to learn and adapt throughout its pilot phase. Tim will serve as the facilitator for these projects, providing support in planning and execution to ensure they align with the program's objectives. This initiative is envisioned to cultivate resilience and mutual flourishing within the community, and they look forward to engaging with participants and receiving feedback. Additional information can be found on the EDI webpage.</p> <p>H. Arshad, GSA President, asked if the project is a one-year project. C. Smith stated that she hopes not; they are hoping for success and continued funding. There is a \$5,000 cap currently.</p> <p>B. SEAP Heatmap Presentation Presented by VP Student Life Benjamin Kucher, Deputy-Provost Sarah Wolgemuth, Vice-Provost Melissa Padfield</p> <p>The session provided an overview of the "Igniting Purpose: Student Experience Action Plan," a collaborative initiative designed to enhance the student experience at the university. After extensive engagement with students, faculty, and staff, the plan is structured around three key pillars: exploration, essential challenge, and fostering connections. The recent student experience survey yielded valuable baseline data, highlighting critical areas for improvement, particularly in career support and academic advising. Findings indicated that while graduate students felt generally positive about their academic environment, there is a notable need for enhanced career pathway communication and improved navigability of university resources. Additionally, the survey revealed opportunities to strengthen community connections and safety on campus. Moving forward, the plan will evolve</p>	<p>M. Padfield, Vice-Provost; S. Wolgemuth, Deputy-Provost; B. Kucher, VP Student Life</p>
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		<p>through continuous feedback and data-driven insights, with a commitment to transparency and accountability in its implementation. The presenters encouraged ongoing dialogue and involvement from the student body to refine and enhance the experience further.</p> <p>During the discussion, participants provided valuable feedback on the data presentation. One suggestion highlighted the need to differentiate between various types of safety—psychological, cultural, emotional, and intellectual—when assessing student experiences. Another participant raised a controversial question about how the Student Experience Action Plan would address the fallout from a significant incident on campus, emphasizing the importance of fostering civil discourse around such sensitive topics. Further feedback suggested that safety assessments should distinguish between thesis-based and course-based students due to differing dynamics, particularly regarding supervisor relationships. The presenters acknowledged these points, expressing a commitment to refining the survey for future iterations and involving students in shaping actions to improve interdepartmental connections. Overall, the conversation underscored the collaborative responsibility of the university community in enhancing the student experience, with an invitation for ongoing dialogue and proposals from students on how to foster a more connected and supportive environment.</p> <p>C. Savver AI Pilot (Financial Management App) Presented by Dillon Kearl</p> <p>Dillon Kearl discussed the financial challenges faced by students, referencing alarming statistics that highlight the struggles many encounter, such as high tuition costs, debt, and reliance on food banks. He introduced Bright Learning Lab, a company he co-founded, which aims to support student success through AI-driven tools. One of their products, called Savver.ai, aggregates financial data from various bank accounts to help students manage their finances effectively. This application categorizes spending, forecasts budgets, and provides personalized notifications to guide users in their financial decisions.</p>	<p>D. Kearl, CEO Brightlearning Labs</p>
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		<p>He proposed running a pilot of the Saver app with the Graduate Students' Association (GSA), promising that participation would be free and come with incentives such as gift cards and a chance to win a grand prize trip to Victoria. The goal is to foster a partnership that benefits both students and the GSA, enhancing financial support in the academic community.</p> <p>During the presentation, concerns arose about data security and the implications of using the Saver app offered by Bright Learning Lab. Attendees questioned whether the app would sell their data or use it to train AI models. Dylan clarified that the app is currently free as part of a pilot program, with plans to eventually monetize it through universities or organizations like the GSA. He emphasized that user data would not be sold and that the app adheres to stringent security standards, including SOC 2 compliance, using third-party APIs to protect banking information. Users expressed the desire for features like connecting student loans and setting financial goals, and Dylan confirmed these functionalities are in development. He assured participants that upon termination of their account, all data would be deleted, reinforcing the app's commitment to user privacy. Overall, the project was met with cautious optimism, with attendees appreciating the potential for financial management support tailored to students.</p> <p>H. Arshad, GSA President, made a point of saying that he supports the project.</p>	
15 min	6 6.0 6.1-6.6	<p><u>ACTION ITEMS</u></p> <p>A. GSA Governance Committee-Recommended Bylaw Changes - August 19 Second Reading</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. Outline of Issue</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b. Recommended Bylaw Changes</p> <p>BK MOVED. SI SECONDED.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Motion PASSED.</p> <p>B. GSA Governance Committee-Recommended Bylaw Changes - September 23 First Reading</p>	<p>H. Arshad, President</p> <p>H. Arshad, President</p>

	<p>6.7 6.8-6.10</p> <p>6.11</p> <p>6.12 6.13</p> <p>6.14</p> <p>6.15-6.27</p> <p>6.28-6.30</p> <p>6.31-6.32</p> <p>6.33-6.34</p>	<p>a. Outline of Issue b. Recommended Bylaw Changes</p> <p>HA MOVED. BK SECONDED.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Motion PASSED.</p> <p>C. 2024-2025 GSA Spring/Summer Term Budget and Expenditure Report</p> <p>a. Cover Letter to the President and Chair of the GSA Budget and Finance Committee From the Executive Director</p> <p>b. Outline of Issue</p> <p>c. Cover Letter to GSA Council from GSA President</p> <p>d. Spring Summer Term 2024-2025 Budget and Expenditure Report</p> <p>e. Spring Summer Term 2024-2025 Operating Budget Narrative</p> <p>f. Spring Summer Term 2024-2025 Restricted and Other Funding Report</p> <p>g. Spring Summer Term 2024-2025 Restricted and Other Funding Narrative</p> <p>h. Spring Summer Term 2024-2025 Labour Union Fund Dues Budget Narrative</p> <p>BK MOVED. SI SECONDED.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Motion PASSED.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H. Arshad and Seidy Louangxay summarized 	<p>H. Arshad, President</p>
<p>15 min</p>	<p>7</p>	<p><u>DISCUSSION ITEMS</u></p>	

30 min	8	<p><u>ELECTIONS</u></p> <p>A. GSA Deputy Speaker:</p> <p>a. One GSA Member Position</p> <p>B. Appeals & Complaints Board:</p> <p>a. Two Councillor Positions</p> <p>C. NoC:</p> <p>a. One GSA Member Position: Pam Hung</p> <p>D. Budget & Finance Committee:</p> <p>a. One GSA Member Position: Cassandra Cowan</p> <p>E. Elections & Referenda Committee:</p> <p>a. Two GSA Member Positions: Md Rakibul Hasan & Rebecca Elsie Osei</p> <p>F. Governance Committee:</p> <p>a. One Councillor Position</p> <p>G. Awards Selection Committee:</p> <p>a. Four GSA Member Positions: Amber Yu, Paula Mazur, Olumide Adaolowo, and Emily Coombs</p>	<p>T. Wang, NoC Vice-Chair</p> <p>No nominations received</p> <p>No nominations received</p> <p>Two nominations approved</p> <p>Five nominations received</p> <p>Three nominations approved</p> <p>No nominations received</p> <p>Fifteen nominations received</p>
30 min	9	<p><u>INFORMATION PIECES</u></p> <p>Reports:</p> <p>A. GSA President: Haseeb Arshad</p> <p>a. City Councillors to come to Council in November</p> <p>b. Bylaw reviews and updates are ongoing</p> <p>c. Applications for a new \$2,500 hybrid course award will begin next month, with funding available from January or September.</p> <p>d. The exceptional tuition fee increase (ETI) will affect nine departments, potentially raising tuition between 15%-30%. The President urged counselors to engage with their department associations to ensure proper consultation regarding these increases.</p> <p>e. The GSA has been active in municipal advocacy, addressing issues like affordable housing and transit safety, and facilitating interactions between students and city officials.</p> <p>f. The President also mentioned ongoing</p>	

		<p>bylaw revisions, the approval of an AI policy paper addressing ethical usage of generative AI, and efforts to secure an increase in the Graduate Student Support Fund to \$1.2 million.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. Concerns were raised regarding the proposed increase in peace officers in response to safety issues, with a call for more social services instead. h. Finally, a tuition fee town hall will be held soon to allow students to voice their concerns about ETIs, encouraging widespread participation from all departments. He encouraged graduate students to come to the Tuition Townhall on October 7th to discuss their concerns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B. Vice-President Academic: Rija Kamran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. As submitted C. Vice-President Student Life: Benjamin Kucher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. As submitted D. Vice-President Student Services: Saad Iqbal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. U-Pass Negotiations: first two rounds have failed. UASU and GSA going into the next round with the city. b. Graduate Student Photo Contest: October 10th as World Mental Health Day event with a nature walk and creative photo contest. The call for submissions will come out soon. c. Campus Food Bank: campus food strategy initiative and hydroponics farm to support CFB. S. Iqbal encouraged engagement, participation and concerns with any ideas or suggestions. E. Vice-President External F. Associate Vice-President Labour: Muneeb Raja <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. As submitted b. Bargaining Negotiations: sharing the proposal with the university on October 9th. Full days of negotiation planned on November 24th and 25th, and December 4th and 5th. He plans on getting students as engaged as possible in this process. G. GSA Senator: Ola Mabrouk 	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> H. GSA Speaker I. Chief and Deputy Returning Officers: Sophie Shi and Zain Patel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. S. Shi congratulated Parman on the By-Election for VP External and encouraged graduate students to consider nominating themselves in February’s General Election. Referenda are coming up and will be discussed in coming months. b. H. Arshad asked after any issues with Bylaw changes that affected the by-election; S. Shi stated that it went smoothly. c. The ERC will approve more changes to Bylaw and Policy regarding Referenda J. GSA Nominating Committee Chair: Arseniy Belosokhov <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. T. Wang reported on behalf of A. Belosokhov b. The NoC has approved many nominations for Council elections c. There was one Councillor nomination for ACB, but the nomination was withdrawn d. Internal work on Bylaw and Policy is ongoing K. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Chair L. GSA Management, Executive Director: Lewie Moodley <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. As submitted b. The GSA office is currently in the process of hiring a Finance and HR Manager following the retirement of Dorte Sheikh after decades of working on campus 	
	10	<p>Question Period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Written Questions (May be submitted to the GSA Speaker before 4:00PM on Thursday, August 15, 2024) B. Oral Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. H. Arshad highlighted GSA Social Hour on Tuesday, September 24 from 1:00-3:00PM b. A. Adigun, Educational Policy Studies, asked for clarification regarding guest attendance to Council 	

		Adjournment 8:15 PM	
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GSA's Proposal for the Utilization of Tuition Fee Offset

GSA's proposal to call for the creation of special scholarships and financial support for course-based master's students, addressing rising tuition, food insecurity, and financial strain. It highlights the need for proactive support given the planned enrollment growth and provides recommendations to enhance student wellness and success.

Haseeb Arshad, President GSA

As the president of the Graduate Student Association (GSA), I have had the privilege of working closely with our diverse graduate student community, understanding their struggles and advocating for their well-being. Over the past two years, we at the GSA have conducted extensive research into the financial and mental health realities faced by graduate students. What we found is deeply concerning: a growing number of students, particularly those enrolled in course-based master's programs, are facing significant financial challenges with little or no institutional support.

At a time when tuition fees are increasing (from 2020 to 2024, **for domestic graduate students approximately 22.5% cumulative increase and for international graduate student approximately 75% increase** depending on the program) and living costs are soaring (from **2020 to 2023, the MBM in Edmonton rose by 15.32%**), it is critical that the university steps up to meet the needs of these students. This proposal encapsulates two years of research and highlights the importance of addressing these urgent issues. We present a case for creating special scholarships for course-based master's students and outline additional recommendations to help alleviate the financial pressures and food insecurity they face.

This proposal is not just about responding to the challenges of our members—it's about proactively preparing for tomorrow. The university's plan to increase course-based master's enrollment underscores the need for a structured financial support system that ensures every student can thrive. By taking these steps, the university will send a clear message: we care about all our students, and we are committed to their success.

Rationale for Special Scholarships and Financial Support for Course-based Master's Students

1. Impact of Tuition Fee Increases on International Students:

The university's tuition fee increases disproportionately impact international students, as domestic tuition hikes are capped at 2%. International students, however, are subject to higher and often unpredictable increases. While it is mandated from IRCC that the international students demonstrate proof of funds for their first year, unexpected financial crises—such as medical emergencies, shifts in currency exchange rates, or other personal challenges—can and do occur. Unfortunately, many of these students are excluded from the university's emergency bursary program, particularly first-year international students, leaving them in a precarious situation. **To our knowledge, the IRCC mandated policy is the requirement for study permit and does not restrict the university to open its emergency bursary program to first year international students.**

Course-based master's students face additional vulnerability as there is currently no scholarship or need-based financial assistance available to them. These students bear the full weight of financial uncertainty, and their ability to continue their studies is often compromised by the lack of institutional support. It is critical that the university creates special scholarships specifically for these students, ensuring that financial barriers do not hinder their academic progress.

2. Financial Insecurity Among Course-based Students:

Our recent survey ***“Under Pressure: Mental Health Realities for Graduate Students at U of A”*** revealed that course-based master's students are disproportionately affected by financial stress. **3 out of 10 are clinical diagnosed and 4 out of 10 rely on external mental health support.** These students have limited time for self-care or leisure, as they are often forced to take on part-time jobs to make ends meet. The pressures of balancing work and study contribute to heightened stress levels, negatively impacting their mental health. Many course-based students have reported considering dropping out due to financial challenges in our previous survey ***“Understanding the Financial Realities of Graduate Students at U of A”***, highlighting the urgency of addressing their needs through

dedicated financial support.

3. *Rising Usage of the Campus Food Bank:*

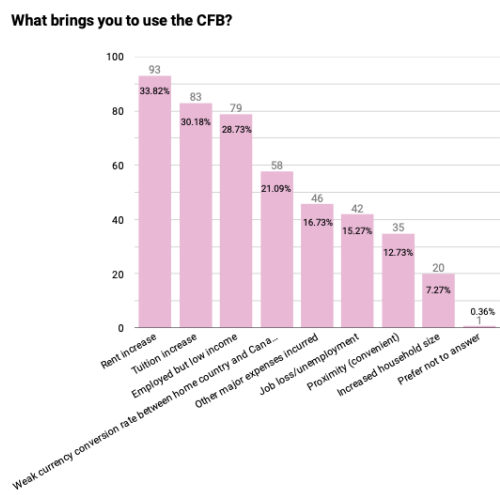
The 2024 Campus Hunger Survey paints a stark picture of food insecurity among graduate students. The data show that:

- **73% of food bank clients are international students, 66.18% are graduate’s students.**
- **Over 23%** of clients cannot afford to meet their basic food needs, even with the assistance of the food bank.
- More than **30% of clients skip meals 4-6 times per week**, and many also rely on off-campus food banks to supplement their access to food.
- **66% of clients believe that starting a cheaper food initiative can help** resolve their food insecurity issues

These alarming figures are a clear indication that students are struggling to afford even necessities. **The number of students using the Campus Food Bank has doubled over the last year.** This dramatic increase in demand highlights the urgent need for greater financial support.

4. Inflationary Pressures:

The current inflationary environment has compounded the financial struggles of students. Rent, food, and transportation costs have risen sharply, making it even more difficult for students to balance their studies with their financial obligations. The following chart provides insight into the **primary reasons why students are using the Campus Food Bank**. The most significant drivers include **rent increases (33.82%)** and **tuition increases (30.18%)**, closely followed by being **employed but with low income (28.73%)**. Other factors, such as **weak currency conversion rates (21.09%)** and major expenses incurred (16.73%), also contribute significantly. The data highlights that financial pressures like increasing living costs and insufficient income are pushing students to seek support from the CFB.



Without targeted financial support, many students—especially those in course-based programs—will find it increasingly difficult to continue their education. This is not just an issue of affordability; it is a matter of student retention and success.

Importance of Special Scholarships for Course-based Master's Students

The university's enrollment growth plan includes a significant increase in the number of **course-based master's students, rising from 3,376 to 5,460 over the next 10 years**. This ambitious growth signals the university's commitment to expanding its graduate programs, **but with this increase comes the responsibility to ensure that students are supported both academically and financially**.

Currently, there are no scholarship programs specifically designed for course-based master's students. Without such support, these students are at a disadvantage compared to their peers in research-based programs who have access to a variety of funding opportunities. As the university seeks to attract and retain more course-based students, it is essential to establish financial aid programs that will ease their financial burdens and enhance the university's reputation as an institution that cares about all its students.

Scholarships for course-based students would serve as a powerful recruitment tool, allowing the university to attract students while providing critical financial relief to those who need it most. **Being proactive in establishing this support will not only benefit the students but will also strengthen the university's standing as a leader in higher education**.

Recommendations for Utilizing University Fee Offsets

In addition to creating special scholarships for course-based master's students, the university could utilize a portion of the fee offset to support student wellness in the following ways:

1. Increased Financial Support for the Campus Food Bank:

The Campus Food Bank is struggling to meet the rising demand for its services. On top of that, there is no direct financial support in the university budget line to support CFB. By providing direct financial support, the university can ensure that no student goes hungry. With food insecurity affecting such a large proportion of the student body, this support would have an immediate and profound impact on student well-being.

2. Affordable Meal Plans:

The university, in collaboration with dining services, could introduce a low-cost meal plan that utilizes leftovers from dining halls. While dining services may be limited in their capacity to offer discounts (as they are run by third-party vendors like Aramark), the university can step in to **subsidize meals, offering basic \$5 meal plans for 3-4 days a week**. This would greatly alleviate food insecurity and provide students with access to nutritious meals. University of Calgary's Student Union has collaborated with the university to start their "**SU Quality Meal Program**" and we can replicate a similar program here with the university's support.

3. Expanding Bursary Programs to Include First-year International Students:

First-year international students are currently ineligible for emergency bursary programs, despite being among the most vulnerable to financial hardship (**almost 27% of our respondents in understanding the financial realities survey were 1st year course-based master's students**). Revising this policy to include these students would provide a safety net for those who encounter unexpected financial difficulties during their first year, ensuring that they are able to continue their studies without fear of financial ruin.

This proposal presents a comprehensive and compassionate case for the creation of special scholarships and enhanced financial support for graduate students. By addressing the financial and mental health challenges these students face, the university can foster a more inclusive, supportive, and successful graduate community. Investing in our students today is an investment in the future of our institution. We urge the university to take these steps now, ensuring that all students—regardless of their program—can thrive and succeed.

Sincerely,

Haseeb Arshad
President, Graduate Student Association

Outline of Issue

General bylaw and policy updates: Recommended Changes to GSA Bylaw and Policy

Suggested Motion:

That **GSA Council** approve the recommendations of the GSA Board and GSA Governance Committee regarding changes to GSA Bylaws and Policy, as noted in the attached proposal, effective following two readings by GSA Council (in the case of GSA Bylaw) and one approval by GSA Council (in the case of GSA Policy). Policy changes are effective and binding from September 24 2024 and Bylaw changes are effective binding October 22 2024.

Note: This is the second reading of changes to GSA Bylaw. The second reading will occur on October 21, 2024. The recommended changes to GSA Policy are currently presented for information and will be presented for approval on September 23, 2024.

Background:

Over the course of the past 2 months, the GSA Summer Intern has reviewed the Integrated GSA Bylaw and Policy document with the intention to highlight any changes needed, as identified by GSA Board members and staff. These changes will provide more clarity and consistency for GSA governance and operations. The Bylaw changes will be reviewed at two (2) successive GSA Council meetings while the Policy changes will be reviewed at one (1) GSA Council meeting.

Jurisdiction:

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section A.BYL.1.2

"These Bylaws ... may be amended by two two-thirds majority votes of Council held on seven calendar days' notice of motion and no less than one week apart."

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section A.BYL.2.2

"GSA Policy is under the jurisdiction of GSA Council and may be amended by a simple majority vote of GSA Council at any meeting of GSA Council."

Current Bylaws (deletions are noted as strikethroughs and changes/additions are noted in red font)	Rationale
<p>D.BYL.4 Restrictions on Multiple Positions</p> <p>D.BYL.4.1 The Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Chief Returning Officer (CRO), and Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) shall not concurrently hold any other GSA position that reports directly to GSA Council.</p>	<p>Holding multiple positions, especially those that are accountable to the GSA Council, could create conflicts of interest. For example, a CRO who is also a DEO might face challenges in maintaining impartiality during elections.</p>
<p>D.BYL.4.2 For the purposes of this bylaw, positions that report directly to GSA Council include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Directly-Elected Officers (DEOs) b. Council-Elected Officers (CEOs) c. Members of GSA Standing Committees d. Councillors-at-Large (CALs) e. Departmental Councillors 	<p>The roles of Speaker, Deputy Speaker, CRO, and DRO are designed to be impartial and oversee various GSA processes. Allowing these individuals to hold other positions could compromise the checks and balances within the GSA governance structure.</p>
<p>D.BYL.4.3 Upon appointment or election to the position of Speaker, Deputy Speaker, CRO, or DRO, the individual must resign from any other GSA positions that directly report to GSA Council.</p>	<p>Especially for the Speaker, Deputy Speaker and CRO roles, impartiality is crucial. Holding other positions could create perceived or actual bias in decision-making processes.</p>
<p>D.BYL.4.4 This bylaw does not restrict these individuals from serving as Departmental Councillors as these positions are directly elected by the graduate student body.</p>	<p>Clear separation of these roles from other GSA positions enhances transparency and builds trust among the graduate student body in the fairness of GSA processes. These bylaws are in line with the vague policy D.POL.13.3 Restrictions under the Speaker and Deputy Speaker policy section</p>

Current Policy (deletions are noted as strikes and changes/additions are noted in red font)	Rationale
C.POL.3.1.e One (1) Councillor elected by the Black Graduate Students' Association (BGSA) as a voting member	<p>Renumber C.POL.3.1.f and g.</p> <p>Adding BGSA Representative as this newly created position will be open in the general election.</p>
C.POL.3.2 Departmental Councillors, and the IGSA Councillor, the BGSA Councillor , and their alternates, will be elected (or, in the case of alternates, appointed) annually for a one (1) year term by graduate students from their department ('constituents') or from the membership of the IGSA and BGSA according to their own procedures or their group Constitution. If a department has no student group, a council seat will still be provided on an interim basis until they are able to get their group registered with Student Group Services (SGS).	
C.POL.3.2.a The duties of Departmental Councillors, and the IGSA Councillor, and the BGSA Councillor will be:	
C.POL.3.2.b.i The IGSA and BGSA will be provided with GSA Council remuneration, as specified in GSA Policy, GSA Council Attendance.	
C.POL.6.3 Departmental Councillors and the Representatives of the Indigenous Graduate Students' Association and Black Graduate Students' Association	
C.POL.6.3.a It is a duty of Departmental Councillors, the Indigenous Graduate Students' Association (IGSA) Councillor, and the Black Graduate Students Association (BGSA Councillor) "to attend all meetings of GSA Council or, if they are unable to attend, to ensure their alternate can attend in their place" (GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section C.POL.3.2.a.ii). If both the Departmental Councillor and the alternate cannot attend a meeting, they will provide an advance written reason to the Speaker. If a Departmental Councillor, or alternate, or the IGSA Councillor, or alternate, misses two (2) consecutive GSA Council meetings or a total of three (3) GSA Council meetings within a year, without an advance written reason acceptable to the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, the Speaker, in consultation with the Deputy Speaker and the ED (or delegate), will declare the position vacant and seek to have the position filled.	

<p>C.POL.6.3.b The GSA will provide, for the benefit of graduate students in each department, faculty, or extra-departmental unit, and for the benefit of graduate students represented by the IGSA and BGSA, remuneration based on an attendance rate of at least 50% at GSA Council meetings in a given year, which is defined as 1 May to the following 30 April, by a Departmental Councillor, or alternate, and the IGSA Councillor, or alternate.</p>	
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Outline of Issue

GSA CEO Restrictions on: Recommended Changes to GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section D, E related Nominating committee policy and by law update around restrictions on paid members.

Suggested Motion:

That the GSA Council, for approval, recommended changes to GSA Bylaw and Policy, **GSA Restrictions on Multiple Positions: Recommended Changes to GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section D, E.**

Note: This is the first reading of changes to GSA Bylaw. The first reading will occur on October 21, 2024 and the second reading will be on November 18 2024. Bylaws require two readings and policy only one reading. Policies are effective and in place from October 22 2024.

Background:

We conducted this review to identify potential conflicts of interest in holding multiple positions within the GSA that report to the Council. Understanding these conflicts helps ensure transparency, fairness, and impartiality, particularly in roles like the CRO and DEO during elections. By addressing these issues, we aim to improve the governance structure and maintain the integrity of decision-making processes within the GSA.

Jurisdiction:

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section A.BYL.1.2

"These Bylaws ... may be amended by two two-thirds majority votes of Council held on seven calendar days' notice of motion and no less than one week apart."

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section A.BYL.2.2

"GSA Policy is under the jurisdiction of GSA Council and may be amended by a simple majority vote of GSA Council at any meeting of GSA Council."

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section F.BYL.1.3

"GSA Standing Committees advise GSA Council and the GSA Board (GSAB) on policy relevant to their mandates, and have full authority to take actions set out within those mandates."

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section F.POL.4.2.a

The mandate of the GSA Governance Committee is to *"advise GSA Council on matters of GSA Bylaw and Policy not in the purview of any other GSA Standing Committee, or other governance issues, and recommend changes to GSA Council."*

Current Bylaws (deletions are noted as strikerthroughs and changes/additions are noted in red font)	Rationale
<p>Restricting Members on External Awards from Applying to Paid Positions D.BYL.1.1c GSA Members who are recipients of external awards that explicitly prohibit paid employment are ineligible to apply for DEO and Council-Elected Officer positions that provide a stipend or an honorarium. However, such members are encouraged and permitted to run for volunteer-only positions within the GSA, where no financial compensation is provided.</p>	<p>This ensures compliance with external award conditions while promoting fairness and transparency by allowing only eligible members to apply for paid roles</p>

Current Policy (deletions are noted as strikerthroughs and changes/additions are noted in red font)	Rationale
<p>Policy for Nominating Committee E.POL.2.8a All nominees are encouraged to attend the GSA Council meeting where election will be held for their contested position. During the meeting, each nominee will be allocated a maximum of 30 seconds to present their qualifications and reasons for seeking the position. This brief introduction will allow Council members to assess the suitability of the nominees.</p>	<p>Encouraging candidates to attend council meetings and present themselves ensures informed decision-making and increases transparency in the election process. Plus, this policy statement also streamlines the process.</p>

**GSA NOMINATING COMMITTEE (GSA NoC)
DEPUTY SPEAKER (ONE (1) POSITION FOR A GSA MEMBER): THREE (3) NOMINEES**

As per GSA Bylaw and Policy, the GSA NoC will open nominations for Speaker, Deputy Speaker, CRO and DRO “on or about 1 May of every year” and nominations will be submitted in writing to the GSA NoC “by 30 May or the next working day” (Section D.BYL.3.1.b and Section D.BYL.3.1.d). These positions were advertised in the GSA newsletters of September 20 and 27 2024, with a deadline of October 9 2024. Four (4) nominations were received and three (3) were approved by the GSA Nominating Committee.

There will be an electronic vote held at the October 21 2024 GSA Council meeting.

If you and your alternate are unable to attend the Monday October 21 2024 meeting of GSA Council and would like to cast an electronic vote for this position, you must contact the GSA Elections Coordinator (gsanomco@ualberta.ca) BEFORE 3:00 PM on Monday October 21 2024 in order to cast your vote in advance of the GSA Council meeting.

Nominees for this position are listed in alphabetical order by last name. ‘None of the Candidates’ will also be considered a nominee.

Deputy Speaker

1. Temi David
2. Akhil Mohandas
3. Amirah Nazir

Jurisdiction:

Section D.BYL.3.1.d

“The Speaker, Deputy Speaker, CRO, and DRO will be elected by a simple majority vote of GSA Council.”

Section E.POL.3.2.a

“The GSA NoC provides GSA Council with the names of nominees for all GSA Council-Elected Officer positions. These positions will be advertised at least twice in advance of the nomination deadline noted in the advertisement.”

Section E.POL.3.2.b

“Prior to forwarding the names of nominees for GSA Council-Elected Officer positions, the GSA NoC will review the resumes and bios received with reference to eligibility criteria as set out in GSA Bylaw and Policy and will forward the names of nominees who meet the eligibility criteria to GSA Council.”

Biographies and brief resumes of the nominees for Deputy Speaker are BELOW. Biographies and brief resumes are presented as received (i.e. not edited).

**Nomination for DEPUTY SPEAKER
(ONE (1) VACANCY FOR A GSA MEMBER)
Three (3) Nominees**

1. Temi David

Other governance bodies you currently serve on (whether GSA or UAlberta)	None
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Statement of Interest
<p>I would like to volunteer to serve as Deputy Speaker based on my dedication to encouraging meaningful discussions, exchanges of ideas, and teamwork. I am passionate about volunteering and it would be a pleasure for me to contribute to an environment where each member feels connected and where opinions are respected.</p> <p>Being elected in this role presents a special chance for me to put my diplomatic and leadership talents to work. I am more than willing to assist the Speaker by making sure that meetings are well-run, agendas are communicated effectively, and everyone is fully informed while maintaining decorum.</p>
Bio
<p>I am a graduate student at the faculty of Agriculture, I am dependable, personable and well organized. I have a good working knowledge of the GSA, its structure, and its governing documents. My professional experience spans roles in banking, agriculture, and education, where I have developed strong leadership and analytical skills. I have managed a variety of teams and led several initiatives.</p> <p>My role as a Peer Tutor and Student Engagement Leader at Niagara College has allowed me to apply my relationship management skills to support and mentor students. My involvement in various volunteer activities at Niagara College and Community Care further reflects my passion for community engagement and my ability to foster meaningful connections. I am committed to fostering an environment of fairness, transparency, and growth, and I look forward to bringing my expertise to this position. Thank you.</p>

2. Akhil Mohandas

Other governance bodies you currently serve on (whether GSA or UAlberta)	None
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Statement of Interest
<p>I'm an international student from India and would like to get to know more about the GSA and would be very interested in the position of deputy speaker. Although, I have a basic knowledge on how the GSA works I would like to expand my knowledge and network by joining the core committee. I have volunteered as the head of photography in my undergrad college. I'm positive that the skills that I acquired during my career will be helpful to satisfy the requirement stated by the position.</p>
Bio
<p>I have completed my undergrad from India (2016-2020) and worked for 3.5 years in Dubai. So basically, it's like starting from scratch as it's been 4 years since I have been in a class room. Since I have the work experience, it can be applied to this position in many ways such as in my previous job as a production engineer I used to take the 'MoM', project coordination, project planning. Moreover, I'm positive that my problem-solving skills would be an added benefit for this position. Currently I'm enrolled in MEng Engineering Management (mechanical engineering) (first year).</p>

3. Amirah Nazir

Other governance bodies you currently serve on (whether GSA or UAlberta)	None
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Statement of Interest

I want to be more involved in the graduate student community at the U of A. In my experience, being a graduate student in the past year has brought back joy in learning and allowed me to meet amazing professionals. Simply put, I want to give back where I can, and serving as the Deputy Speaker will help me contribute to campus culture and student engagement. As a public health student, I bring a unique perspective on community engagement, systems thinking, and policy development.

Since I enjoy meeting others (extrovert by nurture), I hope that as Deputy Speaker I can also grow my network. I see the value in exploring various perspectives, especially those different from my own. I would love to meet graduate students in different faculties to learn more about their programs and how they value giving back to the campus community.

Lastly, I hope to improve my personal leadership and diplomacy skills. Managing meetings, liaising with council members, and having a hand in decision-making are all activities that are valuable to me growing as a leader and future public health professional.

Bio

I am currently in my second year of a Master of General Public Health, and completing graduate embedded certificates in Climate Change and Health and Global Health Equity. I have been a long-standing student at the U of A, completing my BSc in Physiology in 2022. Edmonton has always been my home, as I grew up here. Throughout my academic career, I have developed analysis, critical thinking and public speaking. Working in health research at the U of A and with the Aga Khan University, I learned the importance of attention to detail, but also collaboration and negotiation with various vested interests.

Professionally, I have worked in the project development realm for nearly 6 years. As an intern with Wellness Supports (UofA's Health Promotion team), I developed project plans and led workshops for students on health and wellbeing. As an Outreach lead for Canada Confesses, and now a member of the Youth Working Group for the Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health, I have connected with academics, government officials, global health leaders, and the general public. These experiences have grown my communication capability and my active listening skills to determine the best course of action in dynamic environments.

GSA NOMINATING COMMITTEE (GSA NoC)
GSA APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS BOARD (GSA ACB)
(ONE (1) POSITION FOR GSA COUNCILOR): ONE (1) NOMINEE

Information regarding the positions for one (1) GSA Councilor was advertised to GSA Council on September 20 and 27 2024 with a nomination deadline of October 9 2024. One (1) nomination was received for the one (1) GSA Councilor vacancy. The nominee was then interviewed by GSA NoC members who have been trained in procedural fairness by the GSA and have a record of demonstrating impartiality through their work on the GSA NoC. A member of GSA management was also present for the interview. During the interview, the nominee was asked a series of questions aimed at assessing their awareness of the basic tenets of procedural fairness and their ability to adjudicate potential cases in accord with those tenets (note as well that all individuals elected to the GSA ACB receive training in procedural fairness).

There will be an electronic vote held at the October 21 2024 GSA Council meeting.

If you and your alternate are unable to attend the Monday October 21 2024 meeting of GSA Council and would like to cast an electronic vote for this position, you must contact the GSA Administrative Coordinator (gsaca@ualberta.ca) BEFORE 3:00 PM on Monday October 21 2024 in order to cast your vote in advance of the GSA Council meeting.

Nominees for this position are listed in alphabetical order by last name. ‘None of the Candidates’ will also be considered a nominee.

1. Zeynep Oyku Ozturk

Current GSA ACB membership can be found [here](#).

Jurisdiction:

Section H.POL.7.1 and H.POL.7.2

“Eight (8) GSA members elected by GSA Council as voting members [and] four (4) Departmental Councilors (including the Indigenous Graduate Students’ Association (IGSA) Councilor), alternates, or recent former Departmental Councilors, elected by GSA Council as voting members.”

Section H.POL.8.1

“The GSA NoC will interview all nominees to the GSA ACB and forward selected nominees to GSA Council.”

The name and biography received for the nominees are BELOW. The biography and brief resumes are presented as received (i.e. not edited).

**Nominations for GSA APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS BOARD
(ONE (1) VACANCY FOR GSA COUNCILOR)
One (1) Nominee**

1. Zeynep Oyku Ozturk

Statement of Interest:
I am eager to contribute to ensuring that the elections are conducted fairly and provide equal opportunities for all students involved.
Bio:
I am a first-year international student of my master's in social justice and international studies in education program and I have just started serving as a alternate council member in GSA. I think I could give an objective perspective as I serve in appeals and complaints board.

GSA NOMINATING COMMITTEE (GSA NoC)
GSA GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (GSA GC) (ONE (1) POSITION FOR GSA COUNCILLORS): ONE (1) NOMINEE

Information regarding the one (1) vacancy for a GSA councillor was advertised to GSA Council on September 20 and 27 2024 with a nomination deadline of October 9 2024. One (1) nomination was received.

The GSA GC acts to “advise GSA Council on matters of GSA Bylaw and Policy not in the purview of any other GSA Standing Committee, or other governance issues, and recommend changes to GSA Council” (GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section F.POL.4.2.a).

There will be an electronic vote held at the October 21 2024 GSA Council meeting.

If you and your alternate are unable to attend the Monday October 21 2024 meeting of GSA Council and would like to cast an electronic vote for this position, you must contact the GSA Administrative Coordinator (gsaca@ualberta.ca) BEFORE 3:00 PM on Monday October 21 2024 in order to cast your vote in advance of the GSA Council meeting.

Nominees for this position are listed in alphabetical order by last name. ‘None of the Candidates’ will also be considered a nominee.

1. Ajibola (Jibs) Adigun (Educational Policy Studies)

Current GSA GC membership can be found [here](#).

Jurisdiction:

GSA Bylaw and GSA Policy, Section F: GSA Caucuses, GSA Policy, Standing Committees, GSA Governance Committee, Section F.POL.4.1.c

The GSA GC is composed of “three (3) Councillors or recent former Councillors elected by GSA Council as voting members.”

GSA Bylaw and Policy, Section E: Nominating, GSA Policy, Nominating, Section E.POL.3.1.a

“The GSA NoC provides GSA Council with the names of nominees to fill vacancies on GSA Standing Committees, ad hoc committees, and subcommittees, unless otherwise noted. All vacancies will be advertised at least twice in advance of the nomination deadline noted in the advertisement.”

The names and biographies received for the nominees are BELOW. The biographies and resumes are presented as received (i.e. not edited).

**NOMINATIONS FOR THE GSA GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (GSA GC)
(ONE (1) VACANCY FOR GSA COUNCILLORS)
One (1) Nominee**

1. Ajibola (Jibs) Adigun

Statement of Interest
As a professional governance specialist, I bring to the role my competencies in helping to strengthen policies for human-centered policymaking.
Bio
I am Ajibola (Jibs) Adigun, Mandela-Rhodes Scholar and Governance Specialist. I have worked in several roles in communications and non-profit management around the world. I have also served in advisory capacity to the US Congress, the Nigerian Government and agencies around the world. I currently serve as the convener of a summit on AI governance for the global majority, the AI Global South Summit.

**2024-2025 President
Report to GSA Council for the 21 October 2024 Meeting**

To: Council Members
From: Muhammad Haseeb Arshad
Date: 2024/10/17

2024-2025 GSA President Meetings Attended (Muhammad Haseeb Arshad)

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between Sep 21 to Oct 17, 2024 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

Date	Meeting
Sept 23	General Faculties Council (GFC)
Sept 23	meeting with Bill Flanagan, UofA President and Vice- Chancellor
Sept 24	MNIF Joint Oversight Committee Meeting #1
Sept 25	Meeting with Ellement
Sept 26	Meeting with BoG GFC Representative
Sept 27	UofA Board Learning, Research and Student Experience Committee
Oct 1	Meeting with M Padfield, Deputy Provost (Students and Enrollment)
Oct 1	Sustainable Food Network Discussion
Oct 1	UofA Board Finance and Property Committee
Oct 3	Meeting with R Sanghera, DoS
Oct 3	UAlberta Mobile App
Oct 3	Advisory Committee on Support for Displaced Palestinian Scholars and Students
Oct 4	Meeting with E MacDonald, re: GSA SWP
Oct 4	6th Annual Structures Graduate Student Conference
Oct 4	Meeting with J Lemieux, UofA University Secretary
Oct 7	PAWSOC
Oct 8	Federal Policy Committee Meeting
Oct 9	GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC)
Oct 10	Meeting with D Strohschein, Assistant Dean, Com Well Supp
Oct 10	Tuition Budget Advisory Committee (TBAC) - Meeting #2
Oct 10	UASSC Update/Q&A
Oct 10	UofA Board Members Only Dinner
Oct 11	UofA Board of Governors
Oct 11	UofA Luncheon with GSA & SU
Oct 11	Meeting with Edmonton Transit Rider Org

Oct 15	Meeting with D Bressler
Oct 15	Meeting with Chancellor
Oct 17	Meeting with T Raivio, GPS Dean
Oct 17	GSA/NAIT Collaboration Discussion
Oct 17	AI Subcommittee Meeting

Dear Council Members,

I hope this report finds you well. The Fall semester is extremely busy with the University and province going through a myriad of challenges directly impacting the graduate student community. We do our best to mitigate the impact of those challenges on graduate students through our advocacy efforts with the University and government. In the last month, I have attended a couple of meetings that I would like to report to Council. The key highlights from those meetings are divided into the following subsections:

Support for Displaced Palestinian Scholars and Students:

I have been actively advocating for financial support for our Palestinian community members, seeking reciprocity for the aid given to Ukrainian students by the university. As many of you recall, last month I submitted a letter to the third-party investigator, Adele Kent, recommending this as a crucial step (letter attached). I'm happy to inform you that an advisory committee, co-chaired by Dr. Vivian Mushahwar and Dr. Yasmeen Abu-Laban—both of Palestinian descent—has been established. Both chairs are also engaging directly with Palestinian students and faculty. While most discussions are confidential, I remain committed to ensuring our Palestinian members receive equivalent, if not greater, financial support compared to Ukrainian members.

GSSF Advocacy:

Graduate Student Support Fund (GSSF) advocacy has been a key priority. I've held several important meetings with the President (Bill Flanagan), Provost (Verna Yiu), Deputy Provost (Melissa Padfield), Board of Governors (BOG) representatives, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (Tracy Ravio), and the Dean of Students (Ravina Sanghera). During these discussions, I highlighted how critical the GSSF is to sustain the university's growing graduate student population, especially with the ambitious enrollment increase target of 67% in just course-based master's students.

I presented data on how graduate students contribute to the university's research output and how they enhance the university's overall academic standing, reinforcing why investing in graduate student support is crucial. We discussed ways the GSSF could be expanded, not just to cover more students but also to provide greater financial stability for those who face the most significant barriers, i.e., to sustain our graduate course-based hybrid award. I emphasized that supporting graduate students is essential for attracting and retaining top talent, ensuring the success of the university's strategic plans. These discussions are ongoing, but I'm optimistic that we're making progress in securing more support for graduate students.

Tuition Fee Offset Proposal:

I had the opportunity to present a proposal addressing the university's planned tuition fee offset from the increased domestic and international students tuition fee (proposal attached with the council agenda). In this proposal, I advocated for financial support for course-based master's students and emphasized the importance of continued investment in the Campus Food Bank (CFB), which is facing a projected \$60,000 loss without additional

support. I firmly believe that including CFB in the university's budget would not only assist the food bank but also significantly enhance the university's reputation within the campus community.

Meeting with Ellement:

As you know, we recently selected Ellement as our new health and dental provider for the upcoming year. I met with them to finalize the contract and raised several concerns with their Studywell team. Although I can't disclose specifics due to confidentiality, I assure you that I will work to ensure that the final contract serves the best interests of our members. Further discussions are scheduled, and I expect these issues to be resolved in our next meeting.

Food Strategy:

Since proposing the university's food strategy in July, I've continued to engage with SU executives, Dining Services, Board of Governors, and members of the university's Sustainability Council. Our VP of Student Services, who also serves on the CFB board, will represent us on the Sustainability Council. We raised affordability concerns with Dining Services, particularly noting that the current approximately \$650/month meal options fail to meet the needs of financially struggling students.

I have discussed food insecurity and affordability issues with the university Chancellor (Nizar Somji) and Dean of Students; we proposed collaborating with external dining services to explore the feasibility of a \$5 meal plan, which has been successfully implemented by the University of Calgary Students' Union (UCSU). We are also looking into establishing a campus-wide food donation network where unused meals or surplus food from dining services and external partners can be redistributed to students in need. Additionally, I have been advocating for integrating sustainability into the food strategy by promoting local sourcing and reducing food waste, which aligns with both student needs and the university's sustainability goals.

Federal Advocacy:

In my role with CASA's Federal Policy Committee (FPC), I've been working on addressing key policy gaps. I volunteered to update CASA's AI policy and open access publication efforts. Additionally, I'm part of a new working group drafting a white paper on food insecurity from a graduate student perspective, given my ongoing advocacy in this area. On the CASA Graduate Advisory Council (GAC) front, I've discussed with CASA's Executive Director (Wasiimah Janun) and GAC Chair (Hunter Yaworski) the potential for our member speakers at Grad Forum hosted by the GAC during the CASA AdvoWeek. While financial support for this remains limited, I'll continue advocating for funding opportunities to ensure graduate students have a platform at the national level.

Meetings with CASA ED and John:

Following the council's directive, I've been working on finding best practices in the student governance structure aimed at improving our council's effectiveness. I met separately with CASA's Executive Director and UofA University Secretary (John Lemieux) to explore how CASA manages large membership meetings and how the university was able to create the college model. I plan to present these insights to the governance committee, especially as I've identified risks to our NPO status due to current council practices. Once I receive legal guidance, I'll bring formal recommendations to the committee.

UAlberta Mobile App:

I've been advocating for a comprehensive mobile app for the university. In a recent meeting with Executive Director, Enrolment Systems and Service Innovation (Chris Brunelle), it became clear that the university is considering updates to the existing app rather than developing a new one. I expressed strong concerns, highlighting that this would be a waste of time and resources. Navigating campus remains a significant challenge for graduate students, as evidenced by our mental health and SEAP survey. I'll be meeting with the VPUSOF (Todd Gilchrist) and Provost to continue pushing for a better solution.

UASAC and Wellness Updates:

I met with the Assistant Dean of Community Wellness (Dunsi Strohschein), to discuss the U of A Sexual Assault Centre's updates and the broader accommodation and accessibility issues. I raised concerns about the current requirement for students to provide evidence when requesting academic leave following the death of a family member, stressing the need for urgent reform considering ongoing global conflicts. Additionally, we discussed our mental health survey, which revealed that 66% of our members were diagnosed with mental health issues after starting grad school. This data underscores the growing need for financial and mental health support for our graduate student community. Dunsi and I will hold bi-monthly meetings to address these concerns.

ETS Safety Advocacy:

As reported in last month's meeting with the mayor, I raised the critical issue of Edmonton Transit System (ETS) safety. Following up, I met with the Edmonton Transit Rider Organization (ETRO) board, and their president shared that they have been regularly attending city council meetings to advocate for improved transit safety. During our discussion, we explored aligning our advocacy goals, particularly in pushing for new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service routes that would connect downtown Edmonton to areas like Gateway Boulevard, which would be beneficial for students.

In addition, we discussed the possibility of advocating for the installation of fare gates at transit stations. ETRO explained that while they have been pushing for this, there are logistical challenges due to the mix of above ground and underground stations. We will continue to work closely with ETRO and city officials to push for safety improvements, including better lighting and increased security personnel at key transit hubs.

AI Policy Advocacy:

As lead author of CASA's AI policy paper, I forwarded the paper to Verna, who has since nominated me to the university's AI Policy Subcommittee. This subcommittee is tasked with developing recommendations for the ethical use of generative AI on campus. During our initial meetings, I raised several key concerns, particularly regarding the biases inherent in AI models and the potential for false positives in AI detectors. I also pointed out that these models often fail to consider Indigenous ways of learning, such as storytelling, which could lead to a misunderstanding of Indigenous knowledge systems. To address this, I advocated for a human-in-the-loop approach to refine AI models, ensuring they can properly handle culturally sensitive information.

Additionally, I stressed the importance of promoting AI literacy among both faculty and students to ensure responsible use of AI on campus. This involves equipping students with the skills to use AI tools ethically while encouraging faculty to support students in their AI-related endeavors. Our goal is to have initial recommendations ready by the end of the year, and I will continue meeting with the subcommittee monthly to push for these changes.

**GSA Board
Report to GSA Council for the 21 October 2024 Meeting**

To: Council Members
From: Chair GSA Board
Date: 2024/10/17

Dear Council Members,

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. GSA Council members are always able to ask questions about items that were discussed in closed session. Open session Minutes are available upon request.

2 October 2024 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

DEO's Reports

Motions and Agreements:

None to report.

9 October 2024 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

Ombuds Annual Report, DEO's Reports

Motions and Agreements:

None to report.

16 October 2024 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

CFB Updates, Statement on IRCC changes, DEO's Reports

Motions and Agreements:

None to report.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Haseeb Arshad, President and Chair of the GSA Board

**GSA Budget and Finance Committee
Report to GSA Council for the 21 October 2024 Meeting**

To: Council Members
From: Chair GSA BFC
Date: 2024/10/17

Dear Council Members,

The GSA Budget and Finance Committee (GSA BFC) met on October 17, 2024, to review the draft audited financial statements for 2023-2024, as presented by our Auditor, Leon Pfeiffer from RSM. As required by Section 97(1) of the Post-Secondary Learning Act, the GSA undergoes an annual audit, which is eventually presented to the University's Board of Governors. The audited financial statements will be reviewed for approval by the GSA Board (GSAB) in their meeting on October 22, 2024. These statements will then be brought to the November GSA Council meeting, reflecting the organization's solid financial standing.

During the BFC meeting, members also agreed to explore developing written policies aimed at mitigating the risk of management override of controls, streamlining this process.

In our upcoming BFC meeting, we will review the draft budget proposal for the next fiscal year from our management team. Additionally, we will discuss strategies for utilizing our surplus, recognizing that we are in a stronger financial position compared to last year, and expecting an even larger surplus than before.

I look forward to answering any questions,

Sincerely,
Haseeb Arshad, President and Chair of the GSA BFC

**GSA Governance Committee
Report to GSA Council for the 21 October 2024 Meeting**

To: Council Members
From: Chair GSA GC
Date: 2024/10/17

Dear Council Members,

On October 15, 2024, the GSA Governance Committee (GSA GC) met to review the proposed bylaw and policy updates. After careful consideration, the GSA GC voted to recommend the proposal to the GSA Board for further review. This proposal will then be presented at the November GSA Council meeting.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Haseeb Arshad, President and Chair of the GSA GC

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Hon. C. Adèle Kent,

I, the official spokesperson of the Graduate Students' Association at the University of Alberta, am writing to you concerning the ongoing third-party review of the decision to involve the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) in the recent encampment protest. As an advocate for student voices, I feel it is my responsibility to express the concerns and sentiments of my peers, who have experienced extreme distrust and a lack of support from the university administration in handling this situation.

I understand the significance of this third-party review and acknowledge my responsibility as a graduate representative to help shape policies on our campus that reflect the core values of a "culture of care" and "the university of tomorrow." It is my utmost priority to ensure that these values are upheld in all university decisions and actions.

First and foremost, it is crucial to acknowledge that the encampment did not emerge in a vacuum. It was a direct response to the university administration's unfortunate failure to address student concerns over the catastrophic loss of life in Gaza, and concerns over Israeli violations of international law, as highlighted by the [UNHRC](#) and [ICJ rulings](#). Also, since September 2023, students have been calling on the administration to show reciprocal support for Palestinian community members, just as they have shown for [Ukrainian community members](#). This culminated in an [open letter to the university in December](#), multiple requests for meetings with the office of the president, and a town hall meeting invitation—all of which, according to the students, were ignored by the administration.

Despite numerous calls for protests on campus, [according to encampment organisers](#), no senior administration member attempted to engage with the students. Consequently, students felt compelled to take matters into their own hands and initiated [an encampment protest on May 9](#). The encampment began on May 9, with students setting up in the early morning hours. Even then, the administration did not reach out to them for dialogue.

The encampment grew in numbers on May 10, prompting the administration to engage GSA and SU to talk to the protestors, yet they still refrained from meeting with them directly due to safety concerns. Throughout this period, students maintained that the encampment was peaceful and educational, with various activities taking place.

It is important to note that before the first trespassing notice was given to the encampment organizers, the University of Alberta Protective Services ([UAPS officer informed the protestors that they were welcome to stay as long as they remained peaceful, even providing them with fire extinguishers](#)). Although trespassing notices were issued, [UAPS officer explicitly mentioned that these were merely formalities](#).

However, at dawn on May 11, the university administration decided to enforce the trespassing notice, citing safety concerns, one of which was related to the very fire extinguisher initially

offered by the UAPS officer, [camping supplies, and pallets](#). Students, on the other hand, have maintained that the pallets were removed upon request from UAPS [as affirmed by their faculty liaison](#). The administration also raised concerns about external agitators and claimed that [only 25% of the encampment participants were UofA students](#), despite not having identified anyone. Students have expressed great anger and concern, particularly around this 25% number, as this is only possible if the university identified everyone who was at the encampment, which then amounts to a violation of student's privacy rights,

Before the removal of the encampment, there was clear evidence of the threat of banning students for a year from a [UAPS officer](#). Though I appreciate and acknowledge that President Flanagan assured the university community that there would be [no campus ban or any academic repercussions](#) on any student involved in the encampment protest, the lack of transparency and accountability in the university's official statements exacerbated the situation.

While I also appreciate the office of the president arranging meetings with joint associations and unions to explain the decision, the confidentiality of the initial recommendation made by the Crisis Management Team (CMT) was frustrating. The campus community remains largely unaware of how the CMT operates and what led to their recommendation to call in EPS.

Overall, students have expressed concerns about the inconsistent enforcement of the university's policies, particularly when it comes to clearing out protests that have violated these policies. The university's operating policies permit students to protest from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., but in [September 2023, Mark McCormack](#) staged a one-week protest in the same main quad area, setting up his tent and embarking on a hunger strike. The UAPS officer never forced him to leave, and he voluntarily left the main quad area after a week. Students have also said that during Mark's hunger strike, a few of the university's administrators did go down to the main quad area to listen to his demands. Moreover, students have consistently asserted that their charter rights take precedence over the university's policies. Following the [2020 Alberta Court of Appeal's ruling in the UofA Board of Governors vs. Pro-Life case](#), they maintain that, even if they believe their charter rights are safeguarded during their protests on university property, the university lacks the authority to issue a trespassing notice under the Petty Trespassing Act or the Trespassing of Premises Act. Having said that, I don't think you, as an independent investigator, will be able to resolve the charter right debate. Therefore, a more appropriate course of action for the university would have been to obtain a judicial decision before calling in EPS.

I also think that even if involving EPS was deemed necessary, proper discussions with Indigenous, BIPOC, and student representatives should have taken place beforehand, and their recommendations should have been made public. The University of Alberta resides on Treaty 6 territory, and upholding treaty commitments is a significant part of truth and reconciliation. Unfortunately, indigenous students, staff, and faculty members have expressed their great frustration, and [two of our indigenous graduate members chose to resign from U of A](#) because

they believed that the administration had failed to honor these commitments.

There was no accountability for UAPS officer who made threatening announcements because of a lack of proper communication, as was highlighted during the joint association and union meeting, and also for those [UAPS officer who have harassed students' protestors](#). I am certainly not saying that UAPS officers do not have the right to ban someone from campus or take their pictures, but these officers also need to understand that they are not dealing with random protestors but instead are dealing with students. The university employs these UAPS officers, and we should remind them of the University of Alberta's core values and our vision for fostering a 'culture of care'.

Given the university's acknowledgment of the [psychological impact of their decision](#), it raises questions about why university's commitment to its Student Experience Action Plan (SEAP) was not more prominently factored into the initial decision-making process. The SEAP emphasizes a comprehensive approach to safety, including physical, psychological, and cultural dimensions, as outlined in the [university's Culture of Care strategy](#). The SEAP and the Culture of Care strategy highlight the need for safety in all its forms, suggesting that psychological and cultural safety should have been integral to the university's approach to handling the encampment.

I understand that your role is challenging, and my intention is not to criticize what happened for the sake of it. I believe that if the administration had taken the following measures, the outcome could have been different:

- Responding to students' calls back in December of 2023.
- Sending a senior administration officer to the main quad to engage with students when the encampment started on May 9.
- Opting for an injunction, as in the case of UofT, if there were security concerns.
- Informing the encampment organisers about the presence of potential external agitators and asking them to remove those individuals, just like they asked the encampment organisers to remove pallets.
- Avoiding the labelling of camping supplies as weapons post-encampment.
- Transparent and open communication around the conduct of UAPS officers.
- Ensuring accountability for UAPS officers.
- Providing clarity on decision-making processes.

Moving forward, we propose the following recommendations:

1. Establish an advisory board for CMT, comprising students, staff, and faculty members, including representatives from Indigenous and BIPOC communities, to assist in making decisions that could potentially cause psychological harm to marginalised groups. The University of [Chicago's Dean on Call](#) initiative serves as the inspiration for this advisory board.

2. Review and revise policies concerning the unauthorised use of university property by unofficial student groups as outlined in the student conduct policy.
3. Explicitly announce support for Palestinian community members, acknowledging the destruction of universities in Gaza.
4. Enforce Treaty 6 commitments by creating a working group to advise the university on land acknowledgement and related issues.
5. Hold UAPS officers accountable for their actions during the encampment, and make sure that every UAPS officer receives compassionate and harm reduction training before being allowed to deal with students.
6. Develop policies for better communication and ensure the Dean of Students' department takes the lead in critical situations.

I hope this letter aids your efforts to improve our university's decision-making process in navigating conflict situations. I appreciate the time and effort you will devote to this review, and I am rooting for you to make the necessary recommendations to improve the student experience.

Sincerely,

Haseeb Arshad
President, Graduate Students' Association

**2024-2025 Vice-President Academic
Report to GSA Council for the October 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Rija Kamran
Date: October 16, 2024

2024-2025 GSA VP Academic's Meetings Attended (Rija)

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between September 23 to October 18 2024 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

Sept 23	General Faculties Council (GFC)
Sept 25	GFC Committee on the Learning Environment and Student Affairs (CLESA)
Sept 25	GPS Caucus
Oct 2	GPS Council
Oct 7	GFC Executive Committee (EXEC)
Oct 8	LMS of the Future Advisory Committee Meeting
Oct 8	Advisory Working Group on International Student Thesis-Based Tuition Strategy
Oct 10	GFC Programs Committee
Oct 10	Tuition Budget Advisory Committee (TBAC) - Meeting #2
Oct 10	UASSC Update/Q&A
Oct 11	UofA Luncheon with BoG, GSA & SU
Oct 15	CASA Campaign: Info. Session 1
Oct 15	Meeting with Chancellor
Oct 16	CASA Campaign: Info. Session 2
Oct 16	Minimum Funding Implementation Group
Oct 17	Meeting with T Raivio, GPS Dean
Oct 18	Advisory Working Group on International Student Thesis-Based Tuition Strategy

Dear Council Colleagues,

I hope you are doing well. We have been busy furthering implementation of several key initiatives. I have provided a summary of the advocacy work I have been engaged in since the last council meeting.

(October 8) LMS of the Future Advisory Committee Meeting

I am continuing to participate in LMS of future advisory committee meetings. This committee is working to ensure a smooth transition from Moodle (e-class) to the new LMS Canvas. Together with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), this committee is also working to create resources like a glossary of terms comparing features of e-class and canvas, as the needs are being identified by the university community. The new LMS, Canvas is being adopted in 3 phases with some departments and courses transitioning to Canvas this Fall. For this academic year, e-class and Canvas will both be accessible for students depending on where the course is being housed. As we navigate through this change, please feel free to pass on any comments or concerns about Canvas to me, and I will take them to the committee on your behalf.

(October 8) Advisory Working Group on International Student Thesis-Based Tuition Strategy

The Advisory Working Group on International Student Thesis-Based Tuition Strategy had their first meeting. This initiative has been a part of GSA's advocacy efforts for the past several years. Historically, in the University we've always had elevated tuition for international students relative to domestic. Currently there are varying practices across campus with how the elevated tuition is handled - some areas the PIs regularly pay this differential amount, other forms of tuition remission. This group will now look at some comparator institutions and numbers and will also discuss how it's paid and impacts program support and thinking through implications. This group will conclude its work by putting forward some recommendations.

(October 10) GFC Programs Committee

I attended the GFC Programs Committee meeting. We had some discussion around the decisions made with sub-delegated authority to the office of Provost. We were presented an item from the Faculty of Graduate and postdoctoral studies on English Language Proficiency Regulation Changes. We also discussed some minor program changes in Alberta School of Business, and School of Public Health.

(October 15) CASA Campaign: Info. Session

GSA is participating in CASA's campaign, *Secure Student Grants*. This campaign will launch at the end of October. The goal of the campaign is to engage with students on the affordability of post-secondary education and advocating to the Federal Government to permanently increase Canada Student Grants from \$3,000 to \$4,200. We will invite all graduate students to participate in this campaign and share their stories of how they have been impacted by the Canada Student Grants, furthering the case for investment in this initiative.

Thank you for your support and engagement. Please feel free to reach out to me at gsavpaca@ualberta.ca if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions. Thank you

Rija Kamran, Vice-President Academic (2024-25)

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Date	Meeting
September 23	Meeting with W Joomun, CASA ED
September 25	CASA x NIAC Onboarding
September 25	DOA Committee Meeting
September 27	CASA NIAC Co-Chairs Touchbase
September 27	EDI Plan Steering Committee
September 30	LISSA Meeting
October 1	Co-Sponsor Updates SEAP
October 1	NIAC Meeting
October 1	Meeting w D Strohschein, Assistant Dean, Com Well Supp
October 2	FGPS Council
October 3	Meeting with R Sanghera, C Smith re: Consultation Pathway
October 3	Meeting with W Joomun, CASA ED
October 4	EDI Action Plan Special Meeting with EDI Leads
October 4	Meeting with E MacDonald, re: GSA SWP
October 7	Student Housing Stability Working Group
October 7	ISA/GSA Regular Meeting
October 7	Meeting with J Friesen
October 9	EDI reading Group
October 9	Meeting w D Strohschein, Assistant Dean, Com Well Supp
October 10	UASSC Update/Q&A
October 11	Meeting with W Joomun, CASA ED

October 11	CASA Board Meeting
October 11	UofA Luncheon with GSA & SU
October 11	RAC Meeting
October 15	Governance Committee Meeting
October 15	Meeting with K Husing, AVP Campus Services
October 15	NIAC Meeting
October 15	Meeting with Chancellor
October 16	2024 Academic All-Canadian Breakfast
October 18	Standing Committee on Convocation
October 18	Meeting with GSA VP External

GSA Council Report

Date: October 18th, 2024

From: Benjamin J. Kucher, Vice President (Student Life)

Dear Council Colleagues,

As we settle into the rhythm of the academic year, I would like to update you on the initiatives I've been working on to improve student life.

Recently, I had a productive meeting with the Dean of Students and the Vice Provost of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) to discuss the ongoing development and implementation of Non-Disciplinary Accountability Options (NDAOs) at the University. Our discussions centered on ensuring that NDAOs offer flexible, culturally appropriate alternatives to traditional disciplinary processes, particularly in cases involving interpersonal harm and academic misconduct. We explored the integration of community-led relational justice practices, especially those rooted in Indigenous traditions, while being mindful to prevent their appropriation. A key focus of the meeting was on the importance of clear communication, active student engagement, and providing comprehensive training for facilitators to ensure these processes remain accessible and effective for everyone. This work is essential to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment, and continued collaboration between student leadership, faculty, and administration will be vital to its success.

Additionally, I have been working closely with the Assistant Dean of Community Wellness and Sexual Violence Supports on an important initiative to restore the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre to full capacity. This ongoing effort is crucial to ensuring that students have access to comprehensive, trauma-informed support services. Our work involves addressing resource gaps, increasing staff capacity, and expanding outreach to ensure that survivors of sexual violence receive timely, effective care. The Sexual Assault Centre plays a vital role in supporting the wellbeing of our community, and our goal is to ensure it can operate at its fullest potential to meet the growing needs of students.

I am also actively engaged with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) in preparing for Advocacy Week, which is set to take place in November. During this week, we will meet with the federal government and Members of Parliament to discuss key issues facing graduate students. Our advocacy efforts will focus on securing increased funding for research, improving student financial aid, and addressing the mental health and housing challenges that many students face. We are working to ensure that the voices of graduate students are heard at the highest levels of government, and that meaningful actions are taken to support our academic and personal success. This preparation has involved strategic planning, refining our key messages, and coordinating with other student leaders across the country.

In addition, there has been a significant increase in engagement from graduate student groups in recent weeks, with many expressing a desire to collaborate with the GSA. This surge in interest reflects a collective commitment to enhancing the graduate student experience. Numerous groups have reached out to co-organize events, workshops, and initiatives that align with our ongoing goals of improving student life and building a stronger sense of community. This growing momentum not only strengthens the GSA's relationships with these organizations but also amplifies our ability to address the diverse needs of the graduate student body through shared efforts.

Thank you for your continued support and please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or feedback you may have.

Benjamin Kucher,

GSA VP Student Life.

**2024-2025 VP Student Services
Report to GSA Council for the October 21 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Saad A. Iqbal
Date: Oct. 18, 2024

2024-2025 GSA VP Student Services Meetings Attended by Saad A. Iqbal

Below is a list of meetings I attended between September 21 and October 18, 2024 (not including weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

Date	Meeting
September 23	CFB Policy Committee Check in
September 23	Students Who Parent Working Group (virtual)
September 23	Students-Who-Parent on Campus Initiatives (Meeting with SPOC representative)
September 24	MNIF Joint Oversight Committee Meeting #1
September 24	GSA Social Hour
September 24	Meeting with a Student
September 25	DOA Committee Meeting
September 27	Campus Wellness Network
October 1	UAI / GSA – Meeting with Kumarie Achaibar-Morrison
October 1	Sustainable Food Network Discussion
October 4	GSA SWP Meeting with Elan MacDonald (VP External Relations, UofA)
October 4	ESW Hydroponics Project Collaboration Meeting (Kevin Friese and ESW students)
October 7	ISA/GSA – Meeting with Ameley Abigail Quaye (ISA VP Graduate Affairs)
October 7	PAWSOC in-person Tour
October 8	U-Pass Negotiations Round 3 (Day 1)
October 10	GSA/Kepler Academy Meeting with Rachel Jones (Student Who Parent Initiatives)
October 10	U-Pass Negotiations Round 3 (Day 2)

October 11	Student Group Mental Health Network Meeting
October 11	BoG and SU Lunch
October 11	Meeting with Edmonton Transit Riders Representatives (ETR)
October 15	GSA Executives and UofA Chancellor Meeting
October 15	Campus Food Bank Annual General Meeting
October 1, 8	CFB Prairie Urban Farm Volunteering

Dear Council Colleagues,

I hope you're all doing well, in your academic, professional, and personal pursuits. Below are the details of the meetings I have attended between September 21 and October 18, 2024:

CFB Policy Committee Check-in

This was a regular meeting among the CFB's Policy Committee to discuss ongoing ideas about policy revisions for the CFB.

Students Who Parent Working Group (virtual)

This group is to enhance support for students who parent. We discussed an upcoming student caregiver survey and provided feedback on it. We also discussed Mamava pods to be installed in different locations on campus and brainstormed some ideas about which locations could be beneficial to student parents. I also briefed the group about GSA's partnership with Kidz and Company and Bredin Early Bird childcare centers who provide discounted rates to graduate students who parent.

Students-Who-Parent on Campus Initiatives (Meeting with SPOC representative)

In this meeting, I met with the representative of the Student Parent on Campus (SPOC) group to get feedback and suggestions for extending supports for our graduate student parents. We also discussed how the GSA can collaborate with SPOC in this regard.

MNIF Joint Oversight Committee Meeting #1

This meeting was scheduled to brief the UASU and UAGSA executives about the draft 2023-34 Annual Report and to review MNIF Committee Workplan for 2024-25. The reports provided helpful data and information on the use of MNIFs, service assessment, and metrics to inform the use of MNIFs.

DOA Committee Meeting

In this meeting, members discussed the Days of Action Charter and provided feedback and suggestions to improve its goals and objectives. Members were also briefed about the past and upcoming DOA programming.

Campus Wellness Network

In this meeting, members discussed various services, initiatives and activities being offered or organized by various groups and offices on campus. I briefed the group about GSA's orientation, SWP Town Hall, Grad Student photo contest, and GSA Social Hours.

UAI / GSA – Meeting with Kumarie Achaibar-Morrison

In this meeting, Kumarie and I discussed services related initiatives and potential collaborations with the UAI. Kumarie also shared some details about upcoming changes and implementation policies for international students. The GSA will invite Kumarie soon to present these details in our GSA Board meetings so all executives can reflect on them according to their portfolios.

Sustainable Food Network Discussion

In this meeting, the President and I along with UASU VP Student Life and Director of CFB discussed ideas around sustainable food network and GSA's Food Strategy Document with Morgan Butler (Energy and Climate Action Office). Members were briefed about programs already in place on campus regarding sustainable food option on campus. We also discussed ideas about future initiatives to enhance these services.

GSA SWP Meeting with Elan MacDonald

In this meeting, the GSA executives met with Elan Macdonald (VP of External Relations) and discussed the GSA's Strategic Work Plan and ideas about collaborations and supports to help graduate students.

ESW Hydroponics Project Collaboration Meeting (Kevin Friese and ESW students)

In this meeting, Kevin and I met with student representatives from ESW to discuss the GSA's Hydroponics Farm Project initiative. The ESW group has a small hydroponics set up on campus and their experience and feedback was very helpful in understanding how hydroponics systems work and what kind of planning might be needed to explore this initiative.

ISA/GSA – Meeting with Ameley Abigail Quaye (ISA VP Graduate Affairs)

In this meeting, GSA VP Student Life and I met with ISA's VP Graduate Affairs and discussed topics of mutual concern. These meetings will be held regularly now and we might be having some collaborations in future as well.

PAWSOC in-person Tour

The GSA Executive Director, President and I joined the PAWSOC representatives in an in-person tour to the VVC. We were briefed about different facilities and their usage among the university community. We even identified potential spaces where the GSA can hold events in future.

GSA/Kepler Academy Meeting with Rachel Jones (Student Who Parent Initiatives)

I met with a representative from Keplers Academy which is a childcare service provider close to the North Campus. We discussed ideas about potential partnership with the academy as students have previously mentioned the desire to have an arrangement of this sort close to the campus. Rachel also showed an interest in helping the GSA with revamping the parents' lounge.

U-Pass Negotiations Round 3 (Day 1-2)

This was the third and final round of the negotiations. The UAGSA, UASU along with other participating institutions were able to reach a consensus with the ETS and bus service providers. A formal agreement is yet to be signed. However, the newly agreed-upon plan will potentially save students costs in a couple of million dollars.

Student Group Mental Health Network Meeting

In this regular meeting, members discussed ongoing initiatives related to mental health from different student groups on campus. I briefed the group about the Harm Reduction Tent, monthly social hours, and the upcoming mental health photo contest.

Meeting with Edmonton Transit Riders Representatives (ETR)

The GSA President and I met with representatives from the Edmonton Transit Riders and discussed ideas about potential collaboration for advocating students' needs related to ETS and bus services in the city. The groups will also share useful information with each other to keep better informed about upcoming changes in these services.

GSA Executives and UofA Chancellor Meeting

The GSA executives had a chance to meet Chancellor Nizar Somji where we discussed our individual portfolios and areas of interest. On the VPSSE side, I discussed some plans related to mental health and wellness, students who parent initiatives, and updates around the U-Pass negotiations. I also discussed the growing need for CFB usage especially among graduate students and talked about exploring options to enhance its funding to sustain the increased use.

Campus Food Bank Annual General Meeting

The CFB held its AGM on October 15. The turnaround was very good, and we were able to pass last year's minutes as well as some new agenda items. The CFB now has three new directors.

Best Regards,

Saad Arslan Iqbal

GSA VP Student Services (2024-25)

**2024-2025 Vice-President External
Report to GSA Council for the October 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Parman Mojir Shaibani
Date: October 11, 2024

2024-2025 GSA VP External Meetings Attended (Parman)

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 1 October to 8 October 2024 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

Date	Meeting
Oct 1	ab-GPAC History/Suffering Session
Oct 2	Alumni Council Meeting #1
Oct 8	HESA: Student Leaders and SPEC

ab-GPAC History/Suffering Session (Oct 1st)

During my meeting with Andrew Kemle, the Advocacy Advisor for the Graduate Students' Association at the University of Calgary, I was provided with a brief history of ab-GPAC. We also discussed the key issues and factors that led to the ab-GPAC council's downfall and explored the challenges that must be addressed for its successful revival.

Alumni Council Meeting #1 (Oct 2st)

Various topics were discussed, focusing primarily on the 'Indigenous Strategic Plan and Suggestions for Learning.' Upcoming events were also discussed, including fundraising efforts to support the Indigenous people, raise awareness, and educate others about the history of Indigenous peoples. Additionally, we had the opportunity to share our thoughts on our responsibility to spread awareness about Indigenous issues, provided we are adequately informed on the subject.

HESA: Student Leaders and SPEC (Oct 8th)

Hesa provided a presentation about the critical points of its annual report on "The State of Postsecondary Education in Canada." The report is available online for everyone to access.

**2024-2025 Associate Vice-President Labour
Report to GSA Council for the Oct 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Muneeb Masood Raja
Date: 15 Oct 2024

2024-2025 GSA Associate VP Labour Meetings Attended

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 24 Sept to 17 Oct 2024 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

Date	Meeting
24 Sept	Union Outreach
24 Sept	GSA Social Hour
25 Sept	Meeting with a Student (Confidential)
27 Sept	JHSC Meeting
1 Oct	Orange Shirt Day
2 Oct	Meeting with NASA President
2 Oct	Meeting with a Student (Confidential)
3 Oct	Meeting with a Student (Confidential)
4 Oct	Meeting with Vice-President External Relations
8 Oct	Collective Agreement 101 Education
9 Oct	NASA/AASUA Rally
10 Oct	Faculty Steward Meeting
10 Oct	Mindful Drawing Workshop
10 Oct	UASSC Update
11 Oct	BoG and SU Lunch
15 Oct	Meeting - Chancellor & GSA Exec
16 Oct	2024 Academic All Canadian Breakfast
17 Oct	Monthly Check-in with CS and OC

17 Oct	BFC Meeting
17 Oct	AACA Meeting

Dear Council Colleagues,

I hope you're all doing well and had a wonderful summer. I have attended several meetings between 24 Sept 2024 and 17 Oct 2024 which are listed in the table above. Here are the details of the meetings:

(Sept 24) GSA Social Hour

This was the first GSA Social Hour of the term, and we witnessed an overwhelming turnout of graduate students. The event provided attendees with an opportunity to connect with fellow graduate students and engage directly with the GSA's elected officials. Additionally, I had the chance to assist some graduate students with the issues they are facing.

(Sept 27) JHSC Meeting

The university has conducted a comprehensive review and update of the Discrimination and Harassment Policy Suite and asked for feedback from the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC). The topic of Accommodation has been removed from this suite and will be addressed in separate policy documents. A new Discrimination and Harassment Procedure for students has also been drafted.

Additionally, updates on the culture of care initiatives were shared, highlighting that nearly 90% of individuals have completed the supervisor safety declaration. The JHSC is increasingly focusing on psychological and cultural safety, with an upcoming Safety Summit dedicated to these issues.

(Oct 9) NASA/AASUA Rally

Several unions attended the NASA/AASUA rally held on October 9 to support their bargaining teams. I also attended the rally to express solidarity on behalf of the GSA union. The rally featured sign-making, speeches from union representatives, and a march to amplify collective voices in favor of fair working conditions, equitable pay, and collective bargaining rights. It is essential that we stand with other unions as they advocate for fair wages and working conditions.

(Oct 10) Faculty Steward Meeting

In this meeting organized by the GSA LRC Chief Steward, we discussed ways to improve our outreach and membership engagement. We received individual feedback from the stewards on how to better connect with our members and explored avenues for strengthening our steward network.

We were unable to share our negotiations proposal as the negotiator from PSAC fell ill. We plan to present our bargaining proposal to the university on December 3.

I would really appreciate any feedback from the respected council members related to any labour related matters.

In Solidarity,

Muneeb Masood Raja, Associate Vice-President Labour 2024-2025



**2024-2025 Nominating Committee Vice Chair
Report to GSA Council for the October 21 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council

From: Tianxu Wang

Date: October 17, 2024

Dear Members of the GSA Council,

Since the last GSA Council meeting, the Nominating Committee has been working on addressing outstanding committee vacancies. Specifically, we have advertised, received, and reviewed nominations for the GSA Appeal and Complaints Board (ACB) and the GSA Deputy Speaker positions.

As part of this process, the Nominating Committee Vice Chair conducted interviews with four potential candidates for the Deputy Speaker role. Each candidate demonstrated strong potential and relevant skills to contribute to the role. Additionally, we received a single nomination for the GSA ACB. The interview process for this candidate was conducted by the GSA Associate Director and the Vice Chair of the Nominating Committee. Both interviewers provided thorough evaluations of the candidate's qualifications and experience.

Following these interviews, all Nominating Committee (NoC) members cast their votes based on their assessments and interest in each candidate's potential to fulfill the responsibilities of the role. The voting process was conducted transparently, with each committee member submitting their vote after careful consideration of the interview results.

Since the last Council meeting, there has been considerable discussion within the Nominating Committee regarding the fairness of the voting process. Over the past two weeks, we have engaged in a detailed review of our current procedures. After robust discussions, all committee members reached a consensus: we agree that changes should be made to the GSA Bylaws and Policies to formalize and further improve the fairness of the voting process. This recommendation has also been raised in recent Governance Committee meetings, where it has received positive feedback. We believe these improvements will ensure that the nomination and voting processes are as equitable and transparent as possible, benefiting both the GSA and its members.

As always, we are committed to upholding the integrity of our work and fostering an inclusive and fair environment within the GSA. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Council on these important initiatives.

Sincerely,
Tianxu Wang, Nominating Committee Vice Chair

GSA Executive Director
Report to GSA Council for October 21 2024 Meeting

To: GSA Council
From: Lewie Moodley
Date: October 21 2024

Dear Members of the GSA Council,

I trust this message finds you well and you are enjoying the beautiful Fall and getting ready for the winter. I am pleased to provide you with an update on the various initiatives and activities currently underway within the Graduate Students' Association. Below, I outline the key points of our ongoing efforts.

In October, we launched our new Good Grants platform, it is designed to streamline and enhance the application process for GSA grants. This initiative will make it easier for students to apply for funding and track their applications. Many graduate students have started using the new system and it is working well. A big thank you goes to Vanessa Miller, who has worked tirelessly to bring this platform to life. We are confident it will greatly benefit our graduate students.

We have hired a new HR and Finance Manager for the GSA, Dorota Dziekan-Kryjak began on October 15 2024. Dorota comes to us with many years of experience in payroll and HR, she has a strong background with financial services. Dorota has worked in the post-secondary environment, not-for-profit sector, and oil and gas industry.

The annual audit of the Graduate Students' Association (GSA), conducted by RSM, has been completed and will be presented to the GSA Council in November. Prior to that, the audit results were reviewed by the Budget and Finance Committee (BFC) in October, where members had the opportunity to assess and discuss the findings. The audit is a key component of the GSA's financial transparency and accountability, ensuring that our financial statements are accurate and comply with relevant regulations. The upcoming presentation to the Council will provide an overview of the audit process and a summary of the financial health of the GSA for the past fiscal year.

Budget planning for the 2025-2026 fiscal year will begin in November, marking the start of a comprehensive process to ensure financial stability and strategic resource allocation for the Graduate Students' Association (GSA). During this period, the Budget and Finance Committee (BFC) will collaborate closely with the GSA's leadership team to assess funding priorities, project expenditures, and align the budget with the strategic goals. This early planning phase allows for a thorough review of financial needs, potential risks, and opportunities for growth, ensuring that the GSA remains fiscally responsible and well-prepared for the upcoming year.

Finally, the staff have been actively supporting students across a range of important committees, including the Elections and Referenda Committee (ERC), Tuition and Budget Advisory Committee (TBAC), Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIF) Committee, Awards Committee, and Governance Committee. Their involvement in these committees has included assisting with meeting preparation, providing guidance on policy and procedure, and ensuring that student representatives are well-equipped to contribute effectively. We are confident that these efforts will significantly enhance our ability to serve the graduate student community and advance the mission of the GSA. We appreciate your continued support and look forward to working together to achieve our shared goals. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely, Lewie Moodley, Executive Director.

Management Report to the GSA Board, October 2 2024

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on **September 18 2024**.

Executive Director update:

- Grants are now open again for summer. All forms in Good Grants have been completed and we will continue training with our specialist on next steps to complete the setup. We approved 40 new applications so far this month. For new system updates, we have been approved for integration with CCID.
- Our annual audit with RSM Canada is ongoing; this is an annual financial report. We are working with the auditors in the final weeks of the audit and will have the final report in the coming weeks.
- We are working hard to get the Fall social ready for later this month and will be announcing a new Finance and HR Manager in the next week.
- We are currently in the process of planning the onboarding for our incoming VP External. This will be a key focus in the coming weeks, as we finalize their training and scheduling to ensure they are well-prepared to take on the role.
- Social Media updates:
 - **Facebook** - Reach: -2.3% (Sept 3-Sept 23); Followers: +6 followers (current: 2063)
 - **Instagram** Reach: +114.7% (Sept 3-Sept 23); Followers: +27 followers (current: 1429)
 - **Twitter/ X** Followers: +1 followers (1353)

Management Report to the GSA Board, October 9 2024

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on **October 2 2024**.

Executive Director update:

- Grants are now closed and we will reopen with our new platform. We approved 70 new applications so far this month. For new system updates, we have been approved for integration with CCIDs. Our new platform is ready to start from next week.
- Our annual audit with RSM Canada is ongoing; this is an annual financial report. The audit is now coming to a close with a report expected to arrive this week.
- We are working hard to get the Fall social ready for later this month and we have hired a new HR and Finance Manager Dorota Dzeikan- Kryjak who begins on October 15th, 2024.
- We are currently in the process of planning the onboarding for our incoming VP External. This will be a key focus in the coming weeks, as we finalize their training and scheduling to ensure they are well-prepared to take on the role.
- Social Media updates:
 - **Facebook** : Reach: -36.3 (Sept 23-Oct 8); Followers: no change (current: 2063)
 - **Instagram** Reach: '-57.7% (Sept 23-Oct 8); Followers: +7 followers (current: 1436)
 - **Twitter/ X** Followers: +2 followers (1355)

Management Report to the GSA Board, October 16 2024

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on **October 9 2024**.

Executive Director update:

- Grants are now open and students have started using the Good Grants platform. We have new applications coming in. This past month we have approved 53 ATG's at 25,590.00, 14 CCG's at 20,000.00, and 3 GSGG's at \$4,500. For this year we have approved 528 ATG's, 173 CCG's, 20 GSGG and 11 EB's.
- Our annual audit with RSM Canada is ongoing; this is an annual financial report. The audit report will be presented to the BFC on October 17 2024.
- We are working hard to get the Fall social ready for later this month and we have hired a new HR and Finance Manager Dorota Dzeikan-Kryjak who begins on Oct 15, 2024.
- We are currently in the process of planning the onboarding for our incoming VP External. This will be a key focus in the coming weeks, as we finalize their training and scheduling to ensure they are well-prepared to take on the role.
- Social Media updates:
 - **Facebook** Reach: +82.3% (Oct 8 - Oct 15); Followers: +2 followers (current: 2065)
 - **Instagram** Reach: +41% (Oct 8 - Oct 15); Followers: +3 followers (current: 1439)
 - **Twitter/ X** Followers: -1 followers (1354)