

GSA Board Statement on Circulation of Petition and Related Conduct

The GSA Board is aware of a petition and accompanying messages that are currently being circulated among members of the graduate student community. **We would like to provide clarity regarding this matter to ensure members have accurate information and understand the actions the GSA is taking.**

We also acknowledge that these messages, though circulated by an individual acting without Board authorization, may have caused confusion, concern, or harm to members of our community. The Board sincerely apologizes that **an individual affiliated with the GSA has misrepresented the Association and has chosen to circulate improper and misleading materials that do not reflect the values or practices of the GSA.** We remain committed to transparency, respect, and lawful governance on behalf of all graduate students. However, we do acknowledge that while work has been done in this area, there is more to be done to further strengthen and enhance our efforts to incorporate Indigenous voices in a meaningful and sustainable way.

1. Xenophobic and Discriminatory Language

The GSA Board is deeply concerned about the xenophobic, exclusionary, and discriminatory language that has appeared in some of the emails and responses associated with this matter. Such language—whether directed at international or other marginalized student groups—has no place within the GSA or our university community.

These remarks not only undermine the GSA's values of equity, inclusion, and mutual respect but also contribute to a harmful and divisive climate. The GSA unequivocally condemns all forms of discrimination and reaffirms our commitment to creating an environment where all students—regardless of background, citizenship, or identity—feel safe, heard, and valued.

2. Clarifying Misinformation

The materials being circulated contain numerous inaccuracies and misinterpretations regarding the GSA's legal obligations, governance processes, and financial management. Claims made in these messages represent a **personal interpretation that is not grounded in fact or governance best practice.** The petition contains an inaccurate invocation of the PSLA: While the Post-Secondary Learning Act allows for student petitions, it does not automatically compel implementation of demands without a Council vote. The claim that reaching 10% signatures mandates implementation regardless of the vote is **a misrepresentation of the law.**

The petition also demands removals and employment terminations without adherence to the due process and disciplinary measures outlined in the bylaws. Overall, the **petition lacks legal merit and may generate animosity or alienation, as it contains demands that are** misaligned with the existing bylaws.

3. Defamatory Statements and Misuse of Process

The circulated materials contain defamatory statements regarding Indigenous students, GSA staff, and elected officers, as well as unfounded accusations concerning the integrity of GSA elections. The “evidence” offered lacks substance and context, and does not withstand scrutiny when measured against the GSA’s transparent and well-documented electoral procedures, which are governed by our Bylaws and Policies.

4. Privacy and Policy Violations

It is important to note that the unauthorized use and distribution of internal GSA member lists, departmental lists, and academically employed graduate students list (AEGS) contacts for **personal advocacy purposes constitutes a violation of both privacy law and university policy.**

Under the **Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)**:

- **Section 33(c):** Personal information must only be collected for necessary and lawful purposes related to official programs or activities.
- **Section 38:** A public body must protect personal information through reasonable security measures.
- **Section 40(1):** Disclosure of personal information is permitted only under specific legal exceptions — which do not include personal or political campaigning. In addition, the **University of Alberta Acceptable Use of Technology Policy** prohibits the use of University systems (including emails, lists, and IT platforms) for unauthorized mass communications or political activities.

Members who have received any communication in violation of the above Act are **encouraged to report the privacy breach** through the [University’s Report a Privacy Breach](#) process.

5. Commitment to Good Governance and Next Steps

The GSA Board remains committed to lawful, transparent, and respectful governance in service of all graduate students. We fully support the integrity of our election processes

and the professionalism of our staff and elected officers. We will not tolerate defamatory actions or behaviours that undermine our community or the work of Indigenous leaders.

Previous updates on this matter have already been shared with GSA Council [[link to Council Statement](#)], and we remain committed to open and transparent communication as we move forward.

To ensure accountability and protection of our members, the Board will:

- **Report the identified privacy breach to the University of Alberta Information and Privacy Office.**
- **Refer the matter to the GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (ACB)** for further review and response in accordance with GSA Bylaws.
- Encourage any members who feel harmed or affected by these actions to file complaints through:
 - The **GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (ACB)**
 - The [University of Alberta Office of the Dean of Students](#) or [Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights \(OSDHR\)](#):

In order to maintain a respectful and safe working environment, GSA management has made temporary adjustments to office access for the individual involved, pending further review. These steps are part of our normal duty of care to protect staff and members, and **do not restrict the individual's ability to perform their elected duties through other appropriate channels.**

The Board will continue to monitor this situation closely and will take any further actions necessary to safeguard the integrity of the GSA, its members, and its governance.

Disclaimer: Please note that official communications from the GSA will always be shared through the GSA newsletter or issued as formal special bulletins. We encourage members to verify sources and check that any information reflects the GSA's official position.