



The Graduate Students' Association Board Strategic Work Plan 2019-2020

Connect Support Advocate



Our Vision and Mission

To advocate for all graduate students to the University of Alberta and the Alberta Government in pursuit of a safe, supportive, respectful, accessible, and inclusive community that fosters the multi-faceted roles played by graduate students.

The GSA respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of First Nations and Métis people.



What is a Graduate Student?

A graduate student is a junior colleague who contributes to their field of study in pursuit of an advanced degree through collaborative work with the professoriate in research, teaching, and the development of University learning environments. These contributions may be accomplished through: extensive coursework and the development of capstone projects, theses, or dissertations (in pursuit of which graduate students are charged tuition and fees); academic employment (for which graduate students are paid); the co-creation and writing of scholarly work; contributing to the securing of academic funding; and participation in the community via presentations, conferences, and community engagement. This multi-faceted role takes place in an environment of mutual respect and fairness aimed at developing skills and knowledge for future careers, and is one that merits appropriate remuneration for labour in service of the enhancement of the institution.

What is the GSA Board's Strategic Work Plan?

The GSA Board's Strategic Work Plan is the document that steers and prioritizes the work and initiatives of the GSA. The GSA sees this as a living document, shifting directions as needed as the provincial, federal, and University landscapes change. It is developed annually with reference to the Strategic Work Plans of previous GSA Boards, and provides a planning document for this and future years.



Graduate students elect GSA leaders each February. Here are the 2019-2020 GSA Directly-Elected Officers (from left to right): Vice-President Academic, Dylan Ashley; Vice-President Student Services, Chantal Labonté; President, Fahed Elian; Vice-President External, Marc Waddingham; and Vice-President Labour, Shanawaz Mohammad.

The Graduate Students' Association

The GSA, as established by the *Post-Secondary Learning Act*, represents graduate students at the University of Alberta, and provides a wealth of services to its members that enrich the graduate student experience. As a separate corporation, it is both *a part* of the University of Alberta and *apart* from the institution. The GSA Board believes that a healthy organization is nurtured through effective relationships with all stakeholders. To sustain the organization's long-term health and excellent reputation, the GSA fosters a culture of respect and professionalism among staff and graduate student leaders, engages in regular review of governance processes, is committed to transparency and accountability, and ensures an annual transition process that facilitates the on-going education of elected graduate student leaders.



Connect

The GSA provides a wealth of benefits and services to its members that both enrich the graduate student experience and forge connections between graduate students.

The GSA will:

- Continue to foster a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion among its members
- Provide guidance to graduate students and aid them in navigating University processes and structures, while advocating for greater transparency around expectations and outcomes for graduate students
- Maintain engagement in discussions about space on campus

The GSA will create opportunities for graduate student awareness of and engagement with the GSA by:

- Ensuring the GSA remains responsive, effective, and efficient by regularly reviewing services and seeking feedback from members
- Evaluating communication methods to broaden engagement with our members
- Offering orientation and information sessions on key issues
- Offering engagement and recognition events
- Connecting with and supporting departmental graduate student groups and networks

Did you know?

The GSA has:

- graduate student lounges at Triffo Hall
- rooms available for booking
- several fun events per year
- two large orientations specific to graduate students (we also participate in 45-50 departmental orientations annually)
- a weekly newsletter, website, and social media profiles that highlight events and ways to get involved

The GSA will develop collaborative and positive relationships with:

- The Government of Alberta, including the Minister of Advanced Education, and the City of Edmonton
- Members of senior University administration (such as the President, the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), the Dean of Students, the Chair of the Board of Governors, and the Chancellor)
- Other campus stakeholder associations (such as the Students' Union, the Association of Academic Staff: University of Alberta, the Postdoctoral Fellows' Association, and the Non-Academic Staff Association)



Support

*All graduate students
are entitled to a safe
and respectful study
and work environment
characterized by
positive supervisory
relationships and free
from harassment,
discrimination, and
bullying.*

*In its role as a union,
the GSA champions,
advances, and protects
the rights of its members
as workers.*

The GSA will:

- ◆ Work collaboratively with senior University administration and the Government of Alberta on the implementation of Bill 19 and a predictable tuition model tied to the Alberta Consumer Price Index (CPI), as well as a consultative model concerning fee increases
- ◆ Actively review and participate in campus wide health and wellness (including mental wellness) initiatives
- ◆ Work to optimize the experience of its members during any academic employment appointment and to ensure the rights of graduate student workers are protected
- ◆ Continue work to ensure campus-wide compliance with the provisions of the Graduate Student Assistantship Collective Agreement and also advocate more broadly for campus-wide supportive learning and work environments based on respectful and professional relationships
- ◆ Continue to provide financial supports to graduate students through the Graduate Student Support Fund
- ◆ Continue to support workshops and services that assist graduate students with their academic progress

Did you know?

The GSA offers:

- ◆ GSA Emergency Bursaries
- ◆ GSA Child Care Grants
- ◆ GSA Academic Travel Grants
- ◆ GSA Graduate Student Group Grants
- ◆ GSA Recognition Awards
- ◆ GSA Health and Dental Plan
- ◆ Graduate Student Assistance Program
- ◆ Collective Agreement Advice

The GSA will:

- ◆ Support and collaborate with partners and stakeholders with respect to the establishment of a variety of high-quality professional development and internship opportunities in recognition of the diverse future career paths ahead of graduate students
- ◆ Support the services offered by the Campus Food Bank
- ◆ Push for the ongoing review and improvement of safety and security on campus
- ◆ Support initiatives and programs aimed at environmental stewardship and sustainability



A lack of stable funding and unpredictable increases in educational and other costs can cause significant strain on graduate students' health and wellness and can inhibit academic progress.

The GSA believes that graduate students should be provided with professional development opportunities that are essential for future career success.

Advocate

The GSA will:

- ◆ Work with campus partners to advocate for, develop, and implement a Charter of Student Rights
- ◆ Collaborate with and advocate to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and senior University administrators to make quality graduate student supervision an institutional priority (including creating appropriate supervisory training opportunities, an accountability structure for supervisory evaluation, and establishing a means of safe disclosure and reporting of concerning supervisory behaviour)
- ◆ Continue its advocacy work with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Office of the Provost on the implementation of guaranteed minimum funding packages for PhD students
- ◆ Advocate for increased financial supports for all graduate students, including merit based and non-merit based financial support (as well as greater accessibility to these supports) and the Graduate Student Support Fund
- ◆ Campaign for new initiatives and programs (and support existing ones) that specifically support Indigenous graduate students

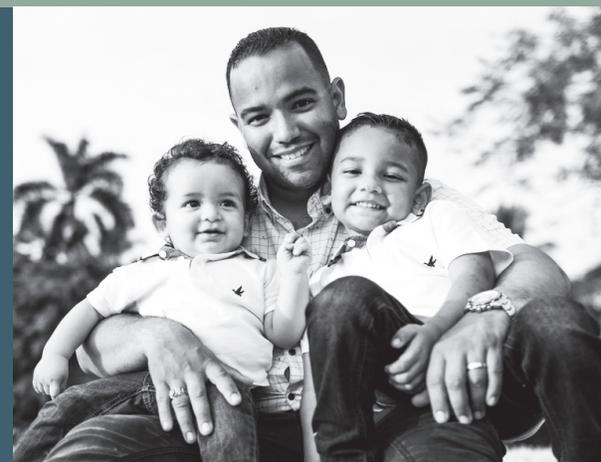
Did you know?

The GSA:

- ◆ meets regularly with the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Dean of Students
- ◆ is a member of the provincial advocacy group the Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council
- ◆ has seats on the Board of Governors, the General Faculties Council, and their sub-committees
- ◆ works individually with students to help them

The GSA will:

- ◆ Advocate for sustainable, cost-effective, and well-maintained housing for graduate students, and support and assist graduate students living in residences
- ◆ Campaign for enhanced supports and community building opportunities for graduate students who parent, and their families
- ◆ Advocate for new initiatives and programs (and support existing ones) that specifically support international graduate students.
- ◆ Encourage the development and implementation of initiatives to prevent homelessness
- ◆ Advocate for high-quality graduate-level programs and courses and opportunities to provide graduate students with international research and study opportunities



Events:

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| GSA Fall Orientation | Late August |
| GSA Fall Event | Early October |
| GSA Winter Orientation | Early January |
| GSA Winter Event | Mid February |
| GSA General Election | Late February |
| GSA Volunteer Appreciation | Early March |
| GSA Awards Night | Late March |
| GSA Coffee Breaks | One Friday Monthly |



Come visit us at
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