

2024-2025 Strategic Work Plan Report

Delivering on Our Commitments to Graduate
Students



Graduate
Students'
Association
University of Alberta

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Over the past year, our Graduate Students' Association has worked hard to turn the ambitions set out in the Strategic Work Plan into tangible results. Thanks to the trust you placed in my team—and to the passion and persistence of countless volunteers, staff, and campus partners—we have moved from ideas to action in ways that are already improving graduate life at the University of Alberta.

Together, we secured more than **\$8.5 million in direct financial support**, including a brand-new Community Engagement Award that channelled **\$200,000 of GSA funds to course-based master's students**, with a further \$400,000 committed for the next two years. We finalized a re-engineered health and dental plan that **will save students \$400,000 over three years**, renewed the U-Pass—putting **\$3.4 million back in students' pockets**—and successfully advocated for **no tuition increase for international thesis-based students**. Each of these wins began with your feedback and your insistence that affordability must remain at the centre of our work.

But financial relief is only part of the story. We also helped **launched the pilot Graduate Peer Support Program**, published the first comprehensive Graduate Mental Health Report, doubled attendance at our GSA Social Hours, and laid the groundwork for a Peer-Connect Conference and Career Fair that will showcase graduate talent and create new career pathways. Our two-year **EDI Action Plan** and updated bylaws have set a clearer, more accountable course for the association, while our bargaining team has already tabled a full proposal package to improve working conditions for academically employed graduate students.

None of this progress would be possible without you. Whether you completed a survey, attended a town-hall meeting, or simply shared your lived experience with us, your voice shaped every decision we made. I am deeply grateful for the confidence you have shown in this executive team and for the tireless work of our councillors, committee members, and staff, who turned collective vision into concrete gains. As my team's term concludes, I am heartened to know that a newly elected executive team is ready to carry this momentum forward. Their agenda remains ambitious, including but not limited to, securing stable scholarship funding, implementing a campus-wide food strategy, completing collective bargaining, and ensuring that our governance continues to reflect the diversity and creativity of the graduate community. I encourage you to lend them the same energy, creativity, and constructive scrutiny you showed my team—because the GSA's strength has always come from an engaged membership willing to push for bold ideas and hold its leaders to account.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your President this past year. Working alongside you has been the most rewarding experience of my graduate journey, and I will continue to champion graduate students—this time from the sidelines—as an alumnus of the GSA. Together we have set a strong foundation; now, in partnership with the new executive, I am confident our association will reach even greater heights.

In solidarity and gratitude,

Haseeb Iqbal

GSA President, Graduate Students' Association
University of Alberta



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This past year, the GSA has been focused on turning goals into action. Our work has been guided by the Strategic Work Plan (SWP), which was built around four key themes: **Grow, Engage, Advocate, and Reimagine**—or what we’ve come to call **GEAR**.

These themes reflect what graduate students have consistently told us matters most: better funding and support, stronger community connections, meaningful advocacy, and more modern, accessible services.

Since the start of the academic year, we’ve made real progress across all four pillars—whether that’s securing new scholarships, launching a new health and dental plan, increasing attendance at student events, or leading collective bargaining for our members. Much of this work came directly from student feedback, and we’re proud that the priorities laid out in the SWP are showing up in visible, practical ways across campus.

This report is both a reflection of what’s been done—and a reminder of what’s still ahead. As we move into the next phase of the year, the GSA remains committed to working with our community and partners to keep pushing these priorities forward.

Key Achievements 2024–2025

Financial Access & Scholarships

- **Spent \$200K on new scholarships for course-based Master’s students**, with a \$400K commitment for the next two years.
- **Secured a total of \$8.55M in graduate student financial support.**

Health, Wellness, and Services

- **Finalized a new health & dental plan**, saving students \$400K over three years.
- Published the Graduate Mental Health Report and launched the Mental Health Photo Contest with 70+ submissions.
- Helped **launch the Graduate Peer Support Program pilot.**
- Proposed a campus-wide Food Strategy.

Advocacy and Student Rights

- Approved **U-Pass renewal**, saving students **\$3.4M** over three years.
- Reduced tuition fee increases, including **no tuition increase** for international thesis-based students.
- Retained the \$4,200 Canada Student Grant and protected federal loan maximums (\$870M secured nationally).
- Secured key provincial wins, including **Bill 18 exemptions** and **MNIF transparency guidelines**.
- Advocated for **voting rights for Indigenous leaders** and resolved motion for a federal Indigenous advocate structure.
- Established the new CGSAF provincial advocacy alliance.

Governance and Internal Strengthening

- Revised GSA bylaws for accountability, financial management, and clarity.
- Proposed a two-year EDI Action Plan.
- Laid groundwork to improve Council and Board governance with new structures and MoUs.

Student Engagement and Campus Presence

- Doubled GSA Social Hour attendance through partnerships with Wellness Supports.
- Signed an MoU with New Majority, securing paid canvassing positions for graduate students.
- Laid the foundation for the Peer-Connect Conference/Career Fair with sustainable financial planning.
- Launched a new GSA website featuring a DEO Priorities page to improve transparency.

Labour Relations

- Tabled the full collective agreement for Academically-Employed Graduate Students (AEGs) and began active bargaining.

GROW

BUILDING ON SUCCESS AND EXPANDING INITIATIVES

1. Increase Financial Support for Graduate Students

PhD Minimum Funding: The Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS) PhD Minimum Implementation Working Group, of which the Vice-President Academic is a member, has begun the official implementation of this initiative. **Every PhD student in years 1-4 will receive their minimum funding guarantee letters based on the commitment as described in the operating standard starting in Fall 2025.** As part of this working group, the GSA has the responsibility to ensure the smooth implementation of PhD minimum funding and to continue addressing the ongoing challenges related to this project, which is instrumental in shaping this ever-evolving initiative.

Course-Based Graduate Community Engagement Award: The President spearheaded the creation of this pilot scholarship program, allocating **\$200,000 of GSA funds and collaborating with GPS to fully distribute the awards to our course-based master's students in December 2024.** The President, and Vice-President Academic have also secured commitments from the Tuition and Budget Advisory Committee (TBAC) to ensure the award's sustainability over the next two years, and FGPS will support and maintain this scholarship at least through 2027.

External MoUs with GPS and DoS: With our membership number declining, securing the GSA's long-term financial stability has become paramount. The President signed three-year, non-binding Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with both GPS and the Dean of Students (DoS). These agreements not only preserve our institutional legacy but also guarantee continued funding from each office. **GSA will receive \$6,000 annually from GPS and \$8,000 from DoS,** after persistent negotiations, starting next year. This milestone ensures vital support for our graduate students.

Open Letter to the GoA: The President worked closely with student associations and unions across Alberta to sign a joint open letter demanding the province roll back its harmful cuts to post-secondary education. This united front reflects the collective determination of Alberta's students to protect the quality of education and secure the future of the province's workforce. The collaboration underscores the pressing need for funding to support Alberta's institutions and prevent further damage to an already strained education system.

Federal Advocacy Efforts Lead to Updates in Tri-Council Agency Funding Policy: We are pleased that the Tri-Council awards eligibility policy has been updated which will **allow international students to apply for the Tri-Council awards** as well.

[Minimum Guaranteed Funding for PhD Students | Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies](#)
[Announcing the Graduate Course-Based Master's Community Engagement Award - GSA UofA](#)
[Government of Alberta, You Can't Keep Cutting Class - GSA UofA](#)
[NSERC - Latest News - Launch of the new Harmonized Tri-agency Scholarship and Fellowship programs](#)

GROW

BUILDING ON SUCCESS AND EXPANDING INITIATIVES

2. Expand Student Services, including Childcare and Peer Support

Graduate Career Fair & Co-Op Program:

The President and Vice-President Academic have advocated for a dedicated career fair for graduate students, addressing the lack of career transition opportunities after graduation, which was the top concern raised by students in the SEAP survey. We have also advocated for a Graduate Co-op program, which would allow our members to take on full-time internships regardless of their immigration status during their program, thereby doubling their chances of securing a job after graduation. This initiative has gained traction over the year, and the Deputy Provost for Student Experience & Enrollment will be spearheading it moving forward

Google Storage Space Issue: The President met with the Associate Vice President (AVP) of IST to advocate for delaying the implementation of changes to the Google Storage policy and proposed a more optimal solution for managing storage space requirements for graduate research students. An **extension was granted**, but much work remains to ensure the equitable utilization of these resources by our members.

Graduate Peer Support Program:

The President's proposal for **the Peer Support Program has been adopted under the Graduate Ambassador Program, and the Graduate Student Peer Support Program will launch as early as Fall 2025**, with the call for volunteers already issued by the Career Center. This milestone reflects our commitment to advocating dedicated support and services that meet our members' needs. Vice-President Academic and Associate Vice-President Labour are participating in the discussion and design of the training program for this initiative.

University-Wide Wi-Fi Issue: The President also raised concerns about the university-wide Wi-Fi network with the Dean of Students, Deputy Provost for Student Experience & Enrollment, and the AVP of IST. The administration has acknowledged the concern, and IST is actively working on upgrading the university-wide Wi-Fi infrastructure. The timeline for completing this project is set for Fall 2026.

Graduate Student Peer Support Program coming in September 2025 | Human Resources, Health, Safety + Environment

GROW

BUILDING ON SUCCESS AND EXPANDING INITIATIVES



Child Minding Services: The Vice-President Student Services, President, and Executive Director secured a **special discount for graduate student parents at Bredin Early Bird child-minding services**. Efforts to establish additional discounts with other providers near North Campus are ongoing.

Child-care Services Advocacy: The President co-signed a letter with the Students' Union, Non-Academic Staff Association, Association of Academic Staff, University of Alberta, and Post-Doctoral Fellow Association for the university administration, expressing concern over the decision to end its approximately \$300,000-per-year financial support for the six university-affiliated daycares. This support withdrawal would significantly impact our members who rely on these subsidized childcare services.

Community Support Initiative: The Vice-President Student Services proposed a hand-me-down store for student parents and caregivers, in collaboration with UASU and the Dean of Students' Office. **Plans are underway to organize a pop-up store to gauge interest and community buy-in.** A positive step in this domain is the identification of a space where the store will be opened as a pilot project. The President also has held conversations with the chair of the Students Who Parent on Campus Committee to discuss the possibility of distributing gifts and donations from students to caregivers or parents of newborns and other children.

2025-03-25_daycare_centres.pdf

GROW

BUILDING ON SUCCESS AND EXPANDING INITIATIVES

3. Foster a More Connected and Engaged Council



Slack workspace for GSA: The President initiated a Slack workspace for the Graduate Students' Association and its standing committees and continues to enhance engagement and management on the platform.

Improving the GSA Council Effectiveness: The President proposed creating an ad hoc committee to improve councillor engagement, with a focus on meeting structures and overall effectiveness. Recommendations for restructuring the GSA Council to ensure full compliance with the PSLA and alignment with best governance practices for non-profit student associations have been developed; these will be presented to Council by the incoming GSA Board.



GROW

BUILDING ON SUCCESS AND EXPANDING INITIATIVES

4. Governance and Policy Revisions

Bylaw & Policy Overhaul

The President ensured monthly Governance Committee meetings to keep bylaw amendments on track. We Initiated a comprehensive revision of the GSA's Bylaw and Policy document via a summer intern to enhance transparency, accountability, and governance. The intern assisted in eliminating and improving policy language in our integrating bylaws and policy document.

Conflict-of-Interest & Referendum Improvements

The President recommended creating clearer conflict-of-interest rules. We have also refined the procedures for elections and referenda. The President and Associate Director strengthened the referendum process to ensure fair and consistent outcomes.

Council Effectiveness & Representation

On the direction of GSA Council, the President has worked on new guidelines to improve GSA Council's effectiveness after through deliberation with other associations and unions ensuring GSA Council composition aligns with Section 95 of the PSLA. Supported the creation of a dedicated Black Graduate Students' Association Councillor seat, championed by the Vice-President Student Life.

Accountability Measures

We have established accountability bylaws for members representing graduate students on GSA standing committees. We have also expanded the definition of "GSA officer" to ensure all officers are held responsible for their actions. On top of that, the President has proposed bi-yearly performance reviews for all Directly Elected Officers, allowing both voting and non-voting GSA board members to give constructive feedback.

Financial & Budgetary Policies

The President submitted recommendations to refine the annual budget-drafting and approval process, drafted an internal Finance Policy to ensure compliance with legislative requirements, and developed a contingency plan to mitigate financial risks if the GSA Budget is not approved on time.

GSA Board's Human Resources, IT, and Code of Conduct Policy

The President proposed the new HR policy for hiring the Executive Director, collaborated with the HR/Finance Manager and Associate Director to develop an IT policy for the GSA Board. The Associate Director currently finalizing a Code of Conduct to reinforce ethics and professionalism among board members.

ENGAGE

CREATING VIBRANT CONNECTIONS AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

1. Enhance Student Engagement through Events and Communication



Student Feedback & Engagement: A post-event evaluation form is now incorporated into every event to gather student feedback. This was most recently implemented at the Fall Social, Tuition Town Hall, and Winter Orientation. To encourage participation, some events include raffle draws or other incentives for completing the evaluation.

EDI Reading Groups: The Vice-President Student Life, Vice-President Academic, and President led the established EDI reading group. This has helped equity seeking individuals come together and work on ideas to improve campus EDI initiatives.



PhD Reception Event with FGPS: The President and Vice-President Academic attended the PhD Welcome reception, in addition to welcoming graduate students to the university, this event served as a way to share experiences and learnings amongst graduate students. The Vice-President Academic delivered a talk on “What I wish I knew as a 1st Year PhD student”, this talk was very well received and will be featured as one of the upcoming YouAlberta blogs. This year we made an effort to attend the various events on campus catered towards graduate students, to increase GSA's visibility for graduate students.

ENGAGE

CREATING VIBRANT CONNECTIONS AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

2. Improve Indigenous Representation and Advocacy

Voting Rights for Indigenous Reps: The President and Vice-President Student Life advocated for Indigenous students to serve on CASA's board and other standing committees as voting members.

New Structure for NIAC Rep Selection: The GSA Board has resolved a motion to find the best method, in consultation with the Vice-Provost Indigenous Relations and Programming, for electing our official NIAC representative. This privilege, afforded by our status as a paying, voting member of CASA, will ensure we effectively advocate for Indigenous students' rights at the federal level.

Indigenous Perspectives in University AI Policy: The President, in consultation with the Vice-Provost for Indigenous Relations and the Programming office, put forward a recommendation at the Teaching and Learning AI Subcommittee Meeting on how to incorporate an Indigenous lens into the university-wide AI policy, based on the insightful positional work done by Jason Edward Lewie et al. It reflects our commitment to embedding Indigenous perspectives in the development and implementation of AI policies at the university.

Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence Position Paper - Spectrum: Concordia University Research Repository

ENGAGE

CREATING VIBRANT CONNECTIONS AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

3. Increase Accessibility and Inclusivity in GSA

Call to the University to uphold their EDI Commitments

The President raised a motion at the November GFC meeting, calling on the university to uphold its EDI commitments, particularly considering public discussions on EDI. The overwhelming support for this motion demonstrated the university community's expectation that the administration remain steadfast in its commitment to EDI principles.

Educational & Awareness Programing

The Vice-President Student Services is working on creating educational and awareness programs for graduate students to inform them about the Health and Dental Plan Coverage and their entitlements.

Logo, Website & Newsletter Refresh

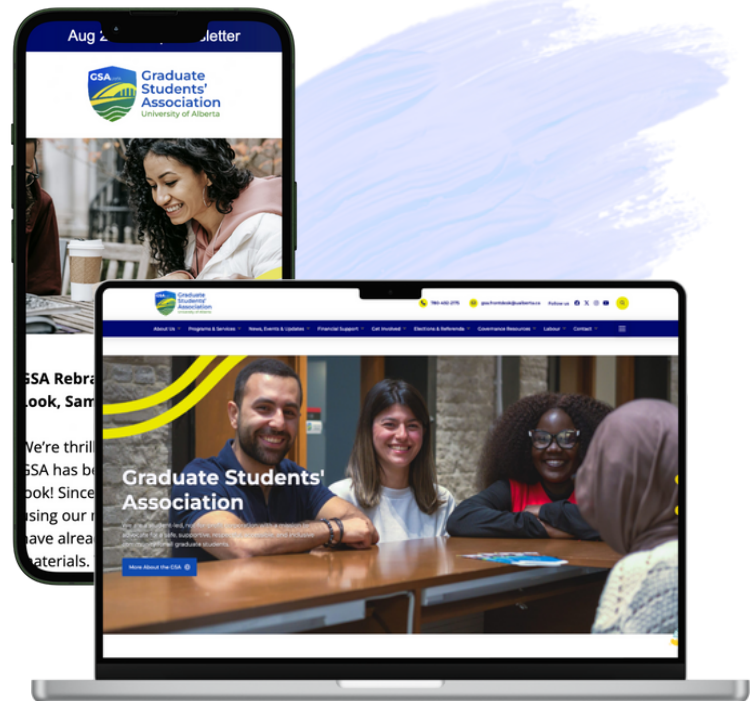
The GSA now has a new identity with a new logo and has successfully launched its new website and refreshed social media platforms, resulting in a significant increase in engagement and functionality compared to the previous system.

Calendar of Events

As part of the website refresh, a new event calendar has been added to improve functionality and accessibility. This calendar allows members to view all upcoming GSA events in one place, access event details for more information, and subscribe and add events directly to their personal calendars for easy reminders.

Two-Year EDI Action Plan

The President proposed a comprehensive two-year Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) action plan for the Graduate Students' Association Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (GSA-EDIC). This plan is based on extensive consultations and feedback, aiming to address critical issues such as accessibility, mental health supports, socio-economic assistance, and representation. The plan sets clear goals, timelines, and action items to address the immediate and long-term EDI needs of graduate students, fostering a more inclusive and supportive academic environment.



[GSA EDIC Action Plan](#)

[Events - Graduate Student's Association | University of Alberta](#)

ENGAGE

CREATING VIBRANT CONNECTIONS AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

4. Extending Partnerships with other Units and Offices Across Campus



Coalition of University of Alberta

Associations (CUAA): The President, and Associate Vice-President Labour has formally signed on to the Coalition of University of Alberta Associations (CUAA). This new alliance brings together the executive members of our association, Non-Academic Staff Association, the Postdoctoral Fellows Association (PDFA), and the University of Alberta Students' Union (UASU) to address the very real challenges our members face, including but not limited to economic instability, austerity measures, and rapidly shifting workplace demands.

Collaborative Event with ASSET and Wellness

Team: The GSA teamed up with ASSET and the Wellness Team to host a collaborative event during one of our monthly social hours. Held in the Triffo Hall, the gathering offered a relaxed environment where graduate students could unwind between classes, connect with peers, and learn about the resources each group provides.



Movie Nights with UAI: The Vice-President External and Vice-President Student Services extended partnerships with the University of Alberta International (UAI) to hold events such as movie nights and social events to engage our international students. The Vice-President Student Services is also actively working on other collaborations with units such as Campus Services and Campus and Community Recreation.

Introducing the Coalition of University of Alberta Associations (CUAA) - GSA UofA

ADVOCATE

CHAMPIONING STUDENT RIGHTS AND ENHANCING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

1. Advocate for Improved Funding and Financial Support within the University

More Funding toward the Graduate Student Support Fund (GSSF): The President submitted a detailed proposal to the university stakeholders requesting an increase in GSSF based on the fact that the funding towards GSSF has not seen any increase since 2020, and our academic travel grants have been increasing since 2022. Considering that the university administration has announced a 3% budget cut for every unit, this year we were only able to ensure that the university administration, if not able to increase our GSSF funding, most certainly does not reduce it. We have received confirmation from the university that we will receive the same funding this year, but a lot of work needs to be done in this regard to ensure that this funding is first sustained and at least subjected to CPI increases every year.

Differential Tuition Fee Model: As a result of continuous advocacy efforts from GSA, a working group was struck by GPS to help ensure continuous support for thesis-based students. The Vice-President Academic, Vice-President External, and President represented graduate student interests in this group. We **successfully minimized tuition increases compared to the university's initial proposal**. We were able to lobby for a differential tuition fee model, which resulted in only a 5% increase for the MBA program and no tuition fee increase for international thesis-based graduate students. This is a significant win considering that the initial proposal talked about within the administration was to increase the tuition fee by more than 10%.

More Funding towards Hybrid Awards: The President and Vice-President Academic collaborated with the Students' Union to advocate reallocating funds from merit-based awards to hybrid awards, including the Turtle Island and Discover UAlberta scholarships, to better support students in need. **The university has committed to transferring \$100,000 from merit-based awards to these two hybrid awards in recognition of those needs.**

Tuition Fee Offset Proposal: The President submitted a detailed tuition-fee-offset proposal to the TBAC, which included recommendations like creating new special scholarships and financial support for course-based master's students, increasing financial support for the Campus Food Bank, developing affordable meal plans, and expanding bursary-program eligibility to include first-year international students.

Equitable Financial Support for Palestinian Community Members: In partnership with Palestinian faculty members and the Registrar's Office, the President drafted recommendations for the Office of the President to ensure equitable financial support for displaced Palestinian scholars, including the waiving of admission fees and expanded scholarship eligibility.

[Tuition Increases | Office of the Registrar](#)

[GSA-Council-October-21-2024-Second-Mailing-Materials-Package.pdf](#)

[Displaced Palestinian Student Bursary Program | Office of the Registrar](#)

ADVOCATE

CHAMPIONING STUDENT RIGHTS AND ENHANCING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

2. Advocate for Improved funding and Transparent Policies with the Provincial Government

Targeted Funding for Graduate Students: The Vice-President External, and President, in collaboration with the University of Calgary Graduate Students' Association and the Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association, met with the provincial caucuses of the NDP and UCP, as well as the Minister of Advanced Education, in November to advocate for 10% targeted funding for all graduate studies programs in Alberta. This funding aims to help offset the impacts of the international student cap, which has severely affected graduate enrollment and reduced the revenue available to these programs.

Advocacy efforts for Bill 18 Exemptions, MNIFs new Guidelines and Streamlining Financial Aid Process: Through our sustained advocacy beginning in May 2024, we **secured key exemptions under Bill 18**. We also persuaded the Minister of Advanced Education to implement more comprehensive mandatory non-instructional fee (MNIF) guidelines, and we appreciate her recognizing our November meeting during the Budget 2025 briefing—underscoring the need to clarify and revise MNIF definitions, which have now been announced. We also co-signed open letter addressed to Minister of Advanced Education from student organizations representing over 150,000 students across Alberta. This letter raises concerns about the ongoing delays in Alberta Student Aid disbursements for the second year in a row, which have affected students relying on financial aid for essential living and academic expenses.

President's Statement on Alberta's Budget 2025: The President expressed concern that Alberta's 2025 Budget kept U of A's operating grants flat, cut \$210 million in student financial aid, and redirected funds to private colleges through Bill 38—even with a \$4.46 billion surplus. He emphasized the urgent need for expanded financial aid and mental-health resources during these challenging times. Highlighting that U of A alumni contribute \$136.6 billion annually—20 percent of Alberta's GDP—with a 47 percent return on public investment, he concluded by calling on the province to prioritize post-secondary funding to sustain innovation and support student success.

Enhance Provincial Advocacy via CAGSAF: Since AB-GPAC's dissolution, the President has been collaborating with UCGSA to establish a new provincial advocacy body: the Combined Alberta Graduate Students Advocacy Front (CAGSAF). We have drafted the bylaws and policies that will govern CAGSAF, and next year, other Alberta graduate-student associations will review and finalize its structure.

[GSA President: Rescind Bill 18, Protect Academic Freedom - Graduate Student's Association | University of Alberta](#)

[GSA Advocacy Update: Key Exemptions Secured for Post-Secondary Federal Funding Under the Provincial Priorities Act \(formerly Bill 18\) - Graduate Student's Association | University of Alberta](#)

[Alberta Tuition Framework.pdf](#)

[Guidelines for the Alberta Tuition Framework.pdf](#)

[Open Letter to Minister Sawhney on Alberta Student Aid Delays - Graduate Student's Association | University of Alberta](#)

[Statement from the President of the Graduate Students' Association \(GSA\) on the Alberta 2025 Budget - Graduate Student's Association | University of Alberta](#)



ADVOCATE

CHAMPIONING STUDENT RIGHTS AND ENHANCING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

3. Federal Advocacy in collaboration with CASA

CPI Adjustments to Tri-Council Awards: The Vice-President External, Vice-President Academic, and President met with federal ministers and senators during November's Canadian Alliance for Student Associations (CASA) Advocacy Week to advocate for CPI adjustments to the Tri-Council Agency graduate student funding programs for future years.

Highlighting Graduate Students' need with SRSR: The Vice-President Academic, Vice President External, and President were invited to attend the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Science and Research (SRSR), where we advance a set of targeted recommendations for enhancing graduate-student engagement and research support. We urged that the new research capstone project's Board of Directors include three reserved seats for student researchers—one per granting specialty—and that the proposed Science & Innovation Advisory Council likewise reserve three spots for graduate students, with at least one graduate-student seat on each Tri-Council granting agency's Board. To build on existing strengths, we called for full implementation of Budget 2024's promised funding increases for Tri-Council graduate and post-doctoral awards and for those awards to be indexed to inflation. Finally, to shape new opportunities, we recommended that student applicants receive structured feedback on Tri-Council proposals and that the university maintain a healthy balance between fundamental/free inquiry and mission-driven research funding.

Increase Indigenous Student Support Funding: The Vice-President Student Life, who also co-chaired the National Indigenous Advocacy Committee, together with the Vice-President Academic, Vice President External, and President advocated for targeted funding to address the chronic under-resourcing of Indigenous programs by calling for an increase in the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP)—and its Métis and Inuit equivalents—to \$750 million annually. This investment would help narrow the Indigenous post-secondary education gap and better reflect the rising secondary-school graduation rates among Indigenous students.



Continue to next page →

ADVOCATE

CHAMPIONING STUDENT RIGHTS AND ENHANCING SUPPORT SYSTEMS



Maintain Maximum Canada Student Grant and Loan Levels:

We urged the federal government to maintain the Canada Student Grant at a maximum of \$4,200 and to keep federal student loan levels unchanged for three years. Although the recent announcement extends these funding levels for only one more year instead of the full three we requested, the regulatory language suggests a move toward a longer-term commitment. We appreciate the government's decision to uphold these supports, which amounts to \$870 million in non-repayable grants for students.

Graduate Forum with CASA: The Vice-President Academic collaborated with CASA's Graduate Advisory Committee to organize a Graduate Forum ahead of the November 2024 advocacy week. This first-of-its-kind event gave delegates the opportunity to learn about graduate-student research and key issues. It also helped inform how student delegates engage with politicians, ensuring they understand both the research objectives and the challenges faced by graduate students.

Advocating for Ethical Usage of GenAI in PSE: The President worked as one of the lead authors on CASA's AI policy paper 'Digital Transformation: Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Canadian Post-Secondary Education', helping to shape clear guidelines for using Generative AI ethically in post-secondary education. The President was also invited by Higher Education Strategies Associates (HESA) as a student panelist to present on how AI policies are evolving and what they mean for universities.

Voter Mobilization Initiative with CASA and New Majority:

We collaborated with CASA to emphasize the importance of student participation in the current federal election pre-polls. As part of this effort, the President and Associate Director partnered with New Majority, a non-profit organization, to secure paid volunteer positions for four graduate students. These volunteers canvassed across campus from April 13 to 16, encouraging graduate students to vote on campus and engage in the democratic process.

Canada Gazette, Part 2, Volume 159, Number 8: Regulations Amending the Canada Student Financial Assistance Regulations

Digital Transformation: Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Canadian Post-Secondary Education
Speaker | AI-CADEMY

ADVOCATE

CHAMPIONING STUDENT RIGHTS AND ENHANCING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

4. Push and Support for Policy Changes on Student Rights and Protections

Student Protest Policies

We advocated for revisions to the university's student-protest policy after EPS were called in to manage protesters, which exposed significant gaps in the existing guidelines. The university had taken steps to issue guidelines, giving unofficial student groups a clear framework for holding demonstrations without fear of reprisal under the student-conduct code.

Call for Third-party Investigation for Violating Alleged Students' Charter Rights

Earlier in the year, we pressed the administration for greater transparency in decision-making while calling for a thorough investigation, and the President recommended that campus peace officers receive compassionate-response training, since they serve on the university payroll.

Letter to Third-party Lead Investigator

The President also sent a detailed letter to the third-party investigation lead, the Hon. Justice Adele Kent, highlighting policy deficiencies, student concerns, and our proposed solutions, most of which Justice Kent endorsed in her final report.

Transit Safety

The President and Vice-President External raised safety concerns in meetings with the City Mayor's Office and ETS, advocating for fare gates and more peace officers, especially around the transit stations close to the campus. Through the University Safety and Security Committee, concerns were also raised by the Vice-President Student Services to highlight the importance of periodic cleaning of the bus shelter across the Hub Mall.

Affordable Housing

The Vice-President External raised a concern previously brought up by the President regarding the lack of landlord accountability in providing tenants with at least three months' notice prior to any rent increase. This issue was discussed during a meeting with the City Council. Karen Principe, Deputy Mayor and Ward Councillor, along with Hani Quan, Director of Affordable Housing and Homelessness at the City of Edmonton, expressed interest in addressing the concern. Later in the meeting, Karen announced that the City will look into the matter further.

U-Pass Referendum

The Vice-President Student Services, along with student representatives from the UASU, participated in the U-Pass negotiations representing the UofA students. The negotiations successfully concluded with an approximate saving of \$3.4 million for the students of the participating institutions. Following this, a referendum was held that was successfully passed during the 2025 General Elections, and the final contract is signed as of April 2025.

SGBV Toolkits to Support Students in WIL

The Vice President Student Services participated in the SGBV Work Integrated Learning Group meetings to share feedback from the graduate students' perspectives. The SGBV WIL group has been actively working on creating resource guides and toolkits to support students in their work-integrated learning environments. This work was carried out to continue the efforts of the Vice-President Student Life portfolio.

[UA_OP_DemonstrationsProtests_Spring2024](#)

[University of Alberta Graduate Students' Association Demands Investigation and Dialogue Following Campus Incident - Graduate Student's Association | University of Alberta](#)

[Third-Party Letter.pdf](#)



ADVOCATE

CHAMPIONING STUDENT RIGHTS AND ENHANCING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

5. Advocate for Student Food Security and Financial Assistance

Campus Food Bank Support

The President submitted a detailed support plea to the University administration including the Senate advocating for additional funding which highlighted the CFB's projected \$60,000 shortfall and urged a direct budget line in the university's operating budget.

67th Annual CAGS Lightning Talk

The President and Vice-President Academic gave a lightning talk during the annual Canadian Association of Graduate Students conference where they talked about how financial strain and mental-health challenges force many graduate students to rely on campus food banks, skip nutritious meals, or downsize their housing just to stay enrolled. Drawing on our recent survey data, they showed that extra work, and food sacrifices undermines both academic performance and emotional well-being. To reverse these trends, they urged comprehensive campus responses to protect students' health and success.

UofA's Campus-wide Food Strategy Proposal

The President proposed a comprehensive food strategy that aligns with U of A's "University of the Tomorrow" vision by prioritizing health, fairness, and sustainability. It emphasizes environmental responsibility, bolsters the local food economy, and centers the well-being of our campus community. Beyond enriching campus life, this initiative is designed to enhance the university's performance on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, boosting U of A's UN Impact Rankings.

Hydroponics Farm

The Vice-President Student Services has been actively advocating for piloting a Hydroponics Farm at the University of Alberta to help the Campus Food Bank with fresh produce. This initiative has received considerable support from the Dean of Students' office, and discussions are ongoing with multiple stakeholders across campus to strategize the next steps.

[Support Plea for CFB.pdf](#)

[Lightning-CP06-2C2](#)

[GSA Proposed UofA's Food Strategy Draft](#)



REIMAGINE

INNOVATING AND IMPLEMENTING NEW INITIATIVES



1. GSA Peer-connect Conference

One of the key initiatives in our approved 2024-2025 strategic work plan is the Peer-Connect Conference, and the President and Vice-President Academic have already made significant progress on it. We've allocated \$27,000 in next year's budget for its launch, and after multiple discussions of the President with the Dean of Students Office and the Vice-Provost and Dean of FGPS, we are confident this will be an outstanding celebration of graduate-student research. It also has the potential to become a revenue-generating event in future years, as members of other associations join for a modest registration fee.

2. Reimagining the GSA Social Hour

We have reimagined the GSA coffee break by adding door prizes and lucky draws, which has boosted attendance. We've also partnered with Wellness Supports, ASSET, and UAI to make each session more interactive and valuable for students.

3. Harm Reduction and Recovery on Campus Pledge

During both the Week of Welcome and our Fall Orientation, EDIC members Emma Chambers and Hannah Bayne set up a harm-reduction tent that drew overwhelming support from students across campus. They then authored a detailed report that proved instrumental in our advocacy effort for the University to sign the "Recovery on Campus" pledge. The President has worked closely with the SU President to secure sustained funding from the Provost's Office—leveraging university and MNIF resources—so that this vital service remains fully supported without requiring a student-association referendum.



2024 Harm Reduction Tent Report - Graduate Student's Association | University of Alberta

REIMAGINE

INNOVATING AND IMPLEMENTING NEW INITIATIVES

4. Improve Services through Technology and Innovation



New Health & Dental Provider: After a comprehensive survey on the current GSA Health and Dental plan and consulting with the GSA Board, we finalized contract negotiations with our new provider, Ellement, under their StudyWell plan, which offers a more comprehensive benefits package. The incoming GSA Board will finalize the plan details, with a major focus on delivering an improved customer-support experience for graduate students at a cost lower than our current plan. We estimate this new contract will save approximately \$400,000 over the next three years, demonstrating our commitment to maximizing the use of our limited resources.

UofA Mobile App Advocacy: The President proposed a new, all-in-one University of Alberta mobile app, and the administration has formally approved it. The Dean of Students Office has already taken the lead—initiating revisions to the MyUALberta app—but substantial work remains to ensure every student chooses to install it for an improved experience.



5. Increase transparency in GSA Operations

A dedicated webpage has been successfully established on the GSA website, providing students with regular updates on DEO initiatives and progress.

GSA Health & Dental Plan Survey Results (as of Aug 14)
DEO Priorities and Updates - Graduate Student's Association | University of Alberta

REIMAGINE

INNOVATING AND IMPLEMENTING NEW INITIATIVES

6. Mental Health & Wellness Initiatives

Under Pressure: Mental Health Realities Survey Report: The GSA released its detailed report, “Under Pressure: Mental Health Realities for Graduate Students at U of A” on World Mental Health Day. This report highlights the mounting pressures our members face and the barriers they encounter when seeking support. Far more than a diagnostic snapshot, this report calls on the university community to prioritize mental well-being by expanding and improving access to resources. It serves both as a wake-up call and a roadmap for action to ensure that every graduate student has the support they need.

The Graduate Student Photo Contest on Mental Health & Well-being: The Vice-President Student Services, Vice-President External, and President partnered with UAI and the Dean of Students Office to successfully organize a photo contest aimed at promoting mental health and destigmatizing the conversation around it. The contest drew 72 submissions, and eight winners were each awarded \$100 in prizes.

Contributing towards UofA Days of Action Programming: The Vice-President Student Services represented the GSA in World Mental Health Day programming, including a mindfulness workshop for graduate students and the World Day of Social Justice Living Library Programming, which were both organized by the Days of Action and Wellness Supports.

HCA Wellness Summit: The Vice-President Student Services participated in the 2024 HCA Wellness Summit to share graduate student perspectives as well as gain valuable insights from other members. These insights will be crucial for next year’s strategic plan. The Vice-President Student Services is also participating in the HCA Wellness Summit 2025 as part of the organizing team.

GSA Wellness and Family Support Hub: The Vice-President Student Services has been advocating for a family hub. The GSA already has a feeding and care space for graduate student parents. However, this initiative will expand the space into a holistic wellness support hub offering activities and experiences to support self-care and mental health and wellbeing-related practices.



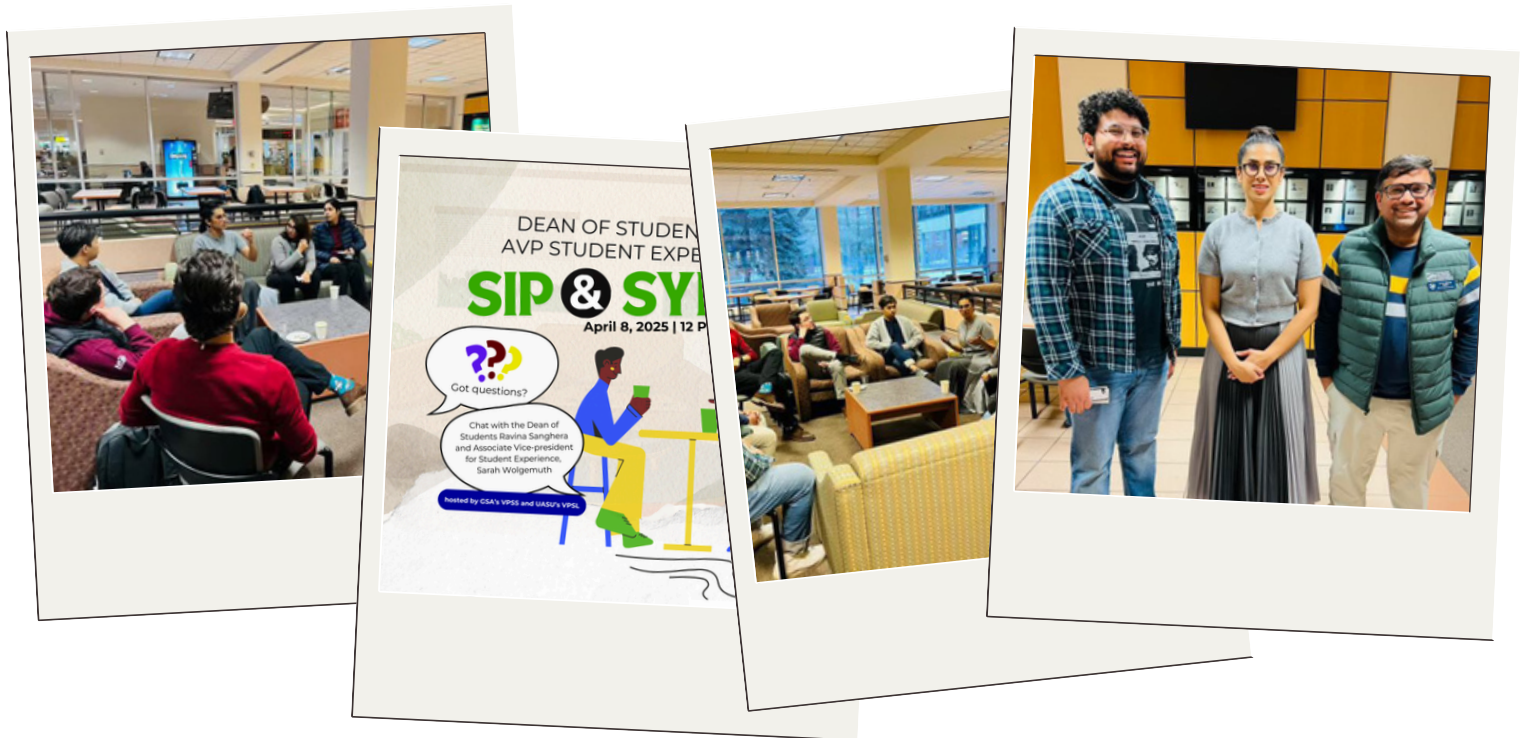
GSA Publishes 'Under Pressure' Mental Health Report in Observance of World Mental Health Day -
Graduate Student's Association | University of Alberta
GSA Photo Contest on Mental Health and Well-being

REIMAGINE

INNOVATING AND IMPLEMENTING NEW INITIATIVES

7. Connecting Students with Leadership and Helping Them Address Their Concerns Directly

The GSA, SU and the Dean of Students office has piloted this initiative in December 2024, where GSA Vice-President Student Services and SU Vice-President Student Life helped initiate discussions between the Dean of Students and the undergraduate and graduate students and listen to their concerns, suggestions and feedback. Upon receiving positive feedback, another chat was organized in April 2025, where the Associate Vice President, Student Experience, was also present. Moving on, this initiative will be expanded to hold at least two chats in each of the Fall and Winter terms, while also exploring the options for expanding the number of University officials to be a part of these discussion sessions.





LABOUR

1. Negotiate improvements to the collective agreement for academically employed graduate students

The GSA Bargaining Team has already finalized and tabled its full proposal package—including both non-monetary and monetary components—during negotiation sessions on March 31 and April 1. While the Union presented all proposals, including those related to wages, the Employer responded only to the non-monetary items and indicated that further time was needed to prepare their monetary response. Constructive dialogue took place during the sessions, and agreements were reached on several non-monetary articles. The upcoming April negotiations will be a critical phase as the GSA continues to push for improved working conditions, fair compensation, and meaningful gains for all academically-employed graduate students.

The GSA Negotiating Team remains fully committed to advocating for the rights and needs of its members throughout the bargaining process.

2. Provide union education and resources for graduate student workers

The GSA is working closely with the Labour Relations Committee (LRC) Chief Steward to develop educational materials that will help graduate student workers better understand their rights, the union structure, and key components of the collective agreement. The first video resource is currently in development and expected to be released soon.

3. Improve union presence through outreach events and increased support for faculty stewards.

The GSA significantly increased its union visibility through multiple outreach initiatives, including regular tabling sessions (targeting two per month), door-knocking campaigns, and breakfast and lunch meet-ups designed to engage academically-employed graduate students (AEGs).

4. Ensuring adherence to the current collective agreement and promptly addressing union members' concerns and grievances.

Over 75 member cases and concerns were attended to and resolved this year, demonstrating a strong commitment to protecting the rights of academically-employed graduate students.

LABOUR



5. Strengthening the steward network to increase support for our members.

The GSA successfully recruited additional stewards across a wider range of departments, ensuring broader and more diverse representation for academically-employed graduate students. To build their capacity, a dedicated steward-only training session was organized early in the year, providing stewards with the necessary tools and knowledge to support their peers effectively. Beyond training, the GSA hosted a series of steward-focused events throughout the year to foster community, encourage the exchange of strategies, and strengthen the overall support network available to union members.

6. UofA Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC).

The Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) at the University of Alberta focuses on recommending health and safety activities for the Edmonton campuses, ensuring that all workers have the right to participate in decisions related to their work environment. The committee addresses physical, psychological, and social well-being, and works to resolve concerns in a timely manner through collaboration between worker and management representatives. As an employee member of this committee, the AVP Labour represents graduate student workers, advocating for their interests and ensuring their concerns are heard in health and safety discussions.

7. People Strategy Steering Committee - Values development

The People Strategy at the University of Alberta is a long-term initiative aimed at creating an inclusive, safe, and sustainable workplace that empowers people to grow and innovate. It emphasizes core commitments like equity, diversity, inclusion, and sustainability, and integrates Indigenous perspectives. The AVP Labour was part of the people strategy committee and contributed to last year's consultation, ensuring graduate students' needs were considered in shaping the strategy to support a thriving university community. The people strategy was initially launched in Oct 2024, and this year the committee is focused on the development of institutional values for the University of Alberta, a key deliverable under the strategy for the first year.

