

## 2022-2023 GSA Board Strategic Work Plan 17 April 2023 Update to GSA Council

Each spring the GSA Directly-Elected Officers (hereafter referred to, informally, as the student executive team) work with the GSA Board to produce a Strategic Work Plan (SWP). The SWP is the document that steers and prioritizes the work and initiatives of the GSA, and is subject to revision as opportunities arise, shifting directions as needed. The SWP reflects the GSA's vision and mission to advocate for all graduate students to the University of Alberta and the Alberta Government for a safe, supportive, respectful, accessible, and inclusive community that fosters the multi-faceted roles played by graduate students.

This year's consultation initiatives were carried out in Summer 2022 and yielded a significant amount of feedback which helped shape the 2022-2023 SWP. The final document was then approved by the GSA Board and received by GSA Council for information at their July meeting. It can be viewed [on the GSA website](#). As in previous years, updates are scheduled to be brought to GSA Council in October 2022, January 2023, and April 2023.

A selection of ongoing work and new initiatives pursued and undertaken by the 2022-2023 student executive team (President Anas Fassih, VP Academic Bishoi Aziz, VP External Janmejay Rao, VP Labour Hiren Kaklotar, and VP Student Services Monisha Vinod), in accord with the 2022-2023 SWP, can be found below.

Earlier updates were shared with GSA Council in October and January and can be viewed [on the GSA website](#).; thus this document is the third and final installment of updates in the 2022-2023 term.

- Continued collaboration with Dr. Roger Epp, Interim Vice-Provost and Dean of FGSR, on moving forward with a proposal on institutional minimum for doctoral funding packages. This pursuit remains a high priority for the GSA, and the Office of the Provost and FGSR have been pivotal in moving these ideas forward. A survey was completed to show the gaps in funding across campus and work continues to find how these gaps can be closed;
- Tuition has been extremely pivotal in these last few weeks, as we've worked with colleagues in the Students' Union and across campus to protest the proposed increases at the Board of Governors' meeting on 24 March. The GSA continues to advocate for the most equitable fee structure pairs with a robust offering of services and academic offerings;
- In January, the VP External participated in the Alberta Provincial Advocacy Council's (ab-GPAC) Advocacy Week with provincial political leaders. Tuition was an important advocacy topic and we were encouraged by the announcements by the provincial government to cap tuition increases starting in 2024-2025, extend the interest-free grace period for student loans, increasing the threshold for the Repayment Assistance Plan, and expand the Alberta Student Grant.
- The VP External has been working with the ab-GPAC in collaborating across the province for a Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign. The GSA is excited to collaborate in this effort to promote civic engagement and encourage participation in the democratic process;
- The VP Academic is currently serving as a member of the Academic Integrity Policy Working Group and engaging in conversations relating to generative AI technologies and the effects these have on the academic environment. The committee is currently working to develop guidelines for University governing bodies regarding the use of these technologies;
- The VP Academic has been actively engaged with the FGSR and the external review process of the Faculty to better understand the role of FGSR in the evolving campus structure, and advocating for graduate student supports on campus;
- The team is continuing to engage the graduate student body through in-person events with the aim of advancing community building and wellness. The GSA Coffee Breaks are continuing to be held in Triffo

Hall, and we held a successful GSA Winter Social, in Dinwoodie Lounge. The latter was a chance to bring a larger cohort of graduate students together for an evening of mingling, games, and food;

- We were also able to celebrate the numerous students who serve on our various committees through the Volunteer Appreciation Night in early March;
- The GSA Awards Night returned for the first time since 2019 with a full suite of guests, including distinguished speakers, award recipients, family and friends to celebrate the accomplishments of graduate students and other members of our community for the 2022-2023 academic year.
- The final draft of the 2022-2024 GSA Collective Agreement has been published and includes the following additions: salary increases in Winter 2023 and Fall 2023, a designated leave for academic conferences, a designated leave for traditional Indigenous practices, and more detailed language on working additional hours;
- The VP External has been collaborating with ab-GPAC to advocate to the provincial government to expand the eligibility criteria of the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program to allow for more opportunities for international graduate students to remain in Alberta after completing their degree. The GSA believe this is an excellent opportunity to not only support students as they move out of the University, but to also support a growing economy in the province;
- The VP Student Services has been working to engage more meaningfully with the Student Innovation Centre and expand opportunities for graduate students to explore the innovation and entrepreneurship space with external start-ups as well as innovation hubs on campus;
- The VP Student Services has been engaged in the student space design competition for the University Commons, which encourages student involvement in developing sustainable practices and solutions for how space can be more optimally used on campus;
- During the funding period spanning 1 January 2023 and 1 April 2023, the GSA disbursed \$707,061.71 as Academic Travel Grants, Child Care Grants, Emergency Bursaries, and Graduate Student Group Grants. Eligibility criteria and usage of GSA grants, awards, and bursaries are being closely monitored to continue to ensure they are in alignment with the needs of graduate students;
- The GSA continues to support the Office of the Dean of Students in their efforts to implement the [National Standard on Mental Health and Wellness for Post-Secondary Students](#). VP Student Services is dedicated to serving as representative of the graduate student voice in conversations with the Office of the Dean of Students;
- The VP Student Services has been serving as a co-sponsor for the Student Experience Action Plan, participating in engagement sessions across campus and gathering feedback from staff and students. More information and ways to participate can be found on the project's [website](#).
- The use of the GSA Health and Dental Reserve Fund (GSA HDPRF) to the amount of \$69.44 per student to help offset upcoming increases to the cost of the GSA Health and Dental Plan. The annual cost of enrolment for this plan was frozen for a period of two years as part of the previous round of negotiations with Studentcare. Since then, as a result of increasing usage, the cost of the plan has continued to grow. With the two-year freezing period ending in August 2022, and further easing of covid restrictions resulted in increased use of the plan the per-person fee of the plan for the 2023-2024 academic year was reported at \$673.63. Thus the GSA Board and GSA Budget and Finance Committee have opted to utilize the GSA HDPRF to help offset this increase for the duration of the 2023-2024 academic year, meaning that the existing per-person cost will see a 15% increase to \$604.19. Work to evaluate coverage offerings under the Plan is ongoing; *and*



- The GSA Board has successfully hired a new Executive Director this April. Further updates on the process will be brought to GSA Council.

The student executive team will continue to work diligently in accordance with the 2022-2023 SWP until the conclusion of the 2022-2023 term on 30 April 2023. Thereafter, the proverbial baton will be passed to the 2023-2024 student executive team.