

**GSA Council Meeting AGENDA**  
Monday, 22 January 2024 at 6:00 pm  
Held in-person in Council Chambers

*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, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway, Saulteaux, Anishinaabe, 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.*

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

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

**Speaker Farhan Khalid in the Chair**

<b>OPEN SESSION</b>	<b>Attached Numbered Pages</b>
1. Approval of the 22 January 2024 Agenda ( <i>suggested time: 1 min</i> )	
2. Approval of the Minutes from the 11 December 2023 GSA Council Meeting ( <i>suggested time: 1 min</i> ) <i>Attachment:</i> i. Minutes from the 11 December 2023 GSA Council Meeting	<b>2.0 - 2.5</b>
3. Changes in GSA Council Membership ( <i>suggested time: 1 min</i> ) i. Introduction of New GSA Council Members ( <i>If you are new to GSA Council, please let us know it is your first meeting</i> ) ii. Farewell to Departing GSA Council Members ( <i>If this is your last GSA Council meeting, or if your last GSA Council meeting is approaching, please let us know</i> )	
<b><u>GSA Council Member Announcements</u></b>	
4. GSA Council Member Announcements ( <i>suggested time: 5 min</i> )	
5. People Strategy consultation ( <b><i>suggested time: 20 min</i></b> ) <b>Tiffany Kung (Vice President Student Life) will present the item and introduce the guest (Mr Logan Mardhani-Bayne).</b>	
6. PhD Minimum Funding Package ( <b><i>suggested time: 20 min</i></b> ) <b>Bishoi Aziz( President) will present the item and introduce the guest (Dr. Tracy Raivio).</b>  <i>Attachments:</i> i ___ 12.0 PhD Student Minimum Funding Guarantee - Draft Background Paper and Operating Standard January 2024 ii ___ PhD Student Minimum Funding Guarantee Proposal SUMMARY	<b>1-20 Original Pagination</b>  <b>1-8 Original Pagination</b>
<b>Action Item:</b> None at this time	
<b><u>Elections</u></b>	

<p><b>11. GSA Council Elections (suggested time – to be determined)</b>  <b>Violet Sun GSA Nominating Committee Chair) will present the item.</b></p> <p>GSA Council-Elected Officer Position</p> <p>a. Appeals and Complaints Board (ACB)  Attachment:  i. Nominees for the GSA ACB (2 GSA Member vacancies)</p> <p><b>Farhan Khalid (GSA Speaker) will present this portion of the item</b></p> <p>d. GSA Board/GSA Nominating Committee (GSAB/GSA NoC)  Attachment:  i. Nominees for the GSAB/GSA NoC (1 GSA Councillor vacancies)</p>	<p>No nominees received</p> <p>No nominees received</p>
<p><b>Reports (suggested time: 15 min)</b></p>	
<p><b>12. President (Bishoi Aziz, President)</b></p> <p>i. President’s Report  ii. GSA Board Report (<b>no written report at this time</b>)  iii. GSA Budget and Finance Committee Report (<b>no written report at this time</b>)  iv. GSA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Report (<b>no written report at this time</b>)  v. GSA Governance Committee Report (<b>no written report at this time</b>)</p>	<p><b>12.0-12.1</b></p>
<p><b>13. Vice-President Academic (Rija Kamran, Vice-President Academic)</b></p> <p>i. Vice-President Academic’s Report</p>	<p><b>13.0-13.1</b></p>
<p><b>14. Vice-President External (Hamid Hassani, Vice-President External)</b></p> <p>i. Vice-President External’s Report  ii. GSA Awards Selection Committee Report</p>	<p><b>14.0-14.2</b> <b>14.3</b></p>
<p><b>15. Associate Vice-President Labour (Muneeb Masood Raja, Vice-President Labour)</b></p> <p>i. Associate Vice-President Labour’s Report  ii. GSA Labour Relations Committee Report</p>	<p><b>15.0-15.1</b> <b>15.2</b></p>
<p><b>16. Vice-President Student Services (Haseeb Arshad, Vice-President Student Services)</b></p> <p>i. Vice-President Student Services’ Report.</p>	<p><b>16.0-16.2</b></p>
<p><b>17. Vice-President Student Life (Tiffany Kung, Vice-President Student Life)</b></p> <p>i. Vice-President Student Life’s Report</p>	<p><b>17.0-17.3</b></p>
<p><b>18. Senator (Ola Mabrouk)</b></p> <p>i. Senator’s Report (<b>no written report at this time</b>)</p>	
<p><b>19. Speaker (Farhan Khalid, Speaker)</b></p> <p>i. Speaker’s Report (<b>no written report at this time</b>)</p>	

<b>20. Chief Returning Officer (Sophie Shi, Chief Returning Officer)</b>	
i. Chief Returning Officer’s Report	<b>20.0</b>
<b>21. GSA Nominating Committee (Violet Sun, GSA Nominating Committee Chair)</b>	<b>21.0-21.1</b>
i. GSA Nominating Committee Report	
<b>22. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (Andrew Pohlka, GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Chair)</b>	<b>22.0</b>
i. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Report	
<b>23. GSA Management (Lewie Moodley, Executive Director)</b>	<b>23.0-23.3</b>
i. Executive Director’s Report	
<b><u>Question Period</u></b>	
Written Questions <b>(none received at this time)</b>	
<b>24. Oral Questions</b>	
<b><u>Adjournment</u></b>	

**GSA Council Meeting MINUTES**  
Monday, 11 December 2023 at 6:00 pm  
Held in-person and online [via Zoom] in Council Chamber

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Bishoi Aziz (President)	Violet Sun (GSA Nominating Chair)	Viren Dave (Business MBA)	Kylie Day (Library & Information Studies)	Magewd Kharouba (Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences)
Rija Kamran (VP Academic)	Arseniy Belosokhov (Councillor-at-Large)	Mehri Ebrahiminejad Baloochi (Business PhD)	Dalia Roman (Linguistics)	Janyne Johnson (Pharmacology)
Hamid Hassani (VP External)	Eric Beaudry (Councillor-at-Large)	Meghana Jois (Chem & Mat Eng)	Pouneh Mohammadi Nejad (Mathematical & Statistical Sciences)	Farid Saberi (Philosophy)
Tiffany Kung (VP Student Life)	Goldy T.R. (Councillor-at-Large)	Amanda Tran (Chemistry)	Simon Walker (Medical Microbiology & Immunology)	Evan Vienneau (Physics)
Haseeb Arshad (VP Student Services)	Mozhgan Sabz (Councillor-at-Large)	Kiera Greenaway (Civil & Environmental Engineering)	Michaela Morrow (Media & Tech Studies)	Grace Essuman (Physiology)
Muneeb Masood Raja (AVP Labour)	Laura Manerus (Councillor-at-Large)	Michelle Bey (Dentistry)	Connor Oborn (Medical Genetics)	Victoria Young (Political Science)
Farhan Khalid (Speaker)	Rajdeepsinh Solanki (Councillor-at-Large)	Shaun Wodstra (Earth & Athmo Sci)	Saeed Ataei (Neuroscience)	Emilie Desnoyers (Psychiatry)
Sophie Shi (CRO)	Uthman Khan (Anthropology)	Shuai Yu (Educational Policy Studies)	Nancy Hammer (Nursing)	Cheryl Pan (Psychology)
Zai Patel (Deputy Returning Officer)	Andrew Pohlka (Biochemistry)	Zoe Wagner (Human Ecology)	Leo Remillard (Oncology)	Wendy Amoako (Rehab Science)
Ola Mabrouk (Senator)	Samantha Tan (Biological Sciences)	Hannah Louis (IGSA)	Constantin Mouzaabar (Ophthalmology)	Yan Xue (Sociology)
Camila de Freitas (Deputy Speaker)	Carly Weber (Biomedical Engineering)	Taylor Walsh (Laboratory Medicine & Pathology)	Ahmed Ahmed (Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences)	

Guests: Dr. Carrie Smith; M Pawluck, K Teeling, E Williams (The Gateway); J Ames, B Kucher, KD King, R Wambold (IGSA); A Quaye and S Iqbal (ISA); E O'Niel (CFB)

Speaker Farhan Khalid in the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm. Speaker acknowledged the Traditional Territory of Treaty Six.

**Approval of Agenda****1. Approval of the 11 December 2023 Consolidated Agenda**

Members had before them the 11 December 2023 Consolidated Agenda, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. TK **MOVED**; Andrew P **SECONDED**.

Motion **PASSED** unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes****2. Minutes from the 20 November 2023 GSA Council Meeting**

Members had before them the 20 November GSA Council meeting minutes, which had been previously distributed. BA **MOVED**; TK **SECONDED**.

Motion **PASSED** unanimously.

**Changes in GSA Council Membership****3. Changes in GSA Council Membership****i. Introduction of New Councillors**

- No new council members

**ii. Farewell to Departing GSA Council Members**

- No departing members

**GSA Council Member Announcements****4. GSA Council Member Announcements**

BA asked the council for any volunteers for an interview to be done with CBC/Radio Canada to speak on the GSA Survey Report (Understanding Financial Realities) results. Interview is scheduled for Dec 12, 10AM.

**5. EDI Integrated Action Plan Consultation**

TK (VP Student Life) presented the item and introduced the guest, Dr. Carrie Smith, to present the EDI Action Plan to the council. Dr. Carrie Smith discussed briefly the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan at the University of Alberta, key issues addressed included the integration of EDI into university culture, the need for clear benchmarks and deliverables, and the importance of responsive and contextual equity work. The plan emphasizes a shift from an additive approach to embedding EDI principles throughout university operations. Council and guests raised challenges such as accessibility, diverse staff recruitment, and the impact of language in EDI efforts. The session highlighted the importance of inclusive approaches and collective responsibility in advancing EDI, inviting further feedback to shape the ongoing development of the action plan.

**6. Elections and Referendum 101**

Speaker introduced the SS, Chief-Returning-Officer, and ZP, Deputy-Returning-Officer to present Elections and Referenda 101 to the council. SS discussed the upcoming elections and referenda, emphasizing the importance of understanding the voting process and the council's role. The GSA, a student-led nonprofit, advocates for graduate students and is governed by a council, board, and various committees, all collaborating yet distinct. The council, composed of various elected members, represents graduate student interests and ensures communication between constituents and the GSA. The upcoming elections involve voting for the president, vice presidents, and councilors-at-large, with historically low voter turnout being a concern. Referendums, both internal and external, are also a significant part of the election process, with councilors voting on whether these should be included in the ballot for graduate students to vote on. The meeting highlighted the process of nominating candidates, campaigning, and the importance of councilors being informed and engaging their constituents. A reminder was given to the council that the referendums being presented this council are being voted on whether or not they should be included in the ballot for the upcoming GSA General Election only.

**Action Items****7. 2023 Referendum and Associated Draft Question Initiated by The Gateway**

Sophie Shi (Chief Returning Officer) presented the item. **MOVER TK. SECONDER RK.**

**Suggested Motion for the GSA Council:** That the GSA Council APPROVE the holding of a referendum on the collection of a fee from graduate students to support The Gateway to run concurrently with the 2024 GSA General Elections.

SS introduced the guests from the Gateway, M Pawluck, K Teeling, and E Williams. M Pawluck presented an overview of the history of the Gateway, Gateway readership statistics, funding history, and The Gateway's future. M Pawluck also briefly discussed the purpose of the proposal: (1) ensuring sustainable journalism at the UofA and (2) expanding graduate student coverage on campus. The scope of the fee would apply to all graduate students except for those enrolled in the Augustana campus, would increase with CPI and inflation, and the option to opt out. The amounts in the proposal are: \$2.64 for Fall/Winter term and \$1.32 for Spring/Summer term. M Pawluck also discussed the outline of allocation of the funding and financial oversight. Questions regarding readership, inclusion of graduate students in The Gateway's board of association, other sources of revenue outside student levy proposal, and efforts on expanding graduate student coverage without graduate student levy from the members of the council. BA expressed disagreement on some points discussed regarding coverage expansion on graduate students saying that the expansion is "not enough" and asked about continued coverage even if the proposal doesn't win during the 2024 elections. M Pawluck answered that The Gateway will be committed to expanding their coverage but having the funding would help make the expansion sustainable. TK expressed support for the referendum, highlighting the coverage that The Gateway has and the importance of their influence/reach.

**MOTION for the GSA Council:** That the GSA Council APPROVE the holding of a referendum on the collection of a fee from graduate students to support The Gateway to run concurrently with the 2024 GSA General Elections.

Council voted. Motion has **PASSED**.

**8. 2023 Referendum and Associated Draft Question Initiated by the Indigenous Graduate Students Association**  
Zain Patel (Deputy Returning Officer) presented the item. **MOVER TK. SECONDER HA.**

**Suggested Motion for the GSA Council:** That the GSA Council APPROVE the holding of a referendum on the collection of a fee from graduate students to support the Indigenous Students Graduate Students' Association to run concurrently with the 2024 GSA General Elections.

Z Patel introduced the guests J Ames and the IGSA team to present their proposal. J Ames discussed the IGSA's role in the community, history of the IGSA, and presented the student experience of Indigenous students in the university. J Ames also mentioned how the Indigenous Students' Union in the undergraduate level has been collecting levy since 2019 and that the existing support from the First People House and ISU is not enough to support the needs of the indigenous graduate students. J Ames presented the proposed levy of \$3.75 per year for full-time students intended to advance indigenous sovereignty, decolonization and indigenization at the UofA, empowering indigenous students financially to work towards reconciliation. The fee is suggested to be non-opt out from non-indigenous students, though it is open to including indigenous students in the fee collection if necessary. The GSA will provide oversight for the budget and the fee will be adjusted every two years based on Bank of Canada's rate of inflation. Questions regarding inclusiveness of planned events, amount allotted for the writing retreat, and efforts to approach the government for funding were raised by council members. BA and TK expressed support for the IGSA referendum proposal.

**MOTION for the GSA Council:** That the GSA Council APPROVE the holding of a referendum on the collection of a fee from graduate students to support the Indigenous Students Graduate Students' Association to run concurrently with the 2024 GSA General Elections.

Council voted. Motion has **PASSED**.

**9. 2023 Referendum and Associated Draft Question Initiated by the International Students Association**  
Sophie Shi (Chief Returning Officer) presented the item. **MOVER TK. SECONDER HA.**

**Suggested Motion for the GSA Council:** That the GSA Council APPROVE the holding of a referendum on the collection of a fee from international graduate students only to support the International Students' Association to run concurrently with the 2024 GSA General Elections.

S Shi introduced the guests from the ISA, Abigail and Saad, to present their proposal to the council. A Quaye discussed the proposal suggesting a fee of \$6 per year for international graduate students with adjustments based on part-time

status or off-campus registration. A Quaye added that the proposed fee initially was at \$10.50, but based on feedback and consultations, they have reduced the fee. A Quaye also outlined the specific areas of fund allocation including communications, events, health and wellness; in addition, the financial oversight was also discussed. A Quaye said that the fund will help address the specific needs of international students that the university is lacking. Questions from the council regarding existing efforts by the university and how it differs with the ISA's plans with the levy was raised. Some feedback on fund allocation and transparency on the allocation of funds were also raised. BA expressed reluctance in supporting the proposal due to some language in the bylaw which was acknowledged by A Quaye and S Iqbal, mentioning that the ISA is currently going through restructuring and that they are working on the bylaws to have better representation for graduate students. RK, VP Academic, expressed support for the ISA's proposal.

**MOTION for the GSA Council:** That the GSA Council APPROVE the holding of a referendum on the collection of a fee from international graduate students only to support the International Students' Association to run concurrently with the 2024 GSA General Elections

Council voted.. Motion has **PASSED**.

#### 10. 2023 Referendum and Associated Draft Question Initiated by the Campus Food Bank

Sophie Shi (Chief Returning Officer) presented the item. MOVER TK. **SECONDER** TK.

**Suggested Motion for the GSA Council:** That the GSA Council APPROVE the holding of a referendum on the collection of a fee from graduate students to support the Campus Food Bank run concurrently with the 2024 GSA General Election.

E O'Neil briefly discussed the CFB's history, current funding structure, and figures on the CFB's clients (>20% undergraduates; <70% graduate students). E O'Neil also mentioned plans on expanding services to better cater graduate students with increasing CFB locations in other buildings in the university. TK and HA expressed support for the CFB's proposal. E O'Neil mentioned coming back to council to discuss more about the details in the CFB's operations.

**MOTION for the GSA Council:** That the GSA Council APPROVE the holding of a referendum on the collection of a fee from graduate students to support the Campus Food Bank run concurrently with the 2024 GSA General Election.

Council voted. Motion has **PASSED**.

### Elections

#### 11. GSA Council Elections

Violet Sun (GSA Nominating Committee Chair) reminded the council that only voting members are allowed to vote during the elections. She presented the items for the elections: GSA Awards Selection Committees, GSA Appeals and Complaints Board, and GSA Elections and Referenda Committee.

##### i. GSA Awards Selection Committees

- Andres Dorado - 30
- Yeon Soo Ha - 29
- Sheerya Kisi - 30
- None of the Candidates - 0
- Abstain - 18

##### ii. GSA Appeals and Complaints Board

- Maged Kharouba - 30
- None of the Candidates - 0
- Abstention - 19

##### iii. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee.

- Jerry Gan - 23
- Cassidy Maplethorpe - 24
- None of the Candidates - 0
- Abstentions - 24

## **Reports**

### **12. President**

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

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. The report stood as submitted.

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

No written report at this time

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

No written report at this time

#### **iv. GSA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Report**

No written report at this time

#### **v. GSA Governance Committee**

No written report at this time.

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

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

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. The report stood as submitted.

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

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

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. The report stood as submitted.

#### **ii. GSA Awards Selection Committee**

No written report at this time

### **15. Vice-President Student Life**

#### **i. Vice-President Student Life's Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. The report stood as submitted.

### **16. Vice-President Student Services**

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

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. The report stood as submitted.

### **17. Associate Vice-President Labour**

#### **i. Associate Vice-President Labour's Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. The report stood as submitted.

#### **ii. GSA Labour Relations Committee**

No written report at this time.

### **18. Senator**

#### **i. Senator's Report**

No written report at this time.

### **19. Speaker**

#### **i. Speaker's Report**

No written report at this time.

### **20. Chief Returning Officer**



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

No written report at this time.

**21. GSA Nominating Committee**

**i. GSA Nominating Committee Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. The report stood as submitted.

**22. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee**

**ii. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. The report stood as submitted.

**23. GSA Management**

**i. Executive Director's Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 8 December 2023. The report stood as submitted.

**Question Period**

**24. Written Questions**

- No written questions were received.

**25. Oral Questions**

- No oral questions were received due to time.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 pm.

# **PhD Student Minimum Funding Guarantee**

**BACKGROUND PAPER,  
OPERATING STANDARD, and  
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Prepared by:  
Roger Epp (Interim Vice-Provost and Dean, GPS)  
Tracy Raivio (Vice-Provost and Dean, GPS)  
Cagri Ayranci (Associate Dean, GPS)

## INTRODUCTION

This document consists of three primary parts. The first is a background paper, which makes the argument for minimum guaranteed funding, beginning with PhD students. It addresses the “why” question in relation to the University’s financial obligations to students and its ongoing capacity to recruit the best of them. Consider it a case for investment. The second part is the operating standard through which, we propose, a model of minimum guaranteed funding can be implemented. It addresses part of the “how” question – the administrative form the guarantee will take. The third part presents a two-stage implementation plan, including the financial considerations that will be critical to the implementation of any guarantee.

Note that the proposed figure of \$25,000 should be read as a minimum and a place to start. In various consultations with senior leadership, and with students, we have been encouraged to be more ambitious about the minimum. But we have also heard concerns from Faculties, Departments, and Faculty Members on that same point. In that light, the \$25,000 figure is meant to strike a balance across a large and diverse University. It is a minimum, not a limit. The same is true for the proposed four-year commitment period. We know that average completion times are closer to six years. Again, what is proposed here is a minimum, not a limit, though it is consistent with the current practices at U15 peer institutions. For programs already guaranteeing the minimum funding proposed here, it is hoped that this initiative will provide them with space to increase this amount, in recognition that it is not enough for most single students to live comfortably on, let alone for those with families.

One final note: this proposal is built on the principle that PhD funding ought to be a matter of shared responsibility between the University, programs, and supervisors; federal and provincial governments; and students themselves. The proposal assumes that the University, in association with peer institutions, will continue to press governments to increase the scale and scope of their support, in ways that could be transformational for Canada’s research sector and reverse what has been described in “breaking-point” terms as the loss of a generation.<sup>1</sup> Within that assumption, this proposal represents the University’s commitment to do what it can to support the recruitment of exceptional and diverse students, enable them to give primary attention to their doctoral studies, and recognize the valuable contributions they make to the research and learning environment of the University.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sparrow McGowan, “Why Canada is losing the next generation of researchers: With support for graduate students at a breaking point, Canadian universities are feeling the impact,” [University Affairs](#), October 2023.

## PART 1: BACKGROUND PAPER

### OVERVIEW

The idea of multi-year minimum guaranteed funding for PhD students has a long history at the University of Alberta. It was a key recommendation, for example, in a major review of graduate education completed in 2014,<sup>2</sup> and again in 2023 in the external review of the then - Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. It has been raised regularly in recent reviews of academic units. In 2018-19, a proposal to establish a minimum guarantee of \$18,000 for four years was the subject of wide consultation. Though it did not succeed, many individual faculties and departments across the University now make what are effectively multi-year minimum funding commitments to students at the point of admission. But this is an uneven patchwork, and necessarily a low-profile one, not one that the University can promote.

This proposal builds on the considerable data collection, analysis, and consultation conducted in 2018-19, and on a collaboration with the Graduate Students Association, for which minimum funding continues to be a strategic priority. The primary recommendation in this proposal is that the University move quickly to implement a minimum funding guarantee of **\$25,000 per annum for four years to PhD students**; and that it does so with sufficient flexibility and transitional funding to ensure that such a commitment is sustainable and that it does not put undue pressure on any of our existing doctoral programs.

The case for minimum guaranteed PhD funding is more urgent than it was in 2018-19. In the first place, many of our peers in the U15 group – among them, UBC, McGill, Waterloo, Queen’s, and Calgary – have already made this step. Others are preparing to do so. Some of those universities are located in provinces like Ontario where public funding formulas count graduate students more favourably (and where institutions have also removed international tuition differentials). The University of Calgary, operating in the same provincial funding context as the University of Alberta, now offers a minimum guarantee of \$25,000 across the board, which is among the highest in Canada, and has also introduced a minimum funding guarantee for thesis-based master’s students. The effect is that some of our programs risk being increasingly unable to make competitive admissions offers. Indeed, many of our established PhD programs are smaller than they were a decade ago. As we were told, while academic leaders in some of our small PhD programs worry about their ability to make minimum guarantees, they are also aware (1) that they have lost top-priority applicants to

---

<sup>2</sup> Martin Ferguson-Pell, “Graduate Student Education Initiative: Recommendations for Reform,” University of Alberta, June 2014.

other universities that could *guarantee* multi-year funding, and (2) that others – even their own master’s graduates – have chosen only to apply to programs whose websites can use such powerfully reassuring language. Needless to say, the quality of our research rests in no small part on the ability to attract the best doctoral students, including Canadian students, who now increasingly look to the United States where programs offer significantly higher funding.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1: Doctoral degree, Fall headcount by Faculty, 2010-2022**

Faculty	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
ALES	225	218	246	235	237	230	221	220	214	216	204	201	193
Arts	469	467	472	478	451	413	412	394	385	374	372	353	358
Business	65	54	60	61	51	45	46	49	52	47	49	53	54
Campus Saint-Jean													
Education	274	292	296	291	295	257	246	255	251	255	255	250	230
Engineering	617	669	717	702	711	678	679	709	726	779	783	820	817
Extension													
KSR	66	63	60	65	55	56	49	58	49	50	47	42	41
Law	4	8	8	8	7	7	8	7	5	5	6	5	6
Medicine & Dentistry	282	304	319	316	340	342	329	308	281	291	270	292	300
Native Studies								5	14	15	19	17	20
Nursing	86	74	70	64	68	64	68	66	67	66	73	72	70
Pharmacy	39	35	34	33	32	32	28	23	26	20	18	31	31
Public Health	40	42	42	43	45	50	47	57	46	46	54	60	61
Rehab Medicine	33	34	36	38	36	37	35	45	48	50	49	52	55
Science	707	692	709	686	646	566	564	567	562	584	567	607	641
TOTAL	2907	2952	3069	3020	2974	2777	2732	2763	2726	2798	2766	2855	2877

Source: GPS, Graduate Studies Yearbook: Enrolment Data and Updates

<sup>3</sup> Canada is now a top-five source country for graduate admission at U.S. universities, behind India, China, and South Korea. See the Council of Graduate Schools’ most [recent report](#) (2023); and the 2023 [Open Doors dataset](#).

In the second place, we know that doctoral students – many with dependents – face increasing financial hardship in the face of the inflationary pressures of recent years.<sup>4</sup> They struggle to afford food and shelter on modest incomes. They pursue PhDs in a funding landscape in which the value and number of federal tri-agency awards have flat-lined for almost two decades; those awards are not available at all to international students. With good reason, doctoral students take on more work, on-campus and off-campus, though it almost always delays completion, and in some cases results in withdrawal from programs. The outdated cost-of-living advice on the GPS website in 2022-23 advised prospective students that they will need \$21-28,000 per year as a single person and \$49-60,000 for a household of two adults and one child, not including tuition and fees, to live in Edmonton. In this context, a minimum funding guarantee is a matter of ethical obligation to those we admit as well as a critical investment in the research and teaching mission of the University. It is also a practical way to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion within PhD cohorts, since access to funding has been shown to be a significant barrier for those who are less sure that doctoral studies are for people like them. The recommendation made here is a place to start.

This proposal is put together with the understanding that graduate admission is necessarily an exercise in risk assessment. At one level, programs make comparative assessments about particular students, who are educated in universities around the world, and who present a range of GPAs, work/life experiences, and motivations. At another level, programs make decisions about the number of offers to make in a given year, based mainly on available funding and supervisory capacity. In this latter respect, our programs generally have a history of prudent judgment. The intention behind minimum guaranteed funding is *not* to make programs more cautious – to see PhD students increasingly in accounting terms as four-year balance-sheet liabilities. That would be an undesirable outcome. Rather, the intention is to affirm the important role of doctoral students in the research and instructional mission, targets and priorities of the University, to strengthen our capacity to recruit them, and to improve their living standards while they are enrolled in our programs. **For many reasons, this is a time to invest meaningfully in PhD students as an investment in the University.**

Consultations with respect to the current proposal began in December 2022, after then Interim Vice-Provost, Dr. Verna Yiu, challenged the University community to make minimum guaranteed funding for PhD students a matter of priority. Since that time, Departments and

---

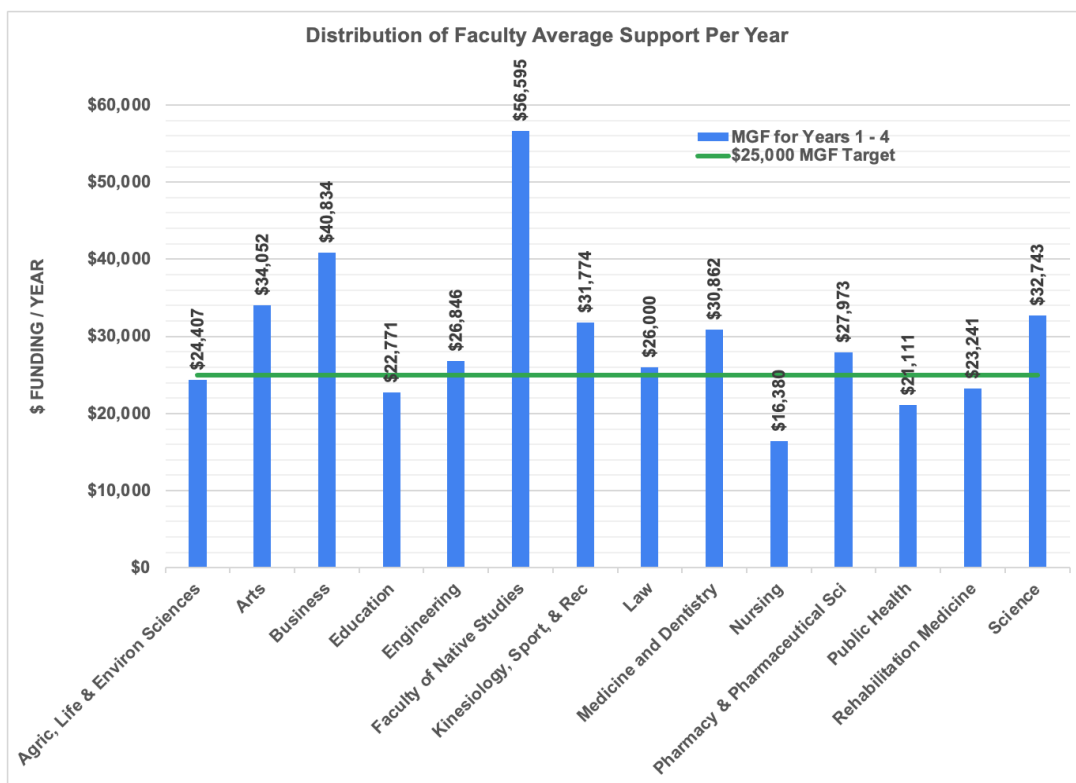
<sup>4</sup> In the triennial Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS), released in early 2023, financial pressures were identified as the most common and significant barrier to academic progress in the subset of 3232 responses from U of A students. See also the comprehensive, Canada-wide analysis by Sarah Laframboise, et al, “Analysis of financial challenges faced by graduate students in Canada,” *Biochemistry and Cell Biology* 00 (2023): 1-35.

Faculties were asked to respond to a survey, modified from 2018-19, to help identify funding gaps, contextualize the data, identify their own practices, and register concerns, which largely echoed those expressed in 2018-19. Survey data was cross-checked against what could be drawn from University databases. Comparative data from U15 peer institutions was also gathered, along with interviews with key academic leaders. Also, the subject of minimum guaranteed funding has been the subject of numerous one-on-one meetings within the University of Alberta. It has been an item on several agendas, including that of GPS Council, Dean's Council, the Provost's Advisory Council of Chairs, and GSA Council. Earlier versions of the proposal were also shared with a small cross-University reference group including Vice-Deans, Chairs, and Associate Deans (Graduate) as well as a somewhat broader Implementation Working Group.

## KEY FINDINGS

1. As a University, we are much closer than we might think to a minimum guarantee, (Figure 1). More than two-thirds of our PhD students are already funded at levels beyond \$25,000 per annum, with formal commitments for four or five years. While averages are deceiving in several ways, average per-student funding from a combination of sources is above \$30,000 per annum in several programs; in most others, it is near or above \$25,000 (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Distribution of Faculty Average Support per Year (data for 2021-2022).**



**Source: Acorn - Graduate Student Financial Support Dataset (GSFS). Prepared by PAIR - Performance, Analytics, Institutional Research (PAIR). Notes:**

1. The cohort was selected to align with the focus of the analysis: PhD students in year 1 to 4 of their studies, and only those who were registered full time in both Fall and Winter terms in the U of A Academic Year. The financial support data were based on payments made to students through the U of A payroll systems in the reporting period. The payments not related to their study and research (administrative jobs, casual cleaning job) were excluded.
2. Sponsored students are not identified in the results. They might show as underfunded in this result if they received additional payments such as a TA position. See point 4.a below.
3. ACORN indicates that some departments may deposit tuition fees for students and these payments will not show in this data as payments to the students, but, in fact this pay is would be part of the MFG amount. In some GTA payments, students may opt to have their tuition fee directly deducted from their TA pay. In these cases the remaining balance would be deposited to the students' accounts. Similar to footnote 4 above, these payments will not show in this data as payments to the students, but again would be part of the MFG amount.



2. The total amount of funding for Y1-Y4 PhD students (students that are registered full time in their PhD programs who are between their first and fourth years) that flowed through the University's accounts in 2021-22 – the last year for which we have complete data – was \$52.98 million. That amount includes University-administered scholarships and assistantships, as well as provincial, federal, and other external research funding. A pie-chart demonstration of the distribution is provided in Figure 2. The overall number is fairly consistent over the recent years. A more detailed breakdown is provided in the Funding Sources section below.
3. In 2021-22, 630 students – 34 percent of those in Y1-Y4 – were funded at less than \$25k. Of that number, 92 received no funding. The total amount that would be required to bring all of those students to \$25k is \$8,388,865. This is the outer size of the gap. The actual size is much smaller, (see points 4(a) and 4(b) below).
4. Two categories of doctoral students, however, skew any calculation of per-student averages and the overall gap.
- (a) First, the University has roughly 300 sponsored international students – 318 in Winter Term 2023 – whose tuition, fees, and living expenses are paid by their home governments or, in a few cases, third parties such as the Fulbright Program. Most are PhD students. Some of them receive no funds through University accounts; others may hold only a periodic TA position, for example, as part of their doctoral training, and so they appear in the data as students with no or limited funding. In practice, sponsored students offset the overall gap by several million dollars, though that offset is not equally distributed across the University. Many of those students are in the Faculty of Engineering (143), with significant numbers in FoMD (29), Science (28), ALES (23), Arts (12) and Pharmacy (12). This proposal assumes that sponsored students will continue to be recruited outside a minimum guaranteed funding commitment so long as their funding meets the threshold.
  - (b) The second category includes doctoral students who enrol, often as mid-career professionals, in PhD programs such as Nursing, Education, Rehabilitation Medicine, and even Engineering, and who choose to continue to work at least part-time at salaries that outpace any available graduate support. They are, in essence, largely self-funded. For that reason, average per-student funding in Nursing and Education appears somewhat lower. We heard considerable anxiety from these programs that the imposition of an inflexible University-wide commitment to minimum guaranteed

funding could actually lead them to admit fewer doctoral students. It is important that this proposal recognize that concern. At the same time, the proposal is clear that in order for doctoral students to remain eligible for guaranteed funding, they must meet a set of expectations: they will be registered full-time; they will submit applications for relevant scholarships; and they will be available for whatever GTA, GRA, or GRAF assignments a program may reasonably make in meeting its commitment to them.

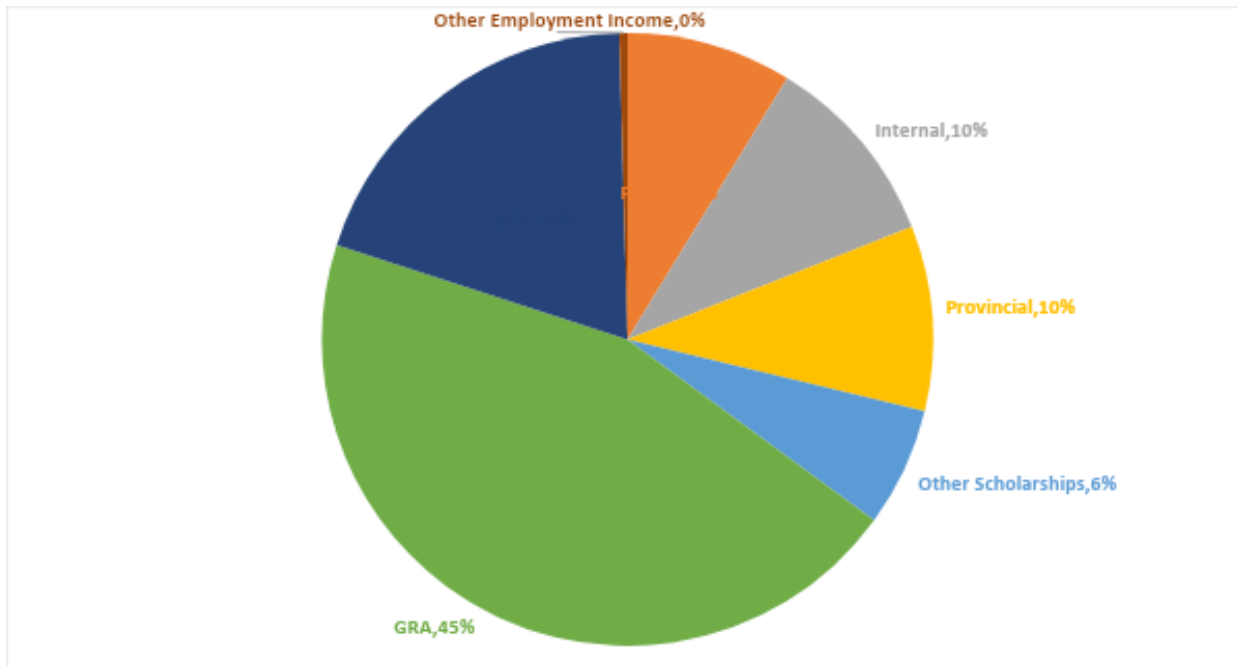
5. In most Faculties, our PhD programs have been sustained by an increase over time in the numbers of international students. On average, and for reasons that may reflect differential tuition and available funding, they tend to finish their programs a half-year sooner than domestic students. That means that in the Y1-Y4 group, their proportion is even higher. International students have access to only some of the sources identified below, and not at all to Tri-Council scholarships. In other words, the imbalance between our numbers of international PhD students and the funding available for them continues to grow. Approximately 42% of our students are international and this guaranteed funding will move us as an institution towards the goal of providing equitable financial support to all PhD students.

6. The University, we think, can reasonably identify sufficient funding to implement a guarantee and maintain PhD enrolment at current levels. In order to grow graduate enrolment, however, including PhD students, it will be necessary to fund those students with new revenue.

7. There is no such thing as a prototypical PhD student. The nature of doctoral research varies considerably, for example, from lab-based disciplines to the humanities. The same is true for funding components and average time to completion. This is the challenge of a University-wide guarantee. When it comes to PhD funding, faculties and departments worry about different things. In programs where students are largely supported from faculty members' research grants, and where admission might be based on a supervisor able to provide funding, the worry lies in making multi-year commitments in a context of grant cycles and uncertain success at renewal time. In addition, we sometimes heard that minimum funding cannot be achieved "on the backs of PIs," who are already under pressure to maintain existing funding levels. In programs that require some of their students to secure Tri-Council doctoral scholarships in order to have the capacity to make commitments to the next cohort, a poor result in a given year will have an impact on admissions.

## FUNDING SOURCES

**Figure 2: Distribution of financial support for 2021-22 (Total Amount \$57 M)**



Support for PhD students, as Figure 2 illustrates, comes from a combination of sources.

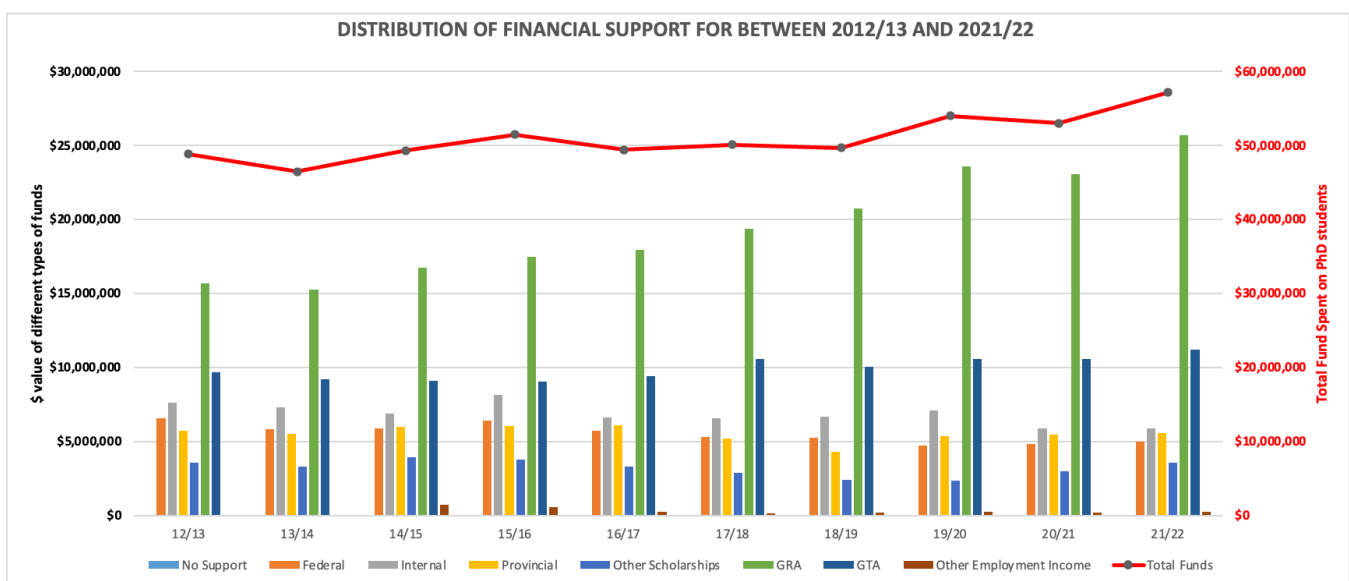
1. The **University's operating budget** provides limited awards funding to doctoral students. That includes \$2.5 in recruitment awards, allocated to faculties by a formula (and also intended for Master's students). The amount has not changed in more than a decade. Internal funding also includes top-up tuition awards for PhD and Master's recipients of Tri-Council fellowships, which are not available to international students. In addition, GPS administers a range of endowed and other scholarships, most notably the Killam Fellowships.

2. The other major operational support for doctoral students comes in the form of **graduate teaching assistantships** or, less commonly, primary/sessional instructor positions. These positions are funded from Faculty and Department teaching budgets. In 2022-23 there were 1803 teaching assistantships in the University, with the largest number in Science (702), Engineering (539), and Arts (261).

3. The bulk of the RA support indicated in Figure 2 is provided through Graduate Research Assistantship Fellowships (GRAF), which are funded directly from research grants secured by **faculty members as PIs**. A smaller number of research assistantships are funded from a variety of other available sources. The increase in the total funds provided to PhD students over the last decade is almost entirely related to GRA funds, which show a linear increase from ~\$10M to ~\$25.6 M.

4. **Provincial support** comes primarily in two envelopes. The first is the Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarships (AGES), in which \$7.2 million is allocated within the University, again by formula, and is open to all graduate students. AGES is paid out at \$12,000 per annum (this is a University decision; it could be as high as \$15,000). Of the total amount, about \$1.4 million is targeted to Indigenous students. International students are eligible for a smaller portion. The second envelope is the Alberta Innovates scholarships program, which provides about \$3 million in annual support to students in areas that align with designated research priorities. That support is available to international students.

**Figure 3: Distribution of financial support from the U of A to the PhD students.**



5. **Federal support** flows directly to students who are successful in Tri-Council competitions for the Vanier (\$50,000 for up to three years); the Canada Graduate Scholarship (\$35,000 for up to three years); or the next tier of multi-year SSHRC and NSERC awards (\$20,000 and \$21,000 respectively). As is well-known, the overall scale of the federal awards program, funding levels, and rules around eligibility have not been revised significantly for a long time.

## LESSONS FROM OTHER UNIVERSITIES

1. There is not necessarily an either-or trade-off between PhD enrolment and guaranteed minimum funding. One partial explanation may be that more PhD students help to generate more research funding, which in turn supports more students.
2. The MFG should not be expected to fully cover the cost of living for all PhD students. Such an objective is beyond the capacity of the University alone.
3. The MFG requires a strong institutional commitment. That includes transitional funding and a financial backstop.
4. Regular data collection and periodic review of the minimum guarantee is crucial to safeguard it against cost-of-living increases. To the extent it is possible, methodology for data collection should remain constant in order to be accessible and verifiable, and to enable reliable comparisons year over year. Admission of PhD students in a way that allows sustainable guaranteed funding will necessitate that programs have access to “real time” funding data to enable decisions.
5. Likewise, regular University-wide and program-level review of the impacts of MFG is necessary in order to identify and offset unintended consequences. Some universities reported that smaller departments may have challenges in their ability to offer grad courses if critical mass is lost. Others reported that guaranteed funding for PhD students only might cause departments to meet those commitments at the expense of Master’s students, shrinking a good recruiting pool for doctoral students.

## PART 2: OPERATING STANDARD

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of a four-year minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for PhD students is to provide stable funding in order to support the recruitment of exceptional and diverse students, enable them to give primary attention to their doctoral studies, and recognize the valuable contributions they make to the research and learning environment of the University.

### 2. Scope

This operating standard applies to graduate programs offering PhDs. Programs may elect to expand the scope of the guarantee – for example, to DMus students – but only within the definition offered by the Canada Graduate Scholarship, which treats creative and performance-based outcomes as the equivalent of research.<sup>5</sup> Otherwise, eligibility will not extend to professional doctoral programs beyond the PhD.

### 3. The Operating Standard

This operating standard recognizes the diversity of PhD programs, available funding streams, and student profiles across the University. It is intended to enable programs to meet a common minimum commitment in ways that are appropriate to them, but within the following parameters:

- a. The commitment to minimum guaranteed funding will be made realized formally through the offer of admission letters. Those letters will clearly state the financial terms of each offer and the expectations of students as set out below. GPS will issue offers of admission only when they conform to the terms of this Operating Standard. To that end, programs will be advised to seek approval for template offer letters in advance of annual recruitment. GPS will provide support to programs requiring assistance drafting offer letters that meet the operating standard.
- b. The amount of funding guaranteed to a student at the time of admission shall be set initially at not less than \$25,000 per annum for four years, or not less than \$100,000 over the same time period. Within that total amount, programs may propose an alternative

---

<sup>5</sup> “An eligible doctoral program must include a significant research component that leads to the completion of a thesis, major research project, dissertation, scholarly publication, performance, recital and/or exhibit that is merit/expert-reviewed at the institutional level as a requirement for completion of the program.” Government of Canada, “Canada Graduate Scholarships – Doctoral,” at [https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/CGSD-BESCD\\_eng.asp](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/CGSD-BESCD_eng.asp).

distribution across four years – for example, they may choose to “front-load” their funding in years 1-2 – in order to meet recruitment challenges in particular fields. In no case, however, should the amount of funding fall below \$25,000 in either years 1 or 2.

c. The minimum funding guaranteed through this operating standard, and any adjustment that is made to the minimum will be applied to all registered, full-time Y1-Y4 students.

d. Programs will meet their funding commitment through any combination of external and internal scholarships, graduate teaching or research assistantships, graduate research assistant fellowships, University-organized internships, and other available funding, including GRA or GTA opportunities elsewhere in the University. The value of external scholarships may be counted towards minimum funding, and must be disclosed by the student.

e. Within the general principle that students who are successful in securing external awards should realize a reasonable net benefit for their efforts, programs have the latitude to set their own rules with respect to the effect of external funding and, in particular, to redistribute funded opportunities within their control (e.g., GTAs, GRAs) to increase the support available for other students.

f. Sponsored students – that is, international students who are fully or partially funded by their governments or other external agencies – may be admitted without an additional funding guarantee, so long as the amount of their sponsorship remains equal to or greater than the minimum set out in this document for the first four years of their studies. At the same time, they should not be excluded from remunerated activities, such as a teaching assistantship, that could be considered part of their overall doctoral training.

g. Funding from a First Nations, Metis or Inuit organization – local, regional, or national – will not be treated as external sponsorship under this Operating Standard. Doctoral students who receive such funding will remain eligible for all forms of financial support at least to the level of the four-year minimum guarantee.

h. Doctoral students will meet a set of expectations to remain eligible for guaranteed funding:

(i) Students must be registered with full-time status, with the exception of Exceptional Leaves, in which case funding is suspended and the time of the leave does not count towards the years of guaranteed funding. Programs may, but are not obligated to, extend the same consideration to students on other approved leaves.

(ii) Students in their second and subsequent years must maintain satisfactory academic standing and be making adequate progress in their program.

(iii) Students are obliged to apply for external and internal scholarships at the direction of their program, and will be actively supported in doing so. This expectation is considered part of students' professional and academic development.

(iv) Students who are assigned GRA or GTA responsibilities must fulfill those employment responsibilities. If they are unavailable, unwilling, or unable to fulfill these responsibilities, their funding may be reduced accordingly and in keeping with the Graduate Student Assistantship Collective Agreement.

(v) When students receive GRAF funding that is paid from a faculty member's research grant, they must make adequate progress in research and contribute to the collective research effort. Where students do not meet this expectation, the assessment of research progress should follow procedures set out in the Calendar. Funding should be maintained until a student has been required to withdraw by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

i. Working professionals who will continue to be employed in Canada while they are PhD students (with the possible exception of a leave of absence in their first year of registration), and who therefore will not be available for GTA, GRA, or other assignments that normally constitute part of a program's funding support, may elect either to decline minimum guaranteed funding altogether or to receive it only in their first year of registration, providing that they are otherwise eligible under this Operating Standard. In programs for which this is relevant, the offer letter will include a checkbox to enable students to decline minimum guaranteed funding, or to do so after Y1. When a student declines minimum guaranteed funding, that decision can only be reversed by consent of the program unit.

j. In special circumstances, but only with the approval of the Dean, GPS, a program may recommend that a student be admitted on a self-funded basis. That exceptional approval must be sought prior to the issuance of an offer letter and be stated in that letter.

#### **4. Oversight**

The Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies retains administrative oversight of the Operating Standard. That includes responsibilities to:

- issue offer letters;
- disburse any University operating funds made available in support of this commitment;



- ensure compliance, monitor impacts and unintended consequences;
- support the development of data systems to make current-year data available to academic program units to assist in administering minimum guaranteed funding.

GPS retains the authority to withhold and request revision of offers of admission that do not meet the terms of this Operating Standard.

Graduate programs and their respective Departments/Faculties – not individuals PIs – retain final financial responsibility for the commitments made to students under this Operating Standard.

### **5. Review and Revision**

The Operating Standard, including the amount of the minimum funding commitment, may be amended at any time by vote of GPS Council. The Dean of GPS is responsible for ensuring that a review of the Operating Standard is conducted at least every three years, and for proposing a mechanism for such a review to GPS Council for its approval. The terms of any review should include unintended or unanticipated consequences of the minimum funding guarantee.

## PART 3: IMPLEMENTATION

### 1. Governance

The proposal for Minimum Guaranteed Funding will be presented to GPS Council for approval in Winter Term 2024. The University has determined that the final decision can be made by Council.

### 2. Effective date

Minimum Guaranteed Funding will take full effect for Fall 2025 registrations. In the interim, programs are encouraged to review funding commitments for current PhD students and those they will admit in any term prior to Fall 2025 in light of the commitments set out in this Operating Standard and additional resources that will be made available for 2024-25 to support early implementation.

### 3. Applicability

Given the lead-time, this commitment should apply to all eligible PhD students, Y1-Y4, by Fall 2025. Programs should not reduce support to current graduate students in order to meet their MFG commitments to new students. That said, GPS is willing to show flexibility and work with individual programs to ensure a successful transition to this Operating Standard.

### 4. Funding

In support of this Operating Standard, GPS will make additional and on-going funds available through the mechanism of what are now called recruitment awards.\* Specifically:

- (a) Recruitment awards will be renamed "**University of Alberta Graduate Student Support Awards (GSSAs)**" and programs will be able to use those award units as they see fit, not only for recruitment, to meet their commitments to students.
- (b) The existing 500 units will be allocated by the current formula.
- (c) GPS will make available a supplementary allocation of funding units through new commitments that will be distributed in the same manner. This funding will be made available and distributed on the basis of criteria to be developed, though part of the purpose will be to address identified funding gaps, balance across the Tri-Council sectors, encourage an EDI lens on admissions, and ensure that additional funding is available to international students.

A portion of the supplementary units will be made available as early as Fall 2024 but only for programs that have implemented interim measures towards this Operating Standard – and only if the Operating Standard is approved by GPS Council no later than April 30, 2024.

### **5. Data**

The administration of minimum guaranteed funding requires that comprehensive, current-year data be accessible at the program level as soon as possible, but at the latest by Fall 2025.

### **6. Tuition relief or tuition awards**

Between now and the setting of tuition for Fall 2025, further consideration will be given to (a) reducing international PhD tuition or returning a significant portion of the amount over and above domestic tuition – say, \$3,000 – as an award; and (b) reducing all tuition beginning in the first registered term after successful completion of the candidacy exam.

### **7. Master's Support**

In implementing this commitment, the University is aware that it must also prepare to implement minimum guaranteed funding for thesis-based Master's students. The tentative date is Fall 2026, subject to approval by GPS Council. The rationale is the same as that stated in the background document: competitive recruitment, an obligation to students, and a recognition of their contribution to the University's research and teaching mission. Masters-level MFG will follow the principles set in the Operating Standard. The initial amount – for one year – will be part of the motion for Council approval.

## **Appendix A: Implementation Working Group: Minimum Funding Guarantee Draft Terms of Reference**

### **Purpose**

The Working Group is established to advance the University's commitment to implement an ambitious minimum funding guarantee (MFG), beginning with PhD students, and to do so in a way that is practical, flexible, sustainable, equitable, and expandable for diverse graduate programs.

### **Terms of Reference**

Since December 2022, when the Interim Provost and Vice-President (Academic) renewed the University's commitment to establish MFG, the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies has engaged in extensive consultations and led in the development a draft Operating Standard with supporting analysis. That draft was presented in June 2023 to Deans' Council and the Provost's Advisory Council of Chairs. It has also been shared with leadership of the Graduate Students Association. In each case, the draft and the principle of MFG received general support; if anything, the response was to be more ambitious for the sake of the University's competitive position and its obligations to graduate students – *if we can make it work financially.*

This Working Group is meant to take up the “how” of a minimum funding guarantee. The scope of its work can be framed in terms of two clusters of questions:

#### *Financial:*

- What is the right starting minimum – one that takes into account the realities of our institutional situation but also the need to visibly and meaningfully invest in graduate students and programs?
- How does a minimum funding guarantee intersect with tuition, including international differentials? Is there a better combination of tuition and financial support? Should PhD tuition, for example, be reduced after candidacy, as it once was?
- How do we also plan to extend the minimum guarantee at some level to thesis-based masters students (rather than reduce support to those students to meet commitments to PhD students)?

*Data:*

- What sort of accessible, current-year data can we generate to make a minimum funding guarantee transparent, sustainable, and simple to administer and monitor?

**Timeline**

In order to ensure that MFG is in place for recruitment for Fall Term 2024, the model should be ready to implement approximately by November 1, 2023.

**Composition**

- Adam Gaudry, Vice-Dean, Faculty of Native Studies
- Amy Gao, Director, Strategic Analysis, Performance, Analytics and Institutional Research (PAIR)\*
- Cagri Ayranci, Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (Faculty of Engineering)
- Deborah Williams, Associate Vice-President, Institutional Reporting, and CAO, PAIR\*
- Greta Cummings, Dean, Faculty of Nursing
- Gregory Funk, Chair, Department of Physiology; former Associate Dean/Graduate, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry
- Melissa Padfield, Deputy Provost, Students and Enrolment (ex officio)
- Peter Schiavone, Associate Dean/Graduate, Faculty of Engineering
- Roger Epp, Interim Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (Faculty of Arts), Convenor
- Tracy Raivio, Associate Dean/Education, College of Natural and Applied Science (Faculty of Science)
- Victoria Ruetalo, Chair, Department of Modern Languages, Faculty of Arts

The Working Group will engage other portfolios and staff resources as need arises.

Updated: 10 Jan 2024

**Shared with:**

- Minimum Funding Implementation Group (1/10/24)
- Provost's office (1/11/24)
- GPS Council (1/11/24, in preparation for 1/17/24 meeting)
- Chairs Council (1/12/24, in preparation for 1/16/24 meeting)
- GSA Council (1/22/24)

## **PhD Student Minimum Funding Guarantee Proposal - Briefing Note**

This briefing note summarizes the proposal to guarantee funding for all PhD students at the University of Alberta. Adoption of the recommended operating standard will signal a commitment by our community to provide basic cost of living to support doctoral students; to prioritize accessibility, equity, inclusivity and diversity; and to be purposeful in acknowledging the role of PhD students in our research, education and engagement missions.

### **RATIONALE**

The need for increased financial support for graduate students is urgent and [widely acknowledged across Canada](#). At the University of Alberta, we know from the [Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey](#) (CGPSS) and [data collected by the Graduate Students Association](#) (GSA) that financial support is a major stressor for graduate students and that many of them access the campus food bank on a regular basis to feed themselves and their families. [Many reports](#) urging increased funding of graduate scholarships and research grants by Tri-Council agencies have been in the news recently. Beyond the most fundamental priority of basic need, implementing guaranteed funding is necessary for the UofA to remain a competitive destination for graduate students – who are integral in driving our research, education, and engagement. Amongst the U15, we lag in our commitment to guaranteeing minimum funding to thesis based graduate students. Institutionally, enrolment of PhD students has remained relatively flat at UofA over a 10 year period; implementing guaranteed funding will be an important step in growing our research capacity and enrolment.

### **A UofA OPERATING STANDARD**

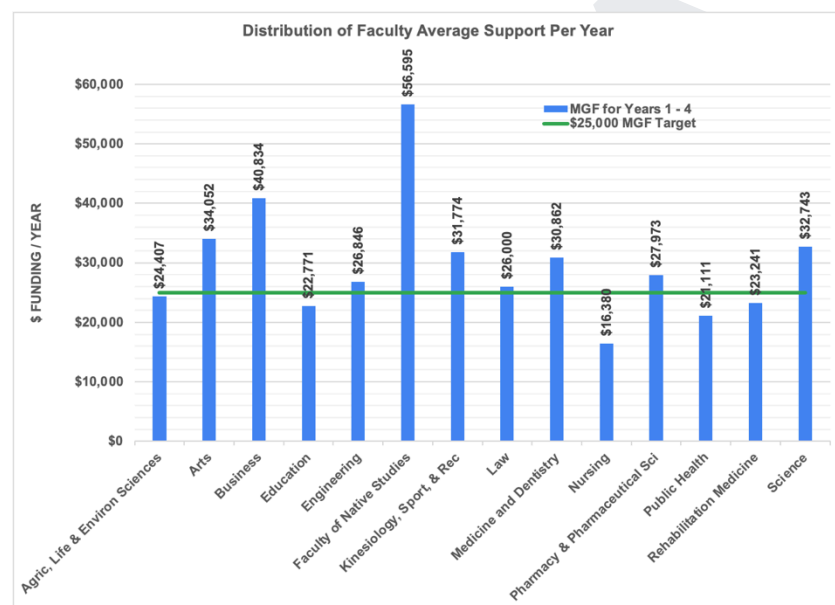
***The primary goal of the proposed operational change summarized here is to guarantee a minimum annual stipend of \$25,000 to all doctoral students in years one through four of their programs at the University of Alberta.*** We propose to operationalize this guarantee via the simple mechanism of the offer letter issued upon admission. Through adoption of an ***Operating Standard*** (appendix A) that

spells out the financial commitment to the student, programs will have flexibility to individualize the ways in which they meet the minimum guarantee. This mechanism recognizes that graduate student support is achieved through many and varied funding sources that necessitate partnerships between students, supervisors, the UofA, provincial and federal governments, and scholarships and awards providers. Recognition of this collaboration by all partners will be fundamental to the creation of a more inclusive funding landscape for graduate students at UofA. The **Operating Standard** (appendix A) describes how programs can work within these partnerships to meet the minimum guaranteed funding commitment.

## IMPLEMENTATION

As the institutional unit that administers graduate student education at UofA, implementation of the **Operating Standard** will be supported through commitments by GPS to:

- (i) adapt existing, and contribute new, funding across programs to facilitate implementation;
- (ii) monitor implementation as it proceeds, to facilitate iterative improvements in how guaranteed funding is operationalized; and



- (iii) provide data-informed strategic supports for programs

Campus-wide analysis of graduate student funding indicates that many units already meet the bar of \$25,000/year for PhD students in years one to four, while others are not far behind. In order to support the primary financial goal of this initiative, GPS will take a two-pronged approach. In the first, we will broaden the terms supporting the recruitment funds

that are already allocated to programs. The new terms will enable the use of recruitment funds (to be renamed **Graduate Student Support Awards**) in support of meeting the minimum funding guarantee. In addition, GPS will make available additional funds for the 2024/25 year to support early adoption of minimum guaranteed funding and further implementation funds in the 2025/26 academic year when minimum funding will be mandated across campus. In the first year this implementation funding will be administered through the familiar mechanism currently used to allocate the recruitment funds. Over the course of 2024/25, the existing GPS Minimum Guaranteed Funding Implementation Working Group (appendix B) will be continued and expanded to develop on-going principles and process for the allocation of institutional support for guaranteed funding in 2025/26 and beyond. This group, in consultation with the GPS Graduate Leadership Advisory Committee, will also monitor

implementation of minimum guaranteed funding across campus in real time, and make recommendations for iterative improvements to the process. Lastly, GPS will also support implementation of minimum guaranteed funding through continued collaboration with PAIR to develop graduate student funding data dashboards that can be strategically used by programs, faculties and colleges to support their admissions and enrolment goals.

Guaranteeing funding to our doctoral students is a first step towards a collaborative commitment by the UofA community to support the graduate students and junior colleagues that are integral parts of the world-changing research, education and engagement we strive towards. The intent of this initial operational and administrative change is to ensure ALL doctoral students are receiving support that can be built on. And yet, even as we consider this target, it is recognized that more work is needed immediately to extend guaranteed funding to thesis-based masters students, to increase the stipend proposed here for PhD students, to consider supports for postdoctoral researchers, and to balance the financial needs of course-based masters students.

DRAFT



## **Appendix A**

### **OPERATING STANDARD**

#### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of a four-year minimum funding guarantee (MFG) for PhD students is to provide stable funding in order to support the recruitment of exceptional and diverse students, enable them to give primary attention to their doctoral studies, and recognize the valuable contributions they make to the research and learning environment of the University.

#### **2. Scope**

This operating standard applies to graduate programs offering PhDs. Programs may elect to expand the scope of the guarantee – for example, to DMus students – but only within the definition offered by the Canada Graduate Scholarship, which treats creative and performance-based outcomes as the equivalent of research.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, eligibility will not extend to professional doctoral programs beyond the PhD.

#### **3. The Operating Standard**

This operating standard recognizes the diversity of PhD programs, available funding streams, and student profiles across the University. It is intended to enable programs to meet a common minimum commitment in ways that are appropriate to them, but within the following parameters:

- a. The commitment to minimum guaranteed funding will be realized formally through the offer of admission letters. Those letters will clearly state the financial terms of each offer and the expectations of students as set out below. GPS will issue offers of admission only when they conform to the terms of this Operating Standard. To that end, programs will be advised to seek approval for template offer letters in advance of annual recruitment. GPS will provide support to programs requiring assistance drafting offer letters that meet the operating standard.
- b. The amount of funding guaranteed to a student at the time of admission shall be set initially at not less than \$25,000 per annum for four years, or not less than \$100,000 over the same time period. Within that total amount, programs may propose an alternative distribution across four years – for example, they may choose to “front-load” their funding in years 1-2 – in order to meet recruitment challenges in particular fields. In no case, however, should the amount of funding fall below \$25,000 in either years 1 or 2.
- c. The minimum funding guaranteed through this operating standard, and any adjustment that is made to the minimum will be applied to all registered, full-time Y1-Y4 students.

---

<sup>1</sup> “An eligible doctoral program must include a significant research component that leads to the completion of a thesis, major research project, dissertation, scholarly publication, performance, recital and/or exhibit that is merit/expert-reviewed at the institutional level as a requirement for completion of the program.” Government of Canada, “Canada Graduate Scholarships – Doctoral,” at [https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/CGSD-BESCD\\_eng.asp](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/CGSD-BESCD_eng.asp).

- d. Programs will meet their funding commitment through any combination of external and internal scholarships, graduate teaching or research assistantships, graduate research assistant fellowships, University-organized internships, and other available funding, including GRA or GTA opportunities elsewhere in the University. The value of external scholarships may be counted towards minimum funding, and must be disclosed by the student.
- e. Within the general principle that students who are successful in securing external awards should realize a reasonable net benefit for their efforts, programs have the latitude to set their own rules with respect to the effect of external funding and, in particular, to redistribute funded opportunities within their control (e.g., GTAs, GRAs) to increase the support available for other students.
- f. Sponsored students – that is, international students who are fully or partially funded by their governments or other external agencies – may be admitted without an additional funding guarantee, so long as the amount of their sponsorship remains equal to or greater than the minimum set out in this document for the first four years of their studies. At the same time, they should not be excluded from remunerated activities, such as teaching and research assistantships, that could be considered part of their overall doctoral training.
- g. Funding from a First Nations, Metis or Inuit organization – local, regional, or national – will not be treated as external sponsorship under this Operating Standard. Doctoral students who receive such funding will remain eligible for all forms of financial support at least to the level of the four-year minimum guarantee.
- h. Doctoral students will meet a set of expectations to remain eligible for guaranteed funding:
- (i) Students must be registered with full-time status, with the exception of Exceptional Leaves, in which case funding is suspended and the time of the leave does not count towards the years of guaranteed funding. Programs may, but are not obligated to, extend the same consideration to students on other approved leaves.
  - (ii) Students in their second and subsequent years must maintain satisfactory academic standing and be making adequate progress in their program.
  - (iii) Students are obliged to apply for external and internal scholarships at the direction of their program, and will be actively supported in doing so. This expectation is considered part of students' professional and academic development.
  - (iv) Students who are assigned GRA or GTA responsibilities must fulfill those employment responsibilities. If they are unavailable, unwilling, or unable to fulfill these responsibilities, their funding may be reduced accordingly and in keeping with the Graduate Student Assistantship Collective Agreement.
  - (v) When students receive GRAF funding that is paid from a faculty member's research grant, they must make adequate progress in research and contribute to the collective research effort. Where students do not meet this expectation, the assessment of research progress should follow procedures set out in the University Calendar. Funding should be maintained

until a student has been required to withdraw by the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies.

i. Working professionals who will continue to be employed in Canada while they are PhD students (with the possible exception of a leave of absence in their first year of registration), and who therefore will not be available for GTA, GRA, or other assignments that normally constitute part of a program's funding support, may elect either to decline minimum guaranteed funding altogether or to receive it only in their first year of registration, providing that they are otherwise eligible under this Operating Standard. In programs for which this is relevant, the offer letter will include a checkbox to enable students to decline minimum guaranteed funding, or to do so after Y1. When a student declines minimum guaranteed funding, that decision can only be reversed by consent of the program unit.

j. In special circumstances, but only with the approval of the Dean, GPS, a program may recommend that a student be admitted on a self-funded basis. That exceptional approval must be sought prior to the issuance of an offer letter and be stated in that letter.

#### **4. Oversight**

The Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies retains administrative oversight of the Operating Standard. That includes responsibilities to:

- issue offer letters;
- disburse any University operating funds made available in support of this commitment;
- ensure compliance, monitor impacts and unintended consequences;
- support the development of data systems to make real-time data available to academic program units to assist in administering minimum guaranteed funding.

GPS retains the authority to withhold and request revision of offers of admission that do not meet the terms of this Operating Standard.

Graduate programs and their respective Departments/Faculties – not individuals PIs – retain final financial responsibility for the commitments made to students under this Operating Standard.

#### **5. Review and Revision**

The Operating Standard, including the amount of the minimum funding commitment, may be amended at any time by vote of GPS Council. The Dean of GPS is responsible for ensuring that a review of the Operating Standard is conducted at least every three years, and for proposing a mechanism for such a review to GPS Council for its approval. The terms of any review should include unintended or unanticipated consequences of the minimum funding guarantee.

## Appendix B

### MFG Implementation Working Group

#### **Purpose**

The Working Group is established to advance the University's commitment to implement a minimum funding guarantee (MFG), beginning with PhD students, and to do so in a way that is practical, flexible, sustainable, equitable, and expandable for diverse graduate programs.

#### **Terms of Reference**

Since December 2022, when the Interim Provost and Vice-President (Academic) renewed the University's commitment to establish MFG, the (then) Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research has engaged in extensive consultations and led in the development of a draft Operating Standard with supporting analysis. That draft was presented in June 2023 to Deans' Council and the Provost's Advisory Council of Chairs. It has also been shared with leadership of the Graduate Students Association. In each case, the draft and the principle of MFG received general support; if anything, the response was to be more ambitious for the sake of the University's competitive position and its obligations to graduate students – if we can make it work financially.

This Working Group is meant to take up the “how” of a minimum funding guarantee. The scope of its work can be framed in terms of two clusters of questions:

#### **Financial:**

What is the right starting minimum – one that takes into account the realities of our institutional situation but also the need to visibly and meaningfully invest in graduate students and programs?

How does a minimum funding guarantee intersect with tuition, including international differentials? Is there a better combination of tuition and financial support? Should PhD tuition, for example, be reduced after candidacy, as it once was?

How do we also plan to extend the minimum guarantee at some level to thesis-based masters students (rather than reduce support to those students to meet commitments to PhD students)?

#### **Data:**

What sort of accessible, current-year data can we generate to make a minimum funding guarantee transparent, sustainable, and simple to administer and monitor?

**Timeline:**

In order to ensure that MFG is in place for recruitment for Fall Term 2024, the model should be ready to implement approximately by November 1, 2023.

**Composition:**

Adam Gaudry, Vice-Dean, Faculty of Native Studies

Amy Gao, Director, Strategic Analysis, Performance, Analytics and Institutional Research (PAIR)\*

Cagri Ayranci, Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (Faculty of Engineering)

Deborah Williams, Associate Vice-President, Institutional Reporting, and CAO, PAIR\*

Greta Cummings, Dean, Faculty of Nursing

Gregory Funk, Chair, Department of Physiology; former Associate Dean/Graduate, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry

Peter Schiavone, Associate Dean/Graduate, Faculty of Engineering

Tracy Raivio, Vice-Provost and Dean, GPS (former Associate Dean/Education, College of Natural and Applied Science (Faculty of Science))

Victoria Ruetalo, Chair, Department of Modern Languages, Faculty of Arts

DRAFT

**President**  
**Report to GSA Council for the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
 From: Bishoi Aziz  
 Date: 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Council Colleagues,

I hope you all had the chance to enjoy the holiday season and to be able to start refreshed in the new year and not to let this harsh winter week ruin the fun. I am happy to update you on my work over the past month.

**Media campaign**

- Over the month of December, I have been active with a media campaign discussing the GSA findings in the financial situation assessment research. I interviewed with CBC Radio Canada, CHED Radio, and Edmonton Global News. I was keen on getting the graduate students' voices clear and loud and bring awareness to the community on our life experience.
- I received feedback from both students and university on how the campaign gained high publicity. I believe the GSA should focus on leveraging this venue to strengthen our overall negotiation power and to be able to achieve better accomplishments for our members especially on the financial aspect.

**Establishing a new elected student executive position to support indigenization**

- The board recently approved starting the work on establishing a new student executive position to advance the GSA commitment to Truth and Reconciliation (TRC). While everyone should be active with TRC work, it is the board's vision that TRC efforts in the GSA will only flourish if it is led by a dedicated indigenous leader.
- As we are currently working on restructuring the GSA operations, we were able to save significant funding for the stipend of the new position without the need to increase the membership fees, thus bringing more value to the dollar amount we collect from graduate students. In terms of the strategic building of the position, Tiffany Kung, GSA VP Student Life, and Benjamin Kucher, IGSA Co-President, co-lead the consultation process that aims to collect feedback from both students and university administration on the roles and the committees this new VP should be responsible for. We hope to be able to finalize the bylaw-draft of the new role by the end of April.

**Advancing work integrated learning**

- This year, we are working actively with the university administration to improve the work-integrated learning opportunities for graduate students. We are approaching this profile with a multifaceted approach. On the external front, Hamid Hassani, the GSA VP External and I were able to bring to the university's attention a \$500,000 grant that we advocated for the university to apply; an application that VP External helped to write its proposal with the FGPS team. If secured, this fund will be used to create a new award to fund expenses of graduate students to go on experiential learning opportunities.
- From the VP Student Services aspect, Haseeb and I are active with the different universities offices to work on establishing a graduate co-op program to simplify the ability of international students to obtain work permits while studying to have better chances of landing internship opportunities.

**Mental health and services satisfaction survey**

- As we committed to the council to ensure higher engagement with graduate students and follow data-supported advocacy, we are launching our second big survey to assess two aspects, mental health status of graduate students, and the level of awareness, usage, and satisfaction of graduate students with both university and GSA services. We plan to send the survey to students by the end of January and to have the analysis published before the term of the current board ends. Data from this survey will help us

## 12.1

design our advocacy plan in the mental health and services front. We plan to send a dedicated survey to specifically assess our health and dental plan usefulness and students preferences for coverage to help guide our negotiation with insurance providers and brokers.

*I hope you all stay warm in this cold weather. Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023 to 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board and management meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.*

11 Dec	Meeting with M Padfield, Provost & Vice-President Academic
12 Dec	Interview with Radio Canada (MSOL Survey Report)
12 Dec	VPRI/GSA/UASU Meeting
13 Dec	Live Interview with CHED Radio (MSOL Survey Report)
14 Dec	Interview with Edmonton Journal (MSOL Survey Report)
15 Dec	Meeting with A Sharman, VP Facilities & Operations
15 Dec	ab-GPAC Board Meeting
15 Dec	Meeting with J Ames and B Kucher (IGSA)
15 Dec	AR Fee Off Campus Student Rates Meeting
16 Dec	In Person Interview with Global Edmonton (MSOL Survey Report)
19 Dec	Meeting with VP Academic and T Raivio, Vice-Provost and Dean, FGPS
3 Jan	SGBV RC MNIF Interim Meeting
5 Jan	Graduate Co-Op Program Meeting
5 Jan	ab-GPAC Board Meeting
5 Jan	FGSR and IGSA Meeting
8 Jan	Meeting with VP Student Life and B Kucher (IGSA)
9 Jan	MNIF Joint Oversight Committee Meeting #4
9 Jan	GSA and Dos Monthly Meeting
9 Jan	EDIC Winter Meeting
10 Jan	GFC APC Academic Planning Committee Meeting
12 Jan	Graduate Tuition Discussion
12 Jan	Discover Governance: Meet the Executives
15 Jan	IPR/GSA/IGSA Bi-Monthly Meeting
16 Jan	Meeting with VP Academic and T Raivio, Vice-Provost and Dean, FGPS
16 Jan	Meeting with J Smith, Chief of Staff - President's Office
18 Jan	Meeting with Bill Flanagan, UofA President and Vice-Chancellor
18 Jan	Meeting with M Padfield and V Yiu
19 Jan	Tuition Budget Advisory Committee Meeting #4
19 Jan	Tuition Townhall #2

**2023-2024 Vice-President Academic  
Report to GSA Council for 22 January 2023**

To: GSA Council  
From: Rija Kamran  
Date: 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Dear Council Colleagues,

Happy New Year. I hope you have had a wonderful start to this year. I have shared some highlights from the work I have been involved in since the last council meeting.

**11 December 2023-Graduate Program Support Team**

I attended the FGSR GPST meeting. We discussed some items going forward to GFC for Approval, this included some course changes in Arts, Education, FoMD, Nursing, and Science and minor program changes in science. The Faculty of Business presented the proposal for a new Master's program in Management Analytics, they laid out the program structure, collaborations, and governance process for the approval of this new program.

**12 December 2023-VPRI/GSA/UASU Meeting**

GSA President B. Aziz and I along with our counterparts from UASU met the VPRI, Dr. Aminah Robinson Fayek. We had a discussion on the role GSA and SU can play in successful implementation of the New strategic plan for research, forward with purpose. We touched up on increasing accessibility to graduate programs, undergraduate research initiatives and role of central units, i.e. Colleges in increasing visibility and availability of research and funding opportunities.

**19 December 2023- Meeting with GSA President and T Raivio, Vice-Provost and Dean, FGPS**

I met Dr. T Raviio, Dean and Vice-Provost of FGPS. We continued our discussion on financial strains on graduate students resulting from the increasing cost of living and inflation. We briefly discussed the academic flexibility during the crisis and the plans the University has around that. We discussed the PhD guaranteed minimum funding proposal. We continue to emphasise the importance of extensive consultation with the graduate students before the items go for approval to the FGSR council.

**5 January 2024- UAI Infomart: GSA Booth**

Along with other DEOs, I was at the UAI Infomart for new international students. We had a great engagement from new students and were able to help them navigate some of the initial mysteries of grad school.

**10 January 2024-2024 FoTL Steering Committee Meeting**

I attended the kick-off meeting for the Festival of Teaching and Learning Steering committee. We discussed potential date options, format for the festival, theme for this year and potential keynote speakers. We also had a discussion on having hands-on workshops for the new LMS that will come into effect. We are looking at days early in March for this event, I will keep the council posted as the format and dates are finalized.

**17 January 2024-Meeting with GSA President and T Raivio, Vice-Provost and Dean, FGPS**

Along with GSA President B. Aziz, I met with Dr. T Raviio, Dean and Vice-Provost of FGPS. We brought forward our concerns about the lack of involvement and consultation with graduate students around the implementation plan for the PhD minimum guaranteed funding. We have emphasized the need for a more comprehensive consultation with graduate students and looking at potentially increasing the amount of guarantee.

Thank you for your engagement. Please feel free to reach out to me at [gsavpaca@ualberta.ca](mailto:gsavpaca@ualberta.ca) if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Thank you.



**Rija Kamran**, Vice-President Academic 2023-24

**2023-2024 GSA VP Academic's Meetings Attended (Rija)**

*Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 11 December 2023 to 19 January 2024 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.*

11 Dec	Graduate Program Support Team Meeting
11 Dec	LMS of the Future Advisory Committee Meeting
12 Dec	VPRI/GSA/UASU Meeting
15 Dec	AR Fee Off Campus Student Rates Meeting
15 Dec	Meeting with P Bayat, Library and Museum - Access Services
19 Dec	Meeting with GSA President and T Raivio, Vice-Provost and Dean, FGPS
19 Dec	Retirement Tea for Office of the Provost Retirees
21 Dec	SU & GSA with Ravina Sanghera (DoS) and Tracy Raivio (FGSR)
5 Jan	UAI Informart: GSA Booth
9 Jan	MNIF Joint Oversight Committee Meeting #4
10 Jan	2024 FoTL Steering Committee Meeting
11 Jan	GFC Programs Committee Meeting
12 Jan	Discover Governance: Meet the Executives
15 Jan	GFC Executive Committee Meeting
16 Jan	Meeting with GSA President and T Raivio, Vice-Provost and Dean, FGPS
19 Jan	Tuition Budget Advisory Committee Meeting #4
19 Jan	Tuition Townhall #2

**2024-2025 Vice-President External  
Report to GSA Council for the 22 January 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Hamid Hassani  
Date: Jan 19, 2024

Dear Council Members,

As the Vice President External of the GSA, I am pleased to reach out with a report filled with positive updates and exciting developments from our recent endeavors.

Post-Secondary Education Task Force Meeting (13 Dec, 20 Dec ,10 Jan):

The Post-Secondary Education Task Force met on December 13th, 20th, 2023, and January 10th, 2024, to discuss various pressing issues. The December 20th meeting was cancelled as members went on holiday. The January 10th meeting welcomed a new member, Shauna Philipchuk, from MacEwen. A significant topic of discussion, led by Tristan, revolved around the cancellation of university events supporting Palestine due to security concerns. These events, focusing on Palestinian issues, were initially planned but postponed, with potential rescheduling for either January 19th or 24th, pending final university approval. Another critical issue raised was regarding the Sexual Assault Center, where a staff member was recently terminated. In addressing the issue of antisemitism, speakers from the Winnipeg Jewish community were mentioned, and there was a proposal to involve speakers from International Government Bodies, although this plan is still under consideration. The meeting also highlighted an interesting talk on the International Code of Justice, which is available for viewing on YouTube. Additionally, there was a significant update from PIA (Public Interest Alberta), with active involvement from an advocate named Brad. This update included discussions with the mayor and council about human rights threats. Lastly, it was noted that Edmonton teachers are going on strike, emphasizing that the issue at hand is not related to salary concerns.

Overall, the meetings covered a broad spectrum of topics, ranging from academic freedom, human rights, antisemitism, and public advocacy. The discussions reflect the dynamic and complex nature of the issues at hand, underscoring the need for ongoing attention and action from the task force.

ab-GPAC Board Meeting (Dec 15, Jan 5)

The ab-GPAC Board convened on December 15th and reconvened on January 5th to undertake a series of critical discussions pivotal to the organization's function and its strategic approach moving forward.

On December 15th, the board meticulously reviewed the current budget allocations, assessing the financial health of the organization and ensuring that funds were being utilized efficiently towards our core mission. The conversation was thorough, with an emphasis on accountability and foresight into the upcoming fiscal challenges and opportunities.

Subsequently, on January 5th, the board shifted focus to internal structure and effectiveness, particularly concerning our Executive Director (ED). Acknowledging the central role the ED plays in orchestrating our initiatives, the board engaged in a candid and constructive dialogue about areas of improvement. Moreover, the January session involved strategizing our advocacy efforts with the municipal government. Recognizing the significant impact that local governance has on our operations, the board deliberated on methods to strengthen our advocacy. The approach was multi-faceted, contemplating not only the direct engagement with municipal officials but also how to amplify our voice to ensure that the interests and concerns of our constituency are heard and acted upon.

#### AB Student Post-Secondary Council (Jan 4)

This meeting was canceled in advance and did not take place.

#### Emergency Bursary Appeal Hearing (Jan 8)

During the recent convening of the Emergency Bursary Appeal Hearing, our committee undertook a detailed review of cases where emergency bursary applications were denied. The meeting, which was held in a confidential setting, focused on a case-by-case analysis to understand the reasons behind the rejections. A critical issue identified was the lack of clarity in the conditions for emergency bursary eligibility as outlined on our official website. This has led to confusion among applicants, especially in cases where students applied for emergency bursaries due to the death of grandparents. These applications were rejected on the basis that the emergency bursary is not extended to instances involving individuals other than immediate parents. The committee engaged in constructive discussions, particularly with Arseniy and Zain, regarding the need for clearer documentation. The discussions highlighted the cultural sensitivities and different familial structures that must be taken into account when defining what constitutes an 'emergency' for the bursary.

There is a consensus that the conditions for the emergency bursaries need to be better communicated to accurately reflect the diverse backgrounds and needs of our student body. Moving forward, the committee is committed to revising the guidelines and ensuring that they are comprehensive and culturally sensitive to prevent such misunderstandings in the future.

#### UAI Infomart: GSA Booth (Jan 5)

The Graduate Students' Association (GSA) hosted a successful booth at the UAI Infomart event on January 5, which was held at the Telus Center. The event was specifically targeted towards incoming graduate students, providing them with an opportunity to learn about the resources and services offered by the GSA. As a representative of the GSA, I was present at our table to disseminate information about the various support services available to graduate students. Our objective was to ensure that the new students were well-informed and felt supported by the GSA from the outset of their academic journey. During the event, we engaged in constructive conversations with several new graduate students. A recurring topic of discussion was their contracts with academic supervisors. These dialogues were insightful, highlighting the students' needs and concerns regarding their academic commitments and responsibilities. The interactions at the booth were not only an opportunity to share information but also to understand the expectations and apprehensions of the new students. The feedback and concerns raised will be invaluable in enhancing the GSA's offerings and in making sure that our services are attuned to the students' needs.

#### GALD 2023 Winter Cohort (Jan 9)

I am pleased to report on an exceptionally fruitful meeting I conducted on behalf of the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) during the GALD 2023 Winter Cohort on January 9. It was an honor to present to an international audience from over 50 institutions, universities, and colleges from China, consisting of researchers and educators visiting for a short term. This engagement was particularly significant to me, marking it as one of the best meetings I have had at the GSA. The opportunity to elucidate the structure, objectives, and services of the GSA to a group of distinguished attendees was a highlight of my involvement with the association. During the presentation, the audience, comprised of Chinese researchers and teachers, demonstrated a robust curiosity through their questions about the GSA's interactions with departmental representatives. I endeavored to clarify these connections, detailing the nature of our affiliations and the importance of these relationships in our operations. Furthermore, I fielded questions regarding our electoral processes and the extent of student participation, which I believe reflects the democratic spirit that we embody at the GSA. My presentation on external advocacy led to an interactive discussion about the critical challenges faced by students, namely the affordability of education and housing. I addressed these concerns, outlining the efforts and initiatives we have undertaken to tackle these issues. The meeting was not only an occasion for me to represent the GSA but also a platform for me to engage with global perspectives on graduate student life and to understand the shared challenges we face in

higher education. It was an enriching experience that I believe will enhance the GSA's vision and its advocacy for the graduate student body.

#### Discover Governance: Meet the Executives (Jan 12)

On January 12, the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) hosted the "Discover Governance: Meet the Executives" event. The session was designed to familiarize potential candidates with the roles and responsibilities of the different Vice-President (VP) positions within the GSA. I took the initiative to outline the portfolio of each VP role, detailing the specific duties, expectations, and the impact each position holds within the GSA and the wider student community. This was an important preparatory step for students interested in running for office in the upcoming term. The event aimed to provide clarity on the function and significance of each executive position, thus empowering students with the knowledge required to make informed decisions about their candidacy. It was also an opportunity for prospective candidates to ask questions and engage with current executives, gaining first-hand insights into the governance structure and the electoral process.

---

This report encapsulates the essence of both meetings, highlighting the board's commitment to financial stewardship, internal development, and robust advocacy, all of which are vital for the ab-GPAC's success and impact.

*Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 13 December and 17 January 2024 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.*

13 Dec	Post-Secondary Education Task Force Meeting
15 Dec	ab-GPAC Board Meeting
20 Dec	Post-Secondary Education Task Force Meeting
4 Jan	AB Student Post-Secondary Council
5 Jan	ab-GPAC Board Meeting
5 Jan	UAI Infomart: GSA Booth
8 Jan	Emergency Bursary Appeal Hearing
9 Jan	GALD 2023 Winter Cohort
10 Jan	Post-Secondary Education Task Force Meeting
12 Jan	Discover Governance: Meet the Executives

**GSA Awards Selection Committee  
Report to GSA Council for the 22 January 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Hamid Hassani  
Date: 18 January 2024

Dear GSA Council Colleagues,

The GSA Awards Selection Committee (GSA ASC) met on 4 January 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to go over the award timeline, training, and adjudication process.

The committee will meet again in early February to finalize the award recipients.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,  
Hamid Hassani, Vice-President External and Chair of the GSA ASC

**2023-2024 Associate Vice-President Labour  
Report to GSA Council for Jan 2024**

To: GSA Council  
From: Muneeb Masood Raja  
Date: 19 Jan 2024

Dear Council Colleagues,

I hope you are all staying warm and had a great start to the year. I have attended several meetings between 11 Dec 2023 and 20 Jan 2024 which are listed in the table below. The details of these meetings are stated below.

**Labour Relations Committee (LRC) Meeting (12 Dec):**

The LRC met on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec to review the bargaining survey from the previous collective bargaining along with the University of Calgary GSA union current bargaining survey, and our GTA and GRAF surveys. Following extensive discussion and consideration, I have created the draft survey currently under review by the LRC. The comments and feedback from the members will be incorporated and the final version will be presented to the LRC for approval in our next meeting later this month. The survey will be made public to the academically employed graduate students (AEGSs) during late January or early February.

On a side note, I am delighted to announce that the LRC has appointed eight faculty stewards during Fall 2023. The LRC is also currently reviewing three applications for the position of faculty steward. Besides that, the LRC members were requested to provide feedback for the people strategy steering committee which has been forwarded to the committee for consideration.

**Solidarity Group Meeting (14 Dec):**

The group comprises members from the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of Lethbridge aiming to advocate for academic issues faced by students and postdocs in Alberta. Our main objective is identifying potential issues and engaging in advocacy efforts with the provincial government.

I chaired this meeting during which we shortlisted two names for the group and reviewed the vision, mission, and values of the group. Apart from major restructuring, the group is also working on a letter to address concerns related to tuition which will be sent to the provincial government.

**Labour Session with Civil and Environmental Engineering (17 Jan):**

CEEGSA extended an invitation for me to deliver a talk focusing on key labour issues, aimed at educating graduate students about their rights in their roles as graduate student workers. This interactive session will include getting feedback from academically employed graduate students (AEGSs) to better understand and address potential labour issues within their respective departments.

I have taken another initiative where I have reached out to different graduate student groups offering to give labour-related talks to their respective groups. These sessions can be tailored to the needs of a specific department/group. Immediately after reaching out, I was invited by the History, Classics, and Religion GSA to participate in their monthly meeting on Jan 18. The agenda for the session includes explaining the rights of AEGSs and resolving any labour challenges they might be encountering.

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

Thank you,  
Muneeb Masood Raja, Associate Vice-President Labour 2023-2024

## 15.1

*Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 20 Nov and 15 Dec 2023 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.*

11 Dec	Meeting with a student (Confidential)
12 Dec	LRC Meeting
14 Dec	Solidarity Group Meeting
21 Dec	Lunch before the Winter Break: Provost, SU and GSA
5 Jan	UofA GSA Labour Check-In
10 Jan	Meeting with a student (Confidential)
12 Jan	UofA GSA Labour Check-In
12 Jan	Discover Governance: Meet the Executives
16 Jan	Winter Warm Up
16 Jan	People Strategy Committee Meeting
17 Jan	Labour Session with Civil and Environmental Engineering GSA
18 Jan	Labour Session with History, Classics, and Religion GSA
19 Jan	UofA GSA Labour Check-In
19 Jan	Tuition Townhall #2

**GSA Labour Relations Committee  
Report to GSA Council for the 22 January 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Muneeb Masood Raja  
Date: 19 January 2024

Dear GSA Council Colleagues,

The GSA Labour Relations Committee (GSA LRC) met on 23 November 2023 and 12 December 2023.

**23 November 2023**

At this meeting, the committee reviewed 4 applications for the Bargaining Team. It was recommended that Corbin Cammidge and Seyedeh Sara Jalili Shani sit on the team due to their active involvement in labour issues and bringing forward diverse perspectives. and voting members approved these names.

The Faculty and Staff Engagement Survey was discussed. The results do not bode well for the university as many respondents expressed a lack of confidence in leadership. The Bargaining Team can use this in their negotiations with the university this year.

An item was presented on graduate student challenges. The report highlighted the need for better working conditions and compensation, citing low wages and a lack of a fair compensation structure as major concerns. There are discrepancies in work hours and compensation between different departments and it was suggested that the university should do more to address these issues. Another concern was Collective Agreement compliance. There is a lack of training, knowledge and awareness among supervisors/departments about the CA. In addition, GRAF students do not have an employment relationship or defined working hours.

The last bargaining survey was presented for feedback. Some suggestions were made such as using 5 or 7 point scales instead of multiple choice questions. Providing links to the CA is a good learning tool for students.

**12 December 2023**

The committee did more work on the bargaining survey which included reviewing the U of C's most recent survey and the U of A's again. Several suggestions were made to improve the quality of the next survey and it was noted that the survey should not be too long that students will not bother to fill it out.

The committee will meet again this month to finalize the bargaining mandate survey.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,  
Muneeb Masood Raja, Vice-President Labour and Chair of the GSA LRC



**2023-2024 Vice-President Student Services  
Report to GSA Council for 22 January 2024**

To: GSA Council  
From: Muhammad Haseeb Arshad  
Date: 19 January 2024

Dear Council Members,

I hope this report finds you with the best of health. For my meetings from 11<sup>th</sup> of December to 16<sup>th</sup> of January, I will use the following space to summarize some of the important ones.

- **Meeting with FGSP re: StudentCare (December 11th):**  
During the December 11th meeting with FGSP regarding StudentCare, discussions primarily focused on collaborative efforts to address issues related to student enrollment in their respective plans. While the details of the discussion remain confidential, a positive outcome of the meeting was the establishment of a future collaboration framework with FGSP. This collaboration aims to streamline the process of resolving enrollment-related issues and ensuring students receive the benefits they have paid for. One notable aspect is the establishment of a direct communication channel between Cindy and FGSP representatives, which promises quicker issue resolution. Additionally, the meeting emphasized the importance of identifying responsible parties in cases of improper job execution. This proactive approach is expected to contribute to a more efficient and effective resolution of StudentCare enrollment issues.
- **Meeting with K Friese, Dean of Students Administration (December 12th):**  
During the meeting held on December 12th with K Friese, the Dean of Students Administration, discussions centered around the preliminary outcomes from the student-focused groups organized by Pipikwan. In this meeting, I conveyed the concerns voiced by students, particularly the need for additional clinicians and dedicated spaces for wellness support. Moreover, the meeting delved into my ongoing efforts to initiate the Graduate Peer Support program. We explored how the DoS office could potentially provide funding support for this program. Kevin expressed interest in this initiative and requested that I draft a proposal outlining the Graduate Peer Support program's details. He intends to present this proposal to his team during their upcoming budget meetings in pursuit of funding opportunities.
- **SGBV RC MNIF Interim Meeting (January 3rd):**  
The SGBV RC MNIF Interim Meeting, organized by Michael, the Vice President of Student Life, featured the presence of Carrie, the Vice Provost for EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion). The primary agenda of the meeting was to discuss the purpose and ongoing support for the SGBV (Sexual and Gender-Based Violence) research coordinator role. Carrie, during the meeting, provided insights into the importance of the SGBV research coordinator role and the continued commitment to support it. A unanimous decision was reached among the attendees that this role should evolve into a more prominent leadership position, transitioning from its current research coordinator role. Furthermore, I conveyed to Carrie that it would be nice if the word was put out to general students that both the university and the student would continue to provide financial backing and support for this enhanced leadership role. This decision underscores the shared commitment to addressing SGBV and promoting a safer campus environment.
- **GSA Award Selection Committee Meeting (January 4th):**  
The GSA Award Selection Committee Meeting on January 4th primarily served as an orientation session for committee members. Cindy briefed us and provided a comprehensive overview of the committee's terms of reference and the specific responsibilities assigned to each committee member. This meeting served as an essential platform for committee members to gain a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the context of the GSA recognition awards adjudication. The attendees

expressed enthusiasm about their involvement in this significant undertaking, which involves evaluating outstanding profiles for GSA recognition awards.

- **Graduate Co-Op Program Meeting (January 5th):**

On January 5th, I called a meeting with Tracy and Beshoi to explore my concept of a Graduate Co-Op Program with multifaceted benefits. This proposed program has the potential to fulfill several objectives, including aiding the university in achieving its work-integrated learning plan and increasing UofA's appeal to international students.

One aspect that I highlighted was the potential reduction in pressure on Canadian academia, as students who engage in industrial internships during their graduate studies are more likely to secure industrial placements. This initiative also has the potential to expedite Permanent Residency (PR) applications for students, who can claim the 50 Express Entry points for Canadian work experience.

The discussions were marked by a positive outlook, and the intention is to further advance this initiative by advocating for its inclusion within the university's administrative committee. I am very excited about this program and already working on the creation of a working group to expedite the discussions around this idea by involving immigration folks from UAI as well.

- **Student Group Mental Health Network Meeting (January 8th):**

The Student Mental Health Network Group Meeting convened on January 8th with a comprehensive agenda. The group had discussions revolving around setting the date for the April meeting (April 8th) and scheduling the last meeting of the year (March 11th). Notably, a standing item for a 10-minute education moment was introduced, aimed at broadening the knowledge base of the group members.

During the discussion, several key points emerged. Resource distribution among groups was emphasized as essential, particularly because the participating groups are not service providers; they should guide individuals to appropriate mental health resources. The meeting underscored the significance of adopting a holistic approach to mental health support, recognizing that each group has its unique community and approach. There was a strong focus on safe spaces, with the intention of making them more organically integrated into the student experience.

The group discussed organizing a Mental Health fair, inspired by past MH carnivals, to showcase the distinct niches of each participating group. Additionally, there was a proposal to create a resource card featuring MH-focused groups, possibly in conjunction with the club's fair. Lastly, the notion of establishing an MH group focus space for informal support was discussed, with a strong emphasis on collaborative planning among the participating student groups.

As a standing item, we also shared insights from our respective student groups regarding the well-being of students. The meeting concluded with updates and information from various student groups regarding their activities and upcoming events.

- **Meeting with K Friese, Dean of Students Administration (January 9th):**

In a brief meeting on January 9th, Kevin provided an update on the hiring status of four new clinicians who will be joining UofA and commencing training next month. He also noted that the university has a plan to hire a total of eight clinicians by the end of September. I am beyond thrilled to share with you all that the writing services area on the second floor of SUB would accommodate these four clinicians and the writing services will move to the 4th floor. This has been one of the significant topics that I have advocated for to develop new spaces and hire more clinicians for mental health support.

Recognizing the significance of this development, I urged Kevin to ensure prompt communication of this information to students, as it directly addresses two major concerns voiced during student engagement discussions. Additionally, I shared my proposal for the Graduate Peer Support program with Kevin during this meeting, with hopes of engaging in further discussions regarding the budget allocation in the next meeting. This forthcoming discussion will offer more clarity on the Dean of Students' potential contribution to this valuable initiative.

- **GSA and DoS Monthly Meeting (January 9th):**

On January 9th, a monthly meeting was convened with Ravina, Dean of Students, including myself, Beshoi, and Tiffany. This meeting served as a platform to review the ongoing efforts and initiatives within our respective portfolios.

During the meeting, I provided updates on various projects and initiatives, including the Graduate Peer Support program and its funding requirements, the proposal for bidet sprayers in washrooms, the Graduate Co-Op Program, and the forthcoming implementation of the Wait Well service for the GSA front desk.

The meeting proved highly productive, and I expressed my intention to connect with relevant individuals on campus to expedite the progress of these initiatives. I would like to acknowledge that Ravina has played a pivotal role in facilitating these connections by utilizing her political capital, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the initiatives discussed during the meeting.

- **Discover Governance: Meet the Executives (January 12th):**

This meeting, organized by the Chair of the Nominating Committee of GSA, aimed to provide graduate students with an opportunity to interact with GSA executives and ask questions about their respective portfolios. The primary objective was to assist students who might be considering running for Directly Elected Officer (DEO) positions within GSA.

Despite a relatively low turnout for the meeting, it's crucial to emphasize the significance of such gatherings. These meetings offer students a valuable chance to engage with current executives, seek insights, and gain motivation from the experiences of the existing team. Encouraging constituents to attend these meetings is essential to prepare and inspire future GSA leaders who aspire to take on DEO roles.

These were the highlights of the meetings that I have attended up until the submission of this report. I look forward to working with all the members of the GSA Council. Please feel free to reach out to me at [gsavpsse@ualberta.ca](mailto:gsavpsse@ualberta.ca) if you have any concerns or would like to discuss any matters with me.

Thank you,

**Muhammad Haseeb Arshad,**

Vice-President Student Services 2022-2023

*Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 08 November to 05 December 2023 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.*

11 Dec	Meeting with FGSP re: StudentCare
12 Dec	Meeting with K Friese, Dean of Students Administration
15 Dec	AR Fee Off Campus Student Rates Meeting
19 Dec	U-Pass Meeting
3 Jan	SGBV RC MNIF Interim Meeting
4 Jan	GSA Award Selection Committee Meeting
5 Jan	Graduate Co-Op Program Meeting
8 Jan	Student Group Mental Health Network Meeting
9 Jan	Meeting with K Friese, Dean of Students Administration
9 Jan	MNIF Joint Oversight Committee Meeting #4
9 Jan	GSA and Dos Monthly Meeting
12 Jan	Discover Governance: Meet the Executives
16 Jan	Students Who Parent Working Group Conversation
17 Jan	VLHR Follow-up Meeting
18 Jan	U-Pass Administrative Committee Meeting
19 Jan	Tuition Townhall #2

**2023-2024 Vice-President Student Life  
Report to GSA Council for the 22 January 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Tiffany Kung  
Date: January 19 2024

Dear Council Colleagues,

Happy New Year, and I hope everyone had a well-deserved relaxing winter break! Please note that I was away on personal leave from January 2-8. My meetings are listed below.

**Meeting RE: Graduate Students in Residence Association (GSRA) (Dec 5)**

I met with a couple of interested students to discuss work that would go toward creating a GSRA that would advocate for the needs of students in residence alongside the GSA. For multiple reasons, the group settled on restarting the work in earnest in May of 2024.

**Meeting with Ravina Sanghera (Dean of Students) RE: Academic Flexibility (Dec 5)**

Bishoi, Rija and I met with Ravina to discuss academic flexibility for students who are experiencing crises either at home or abroad. The group discussed necessary measures to promote student support preceding the "Student Supports During a Crisis" email that went out on December 7. We were informed that the Dean of Students office as well as FGSR/FGPS is working with academic advisors to ensure all advisors are aware of the standard operating procedure. This involves operating in a trauma informed way, wherein students are not required to disclose their personal circumstances for academic flexibility. If you are a student who is seeking academic flexibility, please feel free to reach out to the GSA with any questions or concerns along the way.

**General Faculties Council Programs Committee Meeting (Dec 7)**

I attended this meeting in place of Rija, VP Academic. Most of the meeting was spent providing feedback on the upcoming EDI action plan.

**Meeting RE: Student Experience Action Plan (SEAP) Accountabilities (Dec 7)**

The GSA met to discuss areas in which we could improve our operations to suit our accountabilities within the SEAP. These include improving the DEO and Councillor transition process, creating an online orientation alongside the university, making coffee breaks more accessible to students across campus, hosting some tabling events, strengthening peer support avenues for graduate students, increasing the GSA's volunteer engagement, and increasing the GSA's visibility as our union.

**Meeting between GSA & Tim Tang, Associate VP Student Experience, Dean of Students (DoS) Office (Dec 7)**

The GSA met with Tim Tang, the inaugural VP Student Experience in the DoS office. We discussed priorities for the upcoming year and potential areas of collaboration.

**Meeting with Katherine Huisig (AVP Campus Services) (Dec 11)**

I met with Katherine to discuss the updates on the GSRA, and she suggested the GSRA keep in contact with Allison in the office of campus services in the future. We also discussed the findings of the post-secondary student houselessness project, the details of which can be read from my report in the October 16 2023 council meeting. We further discussed the Joint Residence Oversight Committee (JROC), which we and the UASU have decided to table until January 2027.

**World Social Justice Day (WSJD) Working Group Meeting (Dec 11)**

The group met to discuss progress on the WSJD planning. Submissions of interest to be a living book have closed, and work has started on organizing rooms, sending out invitations, and connecting with living book applicants.

**EDI Scoping Group Meeting (Dec 13)**

The group met and discussed consultation questions for the upcoming EDI action plan, similar to the questions asked to Council in the December Council meeting of 2023.

**Meeting with Carrie Smith (Vice Provost EDI) RE: Student Supports during a crisis (Dec 15)**

I met with Carrie Smith to discuss how we can better promote student support during a crisis to students to ensure that students are empowered to advocate for themselves at the departmental level. Further work will be continued on this in coming months.

**Meeting with Indigenous Graduate Students' Association (IGSA) RE: VP Indigenous Relations position (Dec 15)**

Bishoi and I met with Jillian and Ben from the IGSA to discuss the exciting news that the GSA Board approved the creation of a Vice President Indigenous Relations position within the GSA to ensure that reconciliation efforts and advocacy for Indigenous students has sustained momentum and is headed by an Indigenous student who will be compensated for their time and labour. Work on this will be continued with Ben and I as co-leads, and will hopefully be approved as an official position to begin in May 2025.

**Holiday Coffee Break (Dec 15)**

I attended the holiday coffee break and had a wonderful time chatting with students and decorating cookies!

**EDI plan Steering Committee Meeting (Dec 19)**

The EDI steering committee met to discuss whether industry or research partners should be consulted in the plan, for which it was decided that it would be impossible to engage in meaningful consultation across such a wide variety of groups. The group further discussed the people's strategy and how it may interplay with the EDI action plan, and the upcoming goal with the EDI leads. The group is in the middle of conducting consultations within their own communities.

**Meeting RE: Student Supports During a Crisis (Dec 21)**

I met with Norma Rodenburg (Vice-Provost & Registrar), Ravina Sanghera (DoS) and Tracy Raivio (Dean of FGPS). We discussed the email re: student support during a crisis. Ongoing work following that email includes: what is concretely written within policy, and getting it clearly stated within the UAlberta calendar for example, that students are eligible for academic flexibility measures in times of conflict to destigmatize the process; how we can ensure students are able to advocate for themselves to academic advisors and professors; how can we improve education of student-facing positions to make the position as seamless as possible. Work on this is planned to continue into the new year, possibly alongside Rija, VP Academic.

**Meeting with Carrie Smith RE: Indigenous gathering (Jan 2)**

I met with Carrie Smith alongside members of the IGSA to discuss an Indigenous gathering event that will be taking place next week. Details are currently in the works.

**Meeting with IGSA & Indigenous Students' Union (ISU) RE: Indigenous gathering (Jan 8)**

I met with the IGSA and ISU to discuss the same Indigenous gathering event mentioned above.

**Meeting with Katherine Huising (Jan 8)**

I met with Katherine to discuss updates on the GSRA. Since it was decided to table the GSRA until May and no meetings happened between our last meeting and this current one, the meeting was short with few updates shared.

**Meeting with Jay Friesen (Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) RE: reading group (Jan 9)**

I met with Jay Friesen from FGPS to discuss logistics around the [GSA's reading and discussion group on inclusive research](#). We discussed the logistics of getting PD hours for attendees, room bookings, and all other logistics needed to get the group up and running. All students, staff, faculty, and community members are invited to the first

session, “Confessions of an EDI Killjoy” on January 17 2024 from 12:30-2pm! If the [link to add the event to your calendar](#) does not work, please email [gsavpsi@ualberta.ca](mailto:gsavpsi@ualberta.ca) for a link.

#### **GSA & DoS Meeting (Jan 9)**

Me, Haseeb (VP Student Services) and Bishoi (President) met with Ravina Sanghera (Dean of Students) and Tim Tang (Associate Vice-President Student Experience). Under my portfolio, we discussed the UASSC (University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre) and updates on student supports during a crisis. Tim Tang let me know the UASSC was now back to full work, and efforts were being made to look into how capacity could be increased at counselling services, who were helping with triage. In regards to student support, we discussed follow-up from my meeting with Ravina, Norma, and Tracy. I have yet to hear back at the time of writing this report, but will follow up to ensure the matter does not get forgotten.

#### **WSJD Event subgroup meeting (Jan 10)**

The group met to discuss the changing of volunteer positions and logistics around the event organization. It was decided that Calendly would be used to organize event booking this year.

#### **Consultation with BGSA RE: EDI action plan (Jan 12)**

I met with the Black Graduate Students’ Association for their consultation on the upcoming EDI action plan. I have noted and passed on their feedback to Carrie Smith and the rest of the EDI action plan steering committee. Following the meeting, I am in the process of setting up recurring meetings between the BGSA, Tracy (Dean of FGPS) and I to discuss increasing funding for Black graduate students.

#### **Meeting ISU & IGSA RE: Event updates**

I attended the Indigenous Students’ Union and Indigenous Graduate Students’ Association to discuss the upcoming webinar and event collectively titled “Truth Before Reconciliation”. I will be attending and encourage all students to attend as available! The event will be held from Jan 18, 2-5pm in FAB 2-20.

#### **Living Book programming/selection discussion (Jan 15)**

The World Social Justice Day planning group met to discuss scheduling and programming for the day of. Living books are in the process of being communicated with, and the schedule will hopefully be set for the end of January.

#### **EDI and Indigenous Initiatives Multi-Institute Committee (Jan 15)**

Due to low attendance, the meeting was kept short. The group discussed trying a new format for land acknowledgements in which different non-Indigenous committee members will take the lead every meeting to share something new they have learned with respect to truth & reconciliation.

#### **Indigenous Law Students Association (ILSA) Consultation RE: VPIR (Jan 15)**

Benjamin, the co-lead for the VPIR project and I met with the ILSA to discuss their feedback, thoughts, and concerns on the creation process of the VPIR position. To hear more about how the consultation process is going, please feel free to reach out to me.

#### **Meeting with BSAAN (Jan 15)**

I met with a member of the new Black Students’ Association Alumni Network (BSAAN) to discuss their mission statement and further connections.

#### **Meeting with IPR/GSA/IGSA (Jan 15)**

The IGSA and GSA met with the IPR to discuss updates to the Truth & Reconciliation event on January 18 as well as updates on projects happening in each of our offices.

**2023-2024 GSA VP Student Life's Meetings Attended (Tiffany)**

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 6 November to 11 December 2023 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

Dec 5	Meeting RE: GSRA
Dec 5	Meeting with Ravina Sanghera RE: Academic Flexibility
Dec 7	GFC Programs Committee Meeting
Dec 7	Meeting RE: SEAP Accountabilities
Dec 7	Meeting between GSA & Tim Tang
Dec 11	Meeting with Katherine Huising
Dec 11	WSJD Working Group
Dec 13	EDI Scoping Group Meeting
Dec 15	Meeting with Carrie Smith RE: Student Supports During a Crisis
Dec 15	Meeting with IGSA RE: VPIR position
Dec 15	Holiday Coffee Break
Dec 19	EDI plan Steering Committee Meeting
Dec 21	Meeting RE: Student Supports During a Crisis
Dec 21	Lunch with the Provost, SU, and GSA
Jan 2	Meeting with Carrie Smith RE: Indigenous gathering
Jan 8	Meeting with IGSA & ISU RE: Indigenous gathering
Jan 8	Meeting with Katherine Huising
Jan 9	Meeting with Jay Friesen RE: reading group
Jan 9	Meeting with GSA & DoS
Jan 9	EDIC Winter Meeting
Jan 10	WSJD: Event sub group meeting
Jan 11	GSA Winter Welcome Orientation
Jan 12	Consultation with BGSA RE: EDI action plan
<b>Jan 12</b>	<b>Meeting with ISU &amp; IGSA RE: Event updates</b>
Jan 12	Meet the Executives
Jan 15	Living Book programming/selection discussion
Jan 15	EDI and Indigenous Initiatives Multi-Institute Committee
<b>Jan 15</b>	<b>Indigenous Law Students Association Consultation RE: VPIR</b>
Jan 15	Meeting with BSAAN
Jan 15	Meeting with IPR/GSA/IGSA/SAGEpod
Jan 16	Winter Warm Up (GSA Booth)
Jan 16	UASSC
Jan 16	Council of Residence Associations Meeting
Jan 17	SGBV In WIL working group
Jan 17	Confessions of an EDI Killjoy
Jan 18	GFC Student Conduct and Policy Committee
Jan 18	Truth Before Reconciliation Event
Jan 19	Second tuition town hall
Jan 22	Meeting RE: VPIR position
Jan 23	SEAP Support team meeting

**Chief Returning Officer  
Report to GSA Council for the 22 January 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Sophie Shi  
Date: 19 January 2024

Dear GSA Council Colleagues,

I met with the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (GSA ERC) on 15 January 2024. As reported by Andrew in the GSA ERC report, the committee is discussing an array of matters related to the 2024 General Election, Election of Associate Vice-President Labour, and 2024 Referenda. The agenda for the All-Candidates Meeting was also approved by me on the recommendation of the GSA ERC at this meeting.

The full timeline will be available on the [GSA website](#). Below are some highlights:

**Tuesday, 30 January 2024:** The nomination period for the General Election, Election of Associate Vice-President Labour, and Referenda Campaign opens

**Tuesday, 13 February 2024 at 2 PM MST:** Nominations close for the General Election, Election of Associate Vice-President Labour, and Referenda Campaign

**Monday, 26 February 2024 at 12 PM MST:** GSA Candidates Forum – Located in SUB

**Tuesday, 27 February 2024 at 10 AM MST to Thursday, 29 February 2024 at 10 AM MST:** Voting period for the General Election, Election of Associate Vice-President Labour, and Referenda

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me: [gsacroff@ualberta.ca](mailto:gsacroff@ualberta.ca).

Sincerely,  
Sophie Shi, Chief Returning Officer



**GSA Nominating Committee  
Report to GSA Council for the 22 January 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Violet Sun  
Date: 19 January 2024

Dear Council Colleagues,

The report from the GSA Nominating Committee (GSA NoC) this month is a summary of discussions/decisions the committee has made since its last report, together with a list of all vacancies filled and those which will be filled shortly.

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

Sincerely,  
Violet Sun, Chair of the GSA NoC

**Memorandum to GSA Councillors**

**As reported previously on multiple occasions, there are a number of vacancies on GSA Standing Committees for GSA Council Members (Departmental Councillors, Alternates, and Councillors-at-Large).** These positions play a pivotal role in the GSA's ongoing efforts to keep its processes transparent and itself accountable and long-term vacancies adversely impact these efforts. **GSA Councillors (including Alternates) are strongly encouraged to consider serving on these committees.**

It is important to note that the time commitment for these committees varies greatly. While some meet regularly throughout the year (usually every two (2) to three (3) months) others meet less frequently, and some do almost all of their work over email. Additionally, **there is an appreciation of people's schedules and other commitments and accommodations are routinely made for those who cannot attend all meetings.**

**Service on these bodies is an excellent way to make sure your voice is heard and a great opportunity to add to your CV/resume!**

On behalf of the GSA NoC, I strongly encourage GSA Councillors (and Alternates) and Councillors-at-Large to consider the next round of vacancies, which will be circulated to GSA Council electronically and which are listed below. Questions can be directed to me at [qiuyu@ualberta.ca](mailto:qiuyu@ualberta.ca) or GSA Elections Coordinator Monica Brzak at [gсанomco@ualberta.ca](mailto:gсанomco@ualberta.ca).

**GSA Standing Committees**

**1) GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (GSA ACB (Two (2) Councillor Positions)**

Information regarding the positions for two (2) GSA Councillors was circulated via email on 5 and 12 January 2024 with a nomination deadline of 16 January 2024. **No nominations were received; these vacancies will be advertised again.**

**2) GSA Board and GSA Nominating Committee (GSAB/NoC) (One (1) Joint GSA Councillor Positions)**

Information regarding the position for one (1) GSA Councillors has been circulated via email to GSA Council many times. **No nominations were received; this vacancy will be advertised again.**

**GSA Elections and Referenda Committee  
Report to GSA Council for the 22 January 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Andrew Pohlka  
Date: 19 January 2024

Dear GSA Council Colleagues,

The GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (GSA ERC) met on 15 January 2024 to continue planning the 2024 GSA General Election, Election of the Associate Vice-President Labour, and Referenda.

At this meeting, members reviewed and recommended to the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) the 2024 GSA General Election, Election of the Associate Vice-President Labour, and Referenda All-Candidates Meeting agenda, the 2024 GSA General Election and Election of Associate Vice-President Labour Forum questions, and the 2024 GSA General Election, Election of Associate Vice-President Labour, and Referenda ballots. The GSA ERC also discussed election procedures for the 2024 GSA General Election, Election of Associate Vice-President Labour, and Referenda.

Sincerely,  
Andrew Pohlka, Chair of the GSA ERC

**GSA Executive Director  
Report to GSA Council for the 22 January 2024 Meeting**

To: GSA Council  
From: Lewie Moodley  
Date: 19 January 2024

Dear Members of the GSA Council,

This office has had a busy start to 2024, we are straight into the election season and work is underway for this. We have processed a sizable amount of student grant applications and reviewed a few emergency appeals after the holiday break. The office has been supporting the SU with arranging the Tuition town hall.

The staff have been involved in supporting the board with developing a new survey around evaluating the mental health of graduate students at the university. This survey is due to come out in the near future and we are looking forward to findings.

Despite the chilly temperatures, the recently conducted Winter Orientation in the GSA Lounge gained significant success. The event attracted both familiar and new vendors, and it was rewarding to witness numerous new graduate students attending and engaging with the board and staff. Our dedicated staff are currently working hard to prepare for the Awards Night scheduled for March 2024. The committee overseeing this event convenes regularly, with staff actively participating in the administrative aspects. Additionally, our team is diligently working on formulating the 2024-2025 budget and a comprehensive three-year financial plan for the GSA. These crucial documents are set for presentation to the council in February, following a thorough review by the Budget and Finance committee in January.

The office is enthusiastic with all the activity, and we are in close collaboration with the board to achieve our targets. The staff and board's continued support is invaluable as we navigate through this busy period.

My weekly reports to the GSA Board are attached, and, as always, I am happy to answer any questions.

Lewie Moodley, GSA Executive Director

## Management Report to the GSA Board, 13 December 2023

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on 6 December 2023:

### Strategic

- Work associated with the Collective Agreement (soliciting expressions of interest for the steward network, advising individual graduate student workers, and supporting the work of the GSA Labour Relations Committee, distribution of new agreement, outreach and strategic planning with PSAC).

### Executive Director update

- Social Media - Facebook: Reach: +28.6% (Dec 1-12); Followers: 2025 (-1 follow), Instagram: Reach: -27.1% (Dec 1-12); Followers: 1178 (-1 follow), Twitter: Followers: 1345 (+3 followers).
- The Grants department is currently investigating a software program that can provide better cybersecurity and improved grant review times. We have some good options and will have demos from these companies in the coming weeks. The 3rd quarter will close Dec 31, 2023, within the fiscal year budget for all grant spending.
- The office will be closed from December 20, 2023, to January 1, 2024, and will reopen on January 2 2024. The office has had a busy year and is looking forward to the achievements of 2024.

### Management Report to the GSA Board, 10 January 2024

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on **13 December 2023**.

#### Strategic

- Work associated with the Collective Agreement (soliciting expressions of interest for the steward network, advising individual graduate student workers, and supporting the work of the GSA Labour Relations Committee, distribution of new agreement, outreach and strategic planning with PSAC).

#### Executive Director update

- Working on sourcing quotes for the Health and Dental plan by meeting with potential alternative providers.
- Three Emergency Bursaries were received in the Dec/Jan period and 40+ grants were processed in PeopleSoft on January 2.
- **Facebook** Reach: -35.1% Followers: + 3 new followers (current: 2028) **Instagram** Reach: +0.7% Followers: + 7 new followers (current: 1185) **Twitter/ X** Followers: no change (1345)

#### Associate Director update

- The Labour Relations Committee is accepting nominations to fill a vacant seat. Nominations will close on 17 January 2024. Several Faculty Stewards have been appointed over the past month, so interest is being generated on that front. A bargaining survey will go out to academically employed graduate students soon to get feedback on priorities for the upcoming negotiations.
- I will be organizing some additional meetings with the DEO's in February to get their feedback on training needs so that we can build some meaningful transition and training pieces into the leadership life cycle.
- Award nominations are coming in and planning the awards event is underway.

## Management Report to the GSA Board, 17 January 2024

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on **10 January 2024**.

### Strategic

- Work associated with the Collective Agreement (soliciting expressions of interest for the steward network, advising individual graduate student workers, and supporting the work of the GSA Labour Relations Committee, distribution of new agreement, outreach and strategic planning with PSAC).

### Executive Director update

- Working on sourcing quotes for the Health and Dental plan by meeting with potential alternative providers. I will be meeting with the Alberta blue cross in the coming weeks.
- Grants are on budget, and we have 20 to process this week before eform deadline of Jan 19. We are in the final stages of picking the new grant processing software.
- Winter Welcome had a great turnout, despite the frigid temperatures with over 30 students in attendance.
- Facebook Reach: 460.4% (vs Jan 10) Followers: + 8 new followers (current: 2035) Instagram Reach: - 23.2% Followers: + 5 new followers (current: 1190) Twitter/ X Followers: +2 1347).