

Monday, August 19, 2024

**Held online and in-person in L1-490 ECHA**

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, 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.*

*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.*

**GSA SPEAKER:**

Farhan Khalid in the Chair

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:**

Sumaira Niazi

**CLOSED SESSION:**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

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| 1. Haseeb Arshad, GSA President                        | 30. Iain Smith, Computing Sciences Councillor                                     |
| 2. Rija Kamran, VP Academic                            | 31. Michelle Bey, Dentistry Councillor  |
| 3. Benjamin Kucher, VP Student Life                    | 32. Andy Zhang, Digital Humanities Councillor                                     |
| 4. Muneeb Raja, AVP Labour                             | 33. Shaun Woudstra, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences Councillor                       |
| 5. Saad Arslan Iqbal, VP Student Services              | 34. Guadalupe Montserrat Cornejo Rodriguez, Educational Policy Studies Councillor |
| 6. Zain Patel, Deputy Returning Officer                | 35. Jennie Burton, Elementary Education Councillor                                |
| 7. Arseniy Belosokhov, Councillor-At-Large & NoC Chair | 36. Zoe Wagner, Human Ecology Councillor  |
| 8. Margaret DeCoste, Councillor-At-Large               | 37. Amber Smith, IGSA Councillor  |
| 9. Christine Hymanyk, Councillor-At-Large              |   |
| 10. Abdul Hadi Syed, Councillor-At-Large               |   |
| 11. Andres Dorado, Councillor-At-Large                 |   |

<p>12. Ibrahim Khodabocus, Councillor-At-Large          13. Allyson Brinston, Councillor-At-Large          14. Destiny Otoadese, Councillor-At-Large          15. Georga Boffen Yordanov, Councillor-At-Large          16. Constantin Mouzaaber, Guest          17. Ajibola (Jibs) Adigun, Guest          18. Kaylee Craplewe, Guest          19. Lisa van Lierop, Guest          20. Nafisa Sadaf Hriti, Guest          21. Zijia Yu, Guest          22. Ning Dai, Biochemistry Councillor          23. Samantha Tan, Biological Sciences Councillor          24. Gurparkash Singh, Biomedical Engineering Councillor          25. Andy Cheng, Cell Biology Councillor          26. Hadi Afsaneh, Chemical &amp; Materials Engineering Councillor          27. Yousef Haidar, Chemistry Councillor          28. Kiera Greenaway, Civil &amp; Environmental Engineering Councillor          29. Cassandra Baragar, Communication Science &amp; Disorders Councillor</p>	<p>38. Pouneh Mohammadi Nejad, Mathematical &amp; Statistical Sciences Councillor          39. Connor Oborn, Medical Genetics Councillor          40. Emma Heidebrecht, Neuroscience Councillor          41. Nancy Hammer, Nursing Councillor          42. Rebecca Reif, Obstetrics &amp; Gynecology Councillor          43. Fateema Muzaffar, Oncology Councillor          44. Toqa Abdelwahab, Ophthalmology Councillor          45. Fulin Wang, Pharmacology Councillor          46. Abhinab Mukhopadhyay, Physics Councillor          47. Emilie Desnoyers, Psychiatry Councillor          48. Cheryl Pan, Psychology Councillor          49. Kathryn Short, Public Health Councillor          50. Matt Ball, Renewable Resources Councillor          51. Akil Mangra-Bala, Alternate: Pharmacy          52. Baiyu Su, Alternate: Sociology</p>
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Time	Item #	Title	Presenter(s)
6:02	-	Land Acknowledgement	F. Khalid, Speaker
1 min	1	Approval of the Agenda for August 19, 2024 GSA Council HA MOVED. BK SECONDED.  Motion PASSED.	F. Khalid, Speaker
1 min	2.0-2.6	Approval of the GSA Council Minutes of June 24, 2024 SI MOVED. BK SECONDED.  Motion PASSED.	F. Khalid, Speaker
2 min	3	Changes in GSA Council Membership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New Neuroscience Councillor: Emma Heidebrecht</li> <li>● New Ophthalmology Councillor: Toqa Abdelwahab</li> <li>● New Physics Councillor: Abhinab Mukhopadhyay</li> <li>● Outgoing Councillors: Constantin Mouzaaber</li> </ul>	F. Khalid, Speaker

		(Ophthalmology) and Guadalupe Montserrat Cornejo Rodriguez (Educational Policy Studies)	
10 min	4	<p>Announcements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VP External By-Election:</li> </ul> <p>The GSA VP External has resigned, citing personal and academic reasons, thus we will be running a by-election for the position starting on August 20th, 2024. Nominations close on September 3rd at 4:00pm. The announcement was made in last Friday's newsletter and will continue to be advertised there. Please come by 1-49 Triffo Hall, the GSA Office, to pick up a nomination form.</p>	
15 min	5	<p><b>PRESENTATION ITEMS</b></p> <p>A. Shape the Future Campaign Presentation</p> <p>Lynn Hruczkowski (Senior Consultant, Alumni and Development), Sarah Wolgemuth (Director, Student Experience Strategy Office of the Deputy Provost Students and Enrolment), and Kelly Spencer (AVP Development and Alumni Relations) presented the confidential item.</p>	L. Hruczkowski, S. Wolgemuth, K. Spencer
30 min	5.0-5.9 5.10-5.29	<p>B. GSA Health &amp; Dental Plan Survey Report</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questionnaire</li> <li>Report</li> </ol> <p>H. Arshad presented the item, detailing that the Health and Dental Plan is up for renewal next August. A recent survey was conducted among students to evaluate the current plan, identify desired new benefits, and address any issues. The survey, which had 850 responses predominantly from second-year PhD students, revealed that while 90% of graduate students are enrolled in the plan, 17.5% opt out. Respondents rated the current Student Care plan as neutral, citing areas for improvement in claims processing and customer service. Key student priorities include increased dental coverage and enhanced wellness support. 70% were unaware of Homewood Health, a wellness provider linked with the GSAP plan.</p> <p>Students recommended a comprehensive plan combining wellness, health, and dental coverage, faster claim processing, and a more streamlined user experience. Preferences showed that 65.4% favor a comprehensive plan, 73.5% would like financial support from the provider, 75.1% want quicker claim processing, and 42.8% desire a parental plan.</p> <p>Based on these recommendations, the board has been</p>	H. Arshad, President

25 min	5.30-5.31	<p>working with management for over 18 months to select a new health provider. After a thorough evaluation, Ellement has been chosen to replace the current provider.</p> <p>C. Ellement Health &amp; Dental Presentation</p> <p>Corey Wright, Joshua Sankarlal and Tim Adams, Ellement representatives, presented the StudyWell Benefits website and app presentation.</p> <p>Corey Wright, Senior Vice President at Ellement Consulting Group, presented the item. Ellement is a new entrant in the post-secondary student benefits market. C. Wright provided an overview of the organization and the services they plan to offer to the GSA. Unlike many competitors, Ellement is committed to remaining Canadian-focused, with equity investments from local pension plans. This structure supports ongoing investment in IT systems and ensures service quality. Ellement offers a streamlined claims process through a user-friendly app and website. Claims are handled directly by Ellement with real-time tracking and personalized support. They will provide a custom, accessible website that will provide vital information and enhance user experience, including features for those with visual impairments. Ellement provides various support options, including live chat, call-back features, and dedicated phone lines to ensure efficient service. They demonstrated their commitment to enhancing the student experience, simplify the claims process, and continuously improve through technology and member feedback. They will refine services based on graduate student needs and ensure the benefits package meets expectations through the contract negotiation process that will begin in the coming weeks.</p>	C. Wright, J. Sankarlal
15 min	6 6.0	<p><b><u>ACTION ITEMS</u></b></p> <p>A. GSA Health &amp; Dental Provider Vote</p> <p>a. Outline of Issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions centered around the cost of the other plans. Blue Cross was determined to be too expensive. StudentCare was eliminated due to</li> </ul>	

	<p>6.1 6.2-6.7</p> <p>6.8 6.9-6.20</p>	<p>the lack of technology advancements. Priority to improve coverage and reduce premiums.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>H. Arshad clarified that this vote is to choose a provider and negotiate the exact rates afterward. Priority was to move away from StudentCare to achieve better transparency and customer service.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Motion PASSED.</p> <p>B. GSA Governance Committee-Recommended Bylaw and Policy Changes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline of Issue</li> <li>Recommended Bylaw &amp; Policy Changes to Sections</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Belosokhov asked after an avenue to provide further suggestions for changes. H. Arshad recommended reaching out to him and discussing or using the new website, once it is live, to provide feedback. HA will bring any recommendations to the Governance Committee.</li> <li>HA summarized the changes in the document.</li> <li>This vote is for the policy - only one reading. Bylaw gets two readings.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Motion PASSED.</p> <p>C. GSA ERC-Recommended Policy Changes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline of Issue</li> <li>Recommended Policy Changes to Sections D &amp; I</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Z. Patel summarized the changes in the document, particularly the Acting DRO position.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Motion PASSED.</p>	
15 min	7	<p><b><u>DISCUSSION ITEMS</u></b></p> <p>A. Council Ad-Hoc Committee to Improve Council Efficiency</p> <p>H. Arshad, GSA President, introduced the item and detailed that as part of the GSA’s ongoing efforts to enhance engagement, accessibility, transparency, and accountability, we are exploring ways to improve the</p>	H. Arshad, President

		<p>effectiveness of our Council. Feedback suggests that our Council could benefit from restructuring to become more efficient, akin to other councils, such as the UC GSA.</p> <p>To address this, a proposal of the formation of an ad hoc committee consisting solely of councillors, who would have voting rights, while Farhan, as Chair of the Council, would chair the committee in a non-voting capacity. The ad hoc committee would be responsible for reviewing our current bylaws and policies and comparing them with other student governance bodies to identify improvements. The committee would then present recommendations to the council.</p> <p>The Governance Committee, while having the authority to revise bylaws, would not lead this initiative. Instead, the councillors would drive the process, ensuring that the council's perspective is central to any changes. This approach aligns with the principle that the council, as the supreme authority, should lead decisions affecting its own structure.</p> <p>We need to discuss and decide on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Formation of the Ad Hoc Committee:</b> Determine the number of members required, the election process, and the committee's mandate.</li> <li>2. <b>Mandate and Goals:</b> Define what constitutes an "effective council" to guide the ad hoc committee in its review and recommendations.</li> </ol> <p>The Governance Committee will assist by drafting the mandate and recommending it to the council. If the council agrees to proceed with this route, a formal action item will be prepared for the next council meeting, where members will vote on the proposal and subsequent elections for the ad hoc committee will be organized.</p> <p>The key decision now is whether we prefer an ad hoc committee led by councillors to handle these revisions or</p>	
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		a. Two Councillor Positions (One Nominee): Ibrahim Khodabocus	
30 min	9	<p><b><u>INFORMATION PIECES</u></b></p> <p>Reports:</p> <p>A. GSA President: Haseeb Arshad</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. H. Arshad highlighted that the Coursework-based Master's Scholarship program will begin its advertisement in mid-September, with the adjudication process occurring in December and awards being distributed to graduate students by January.</li> <li>b. Additionally, efforts are underway to finalize the Graduate Peer Support Framework, with the goal of completing it before the next council meeting.</li> <li>c. Regarding the Graduate Student Support Fund (GSSF), a proposal has been submitted requesting \$1.2 million to enhance support for Coursework-based Master's Scholarships and the Graduate Peer Support Program.</li> <li>d. The Board's interview with the third-party lead investigator went well, and several recommendations were made, including the establishment of an advisory board for CMT, compassion training for UAPS officers, support for individuals affected by the forced encampment sweep, and the creation of a comprehensive protest policy.</li> <li>e. It was noted with concern that the lead investigator was unaware of the recent resignation of the Arts Faculty EDI Council, highlighting a significant information gap.</li> </ol> <p>B. Vice-President Academic: Rija Kamran</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. As submitted</li> <li>b. R. Kamran highlighted the Learning Management System platform on Canvas, which will be launched this fall.</li> </ol>	



		<p>R. Kamran encouraged students to contact her with any issues or concerns.</p> <p>c. Additionally, the implementation of the PhD minimum funding is underway, with partial implementation starting this fall. By fall 2025, all PhD students in their first to fourth years will receive a minimum of \$25,000 upon admission. We will seek your input and feedback throughout the rollout process.</p> <p>C. Vice-President Student Life: Benjamin Kucher</p> <p>a. As submitted.</p> <p>b. B. Kucher updated the Council on his ongoing work with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA). As the chair of the National Indigenous Advocacy Committee and a board member of CASA, the GSA has enhanced its influence in advocating for graduate student issues. This year, our focus has been on securing sustainable financial support, improving mental health resources, and increasing Indigenous student access to post-secondary education. Our collaboration with CASA is yielding significant advocacy results.</p> <p>c. B. Kucher will provide further updates after CASA's E-plenary next month and during CASA's Advocacy Week in Ottawa this November. B. Kucher encouraged students to reach out with any questions or to learn more about CASA's work, as your feedback will help shape our advocacy priorities.</p> <p>d. CASA is advocating for a permanent \$1.07 billion investment in the Canadian Student Grants Program, raising the maximum grant to \$4,200 annually and maintaining loan maximums at \$300 per week. We are also involved in shaping the Youth Mental Health Fund and advocating for increased funding for</p>	
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		<p>Indigenous post-secondary education, specifically a \$750 million annual increase for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program and Inuit programs. Additionally, CASA is pushing for a \$207.6 million annual investment in the Student Workplace Placement Program to enhance work-integrated learning opportunities for students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Our collaboration with CASA is yielding significant advocacy results, impacting our graduate student community. I will provide further updates after CASA's E-plenary next month and during CASA's Advocacy Week in Ottawa this November. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or to learn more about CASA's work, as your feedback will help shape our advocacy priorities.</li> </ul> <p>D. Vice-President Student Services: Saad Iqbal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. S. Iqbal detailed the significant efforts that have been directed toward negotiating the U-Pass contract with the City of Edmonton, as the current agreement with the University of Alberta is nearing its end. Despite a negotiation session in mid-July that did not reach a consensus, further discussions are scheduled to start soon. Both the GSA and UASU are working diligently to secure a favourable deal for students.</li> <li>b. Additionally, outreach is underway to engage graduate students at Augustana Campus with social events, and input is welcomed via email.</li> <li>c. For World Mental Health Day on October 10th, two events—a nature walk and a creative workshop—are being organized in collaboration with the SU.</li> </ul>	
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		<p>Graduate Student Association's primary goal is for every student to successfully complete their degree. Second, while some individuals may hold more formal roles, no one is above the collective authority of the GSA; we all have equal standing within this organization. He wishes the best for those stepping into new roles after the upcoming by-election and hopes for improvements in university tuition and inflation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Chief and Deputy Returning Officers: Sophie Shi and Zain Patel             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Z. Patel advertised the By-Election nomination call opening on August 20th - nomination forms to be picked up from 1-49 Triffo Hall.</li> </ul> </li> <li>J. GSA Nominating Committee Chair: Arseniy Belosokhov             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. As submitted</li> </ul> </li> <li>K. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Chair: Andrew Pohlka             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. As submitted</li> <li>b. A. Pohlka encouraged volunteers to nominate themselves for ERC vacancies</li> </ul> </li> <li>L. GSA Management, Executive Director: Lewie Moodley             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. As submitted</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
10		<p>Question Period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Written Questions (May be submitted to the GSA Speaker before 4:00PM on Thursday, August 15, 2024)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. By-Election Dates were detailed (and can be found on the GSA website)</li> <li>b. Anticipated fees to the U-Pass program: confidential negotiations ongoing, but we are working to not let inflation raise the price of the U-Pass</li> <li>c. Current advocacy initiatives taken by VP External: abGPAC has been dissolved, so we are working with the UC GSA to create an advocacy group to the provincial government. We are currently working with the mayor to create affordable, off-campus housing and on</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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		transit safety in U-Pass negotiations. B. Oral Questions: None at this time	
		Adjournment 8:46 PM	