

GSA Council Meeting AGENDA
Monday, March 11, 2013 at 6:00 pm
Telus 1-34

A light, vegetarian dinner will be served at 5:15 pm and an Open Access presentation (delivered by Denise Koufogiannakis, Sharon Farnel, and Amanda Wakaruk) will start **prior to Council at 5:30 pm**

OPEN SESSION

1. Approval of the 11 March 2013 Agenda
2. Approval of the Minutes from the 11 February 2013 GSA Council meeting
Attachments:
 - Minutes from the 11 February 2013 GSA Council meeting
3. Changes in Council Membership
 - i. Introduction of new Councillors (*If you are new to Council, please let us know it is your first meeting*)
 - ii. Farewell to Departing Councillors (*If this is your last Council meeting, or if your last Council meeting is approaching, please let us know*)

Attached Numbered Pages

2.0-2.17*
**Distributed in first mailing*

Presentations and Councillor Announcements

4. Graduate Education at the University of Alberta
Ashlyn Bernier (President) will introduce the speakers and present the item.
Guests: Dr. Mazi Shirvani (Dean of FGSR) and Dr. Catherine Swindlehurst (Special Advisor to the Provost). The presentation will begin after roll call.
Attachments:
 - Letter from President Ashlyn Bernier to Council about the Graduate Plan
 - Graduate Education Administration Draft Action Plan
 - Draft Report from the Graduate Studies Consultation
5. 2012 HUB Mall Incident
Ashlyn Bernier (President) will introduce the speaker and present the item.
Guest: Mr. Philip Stack (Associate Vice-President Risk Management Services).
The presentation will begin at 7:00 pm.

4.0*
4.1-4.7*
4.8-4.70*
**Distributed in first mailing*

Reports

6. President
 - i. President's Report (**attached**)
 - ii. GSA Board (**attached**)
 - iii. Budget and Finance Committee (**no meetings this reporting period**)
 - iv. Governance Committee (**attached**)
 - v. Nominating Committee (**attached**)
7. Vice-President Academic
 - i. Vice-President Academic's Report (**attached**)

6.0-6.1
6.2-6.3
6.4
6.5-6.7
7.0-7.1

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 8. Vice-President Student Services | |
| i. Vice-President Student Services' Report (attached) | 8.0-8.1 |
| ii. Student Affairs Advisory Committee (joint chair: Vice-President Student Life) (no meetings this reporting period) | |
| 9. Vice-President Student Life | |
| i. Vice-President Student Life's Report (attached) | 9.0-9.1 |
| ii. Awards Selection Committee (attached) | 9.2-9.3 |
| 10. Vice-President Labour | |
| i. Vice-President Labour's Report (attached) | 10.0-10.1 |
| ii. Negotiating Committee (no report at this time) | |
| iii. Labour Relations Committee (attached) | 10.2 |
| 11. Senator | |
| i. Senator's Report (no report this period) | |
| 12. Speaker | |
| i. Speaker's Report (no report this period) | |
| 13. Chief Returning Officer | |
| i. Chief Returning Officer's Report (attached) | 13.0 |
| ii. Elections and Referenda Committee (no meetings this reporting period) | |
| 14. GSA Management | |
| i. Executive Director's Report (attached) | 14.0-14.3 |

Action Items, Elections, Appointments, Special Business

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 15. Elections (none at this time) | |
| 16. Budget Principles, Practices, and Procedures: Proposed Revisions (second reading)
Ashlyn Bernier (President) will present the item.
<i>Attachments:</i> | |
| • Outline of Issue | 16.0 |
| • GSA Bylaw, Part XII: Finances: Proposed Revisions | 16.1 |
| 17. GSA Bylaw and Policy: Proposal to Move Certain Sections to GSA Policy
Ashlyn Bernier (President) will present the item.
<i>Attachments:</i> | |
| • Outline of Issue | 17.0 |
| • Letter to Council from the Executive Director regarding Bylaw and Policy | 17.1 |

Question Period

- | | |
|---|--|
| 18. Written Questions (none to date) | |
| 19. Oral Questions | |

Adjournment

GSA Council Meeting AGENDA
Monday, March 11, 2013 at 6 pm,
Telus 1-34

**A light, vegetarian dinner will be served at 5:15 pm and an
Open Access presentation (delivered by Denise Koufogiannakis) will start prior to Council at 5:30 pm**

OPEN SESSION

**Attached
Numbered Pages**

1. Approval of the 11 March 2013 Agenda
2. Approval of the Minutes from the 11 February 2013 GSA Council meeting
Attachments:
 - Minutes from the 11 February 2013 GSA Council meeting
3. Changes in Council Membership
 - i. Introduction of new Councillors (*If you are new to Council, please let us know it is your first meeting*)
 - ii. Farewell to Departing Councillors (*If this is your last Council meeting, or if your last Council meeting is approaching, please let us know*)

2.0-2.17

Presentations and Councillor Announcements

4. Graduate Education at the University of Alberta
Ashlyn Bernier (President) will introduce the speakers and present the item.
Guests: Dr. Mazi Shirvani (Dean of FGSR) and Dr. Catherine Swindlehurst (Special Advisor to the Provost)
Presentation will begin after roll call.
Attachments:
 - Letter from President Ashlyn Bernier to Council about the Graduate Plan
 - Graduate Education Administration Draft Action Plan
 - Draft Report from the Graduate Studies Consultation

4.0

4.1-4.7

4.8-4.70

5. Councillor Announcements

Reports

6. President
 - i. President's Report (**to be distributed**)
 - ii. GSA Board (**to be distributed**)
 - iii. Budget and Finance Committee (**to be distributed**)
 - iv. Governance Committee (**no meetings this reporting period**)
 - v. Nominating Committee (**to be distributed**)

7. Vice-President Academic
 - i. Vice-President Academic's Report **(to be distributed)**

9. Vice-President Student Services
 - i. Vice-President Student Services' Report **(to be distributed)**
 - ii. Student Affairs Advisory Committee (joint chair: Vice-President Student Life) **(no meetings this reporting period)**

10. Vice-President Student Life
 - i. Vice-President Student Life's Report **(to be distributed)**
 - ii. Awards Selection Committee **(to be distributed)**

11. Vice-President Labour
 - i. Vice-President Labour's Report **(to be distributed)**
 - ii. Negotiating Committee **(none at this time)**
 - iii. Labour Relations Committee **(to be distributed)**

12. Senator
 - i. Senator's Report **(no report this period)**

13. Speaker
 - i. Speaker's Report **(no report this period)**

14. Chief Returning Officer
 - i. Chief Returning Officer's Report **(to be distributed)**
 - ii. Elections and Referenda Committee **(no meetings this reporting period)**

15. GSA Management
 - i. Executive Director's Report **(to be distributed)**

Action Items, Elections, Appointments, Special Business

16. Elections **(none at this time)**

17. Special Business **(none at this time)**

Question Period

18. Written Questions

19. Oral Questions

Adjournment

**Meeting Minutes
11 February 2013
GSA Council Meeting**

[Note: All materials referred to in these Minutes are stored in hard copy in the Official File, as well as electronically]

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm.

Approval of Agenda

1. Approval of the 11 February 2013 Agenda

Members had before them the 14 February 2013 Consolidated Agenda, which had been distributed on 01 February 2013.

The Agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Approval of Minutes

2. Minutes from the 14 January 2013 meeting

Members had before them the 14 January 2013 GSA Council Minutes, which had been distributed on 01 February 2013.

The Minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Changes in Council Membership

3. Changes in Council Membership

i. Introduction of new Councillors

This was the first meeting for three Councillors: Anushka Atallahjan (School of Public Health), Keitha Langston (Library and Information Studies), and Emma Kennedy (Philosophy).

ii. Farewell to departing Councillors

Tessa Hawkins (Art and Design) and Evan Berry (Biochemistry).

Presentations and Councillor Announcements

4. APIRG (Alberta Public Interest Group)

Speaker Fred Wu introduced the guests: Ms. Nikki Shaffeeullah (Board of Directors, APIRG) and Mr. Eric Grehen (Board of Directors, APIRG). No material was distributed in advance. A PowerPoint presentation was shown to Council (see appended copy).

During the presentation, Ms. Nikki Shaffeeullah and Mr. Eric Grehen stated that they were at Council to speak about APIRG and what a potential relationship between APIRG and the GSA could look like in the future. The following points were raised:

- APIRG is one of many PIRGs (Public Interest Research Groups) across Canada and the United States. It is an NGO committed to linking student work with community work, with a focus on environmental, social, and economic justice;
- APIRG believes that social change is possible and in providing the tools and resources to effect that social change;
- The core values of APIRG involve equitable environments and anti-oppression;
- One of the main resources that APIRG offers on campus is office space where staff and the board of directors do work. This office is available to students as a meeting space and office space, and is barrier-free;
- There is also a library in the office with books, DVDs, magazines, and other materials otherwise not readily available on campus;
- Main aspect of APIRG's work is the funding of working groups and events;
- \$30,000 is distributed every year by APIRG to fund projects that fall within their scope;
- Some of the ten current working groups include the Edmonton Organic Growers Guild and newer groups such as ConsentEd;
- APIRG funds events like the John Humphrey Centre for Human Rights Unconference and the Edmonton Anarchist Book fair;
- Non-monetary resources include the APIRG office space and library, three staff members with experience in community organizing, a button maker, photocopier, and video cameras;
- Also do own event programming and an host alternative week of welcome with an annual theme-this year's is knowledge economies;
- Currently anyone in undergraduate studies is a member as they pay a \$3 fee per semester. Students can opt out of this fee;
- Community members and graduate students can opt in and become members;
- APIRG's current relationship with graduate students includes involvement with COPE, Stage and Diversities theatre project, a gender and movement workshop, and the Edmonton Free School;
- Graduate students are considered important and may be a good funding source;

- APRIG may offer research grants as part of a potential relationship with graduate students, micro-grants for community research, travel grants, and access to a research journal developed in conjunction with graduate students; *and*
- APIRG may also provide professional development opportunities and a conference with a focus on the research that APRIG promotes and supports.

The floor was then opened to questions.

Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) asked: I'm going to cut to the point. What do you want from us?

Eric Grehen (APRIG Board of Directors) responded: We did touch on a relationship between APIRG and the GSA in the future.

Nikki Shaffeeullah (APRIG Board of Directors) responded: We came here to talk about expanding the APIRG and GSA relationship in a concrete fashion, as well as to touch base with members and become acquainted.

Ashlyn Bernier (President) added: APIRG was invited to Board and their presentation to Council is seen as the next step in establishing a relationship.

Brent Epperson (Vice-President Labour) stated: Thank you for presenting and for your work on campus. We look forward to developing our relationship in the future.

Nikki Shaffeeullah (APRIG Board of Directors) responded: Thank you.

There were no further questions.

5. Councillor Announcements

Ashlyn Bernier (President) announced that GSA Office Staff member Katie Biittner gave birth to daughter Olivia, and that both mom and baby are happy and healthy.

Simarjit (Monty) Bal (Councillor-at-Large) announced that the Political Science student group had a pub quiz recently and that the winner was Fred Wu (Speaker).

Action Items, Elections, Appointments, and Special Business

6. Annual Operating and Capital Budgets AND Five-Year Budget/Business Plan.

Members had before them an outline of issue, a budget letter from the GSA President to Council, the 2013-2014 Restricted and Other Funding Budget and Expenditure report, the 2013-2014 GSA Operating Budget Narrative (condensed for Council), the Annual Operating and Capital budgets (2013-2014), and five-year budget/business plan (2013/14-2017/18, which had been previously distributed on 01 February 2013. Ashlyn Bernier (President) presented the item.

Ashlyn Bernier (President) MOVED the recommended motions:

“That the GSA Council, acting on the unanimous recommendation of the GSA Board (GSAB) and the GSA Budget Finance Committee (BFC), approve the GSA Annual Operating and Capital Budgets (2013-2014) as set out in the left-hand column of 6.5-6.25.”

and

“That the GSA Council, acting on the unanimous recommendation of the GSA Board (GSAB) and the GSA Budget Finance Committee (BFC), receive for information, the GSA Five-Year Budget/Business Plan as set out in the left-hand column of 6.26-6.38.”

Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) SECONDED.

President Ashlyn Bernier MOVED the recommended motion budget plan be considered as one motion. Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) SECONDED.

Ashlyn Bernier (President) then introduced the item and made the following points:

- This is the first year the GSA has been able to do Quarterly Reports due to proper infrastructure now in place;
- Quarterly Reports are intended to bring Council up to speed on budgeting issues so that they are informed and are able to ask questions;
- The five-year budget plan has been recommended by the Board and the GSA Budget and Finance Committee;
- Prior to 2012, there was not a lot of infrastructure at the GSA;
- Modernization efforts have brought up several issues, such as lack of job descriptions for the staff, no filing system or way to access previous GSA agreements, out-of-date operational processes, use of a cash system at the front desk, no training program for elected officials, and risk and compliance issues;

- Huge advancements have been made on addressing these issues and collegial governance initiatives have demonstrated that we are viewed by others as professional and effective on campus;
- Online applications, a filing system for agreements, and the development of institutional memory are now part of the GSA;
- The budget processes have been modernized with the ability to issue Quarterly Reports, thanks to the professional finance team consisting of Shirley Ball (Accountant) and Dorte Sheikh (Financial Manager);
- The GSA has had a successful audit in the past year;
- From 2010 to the present, the focus at the GSA was on fixes. This the last year of the recovery period. Some smaller fixes are still needed but the bigger fixes are now done;
- This budget and the five-year plan allow the GSA to be strategic and forward-thinking;
- Acknowledgement and thanks go to Roy's team, my team, and the management and staff;
- There is quite a bit of information in front of Council today, including the 16th draft of the 2013-2014 budget;
- This addresses issues such as inflation rate, the projected numbers of graduate students, and employment issues; *and*
- In 2010, Roy put together a three-year plan and this year is the third year. There is a twenty-five dollar proposed increase to GSA fees. The five-year plan projects the Consumer Price Index, or CPI, increase in the years after the proposed 2013 increase. This GSA fee increase will allow us to be professionally managed and allow for a robust succession plan for the managers.

Brent Epperson (Vice-President Labour) MOVED to go into CLOSED SESSION. SECONDED by Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services). NO objections.

The minute takers Courtney Borstad and Dyan Semple left for the closed session portion of the meeting until called back by the Speaker.

Ashlyn Bernier (President): There are a few last issues regarding the projected surplus involving cash flow. The University gives us money at certain points during the year and budgeting for a

surplus will help us deal with cash flow issues. As we move forward in the five-year business plan, we will be better able to predict spending in the future.

Ashlyn Bernier (President) then invited Senator Roy Coulthard to make some brief remarks on the budget given his involvement as past GSA President.

Roy Coulthard (Senator): I will add anything I have to say in debate.

The MOTION was then opened for debate.

Colin More (Physics) asked: Why historically do we have the fees delivered quarterly by the University instead of all at once?

Ashlyn Bernier (President) requested that the GSA financial team answer.

Dorte Sheikh (GSA Finance) responded: Financial fees are assessed by the University term by term. Fees are disbursed to the GSA as they are collected term by term, every fall and winter. At the financial year end, fees are reconciled in May. In regards to cash flow, there is a significant influx of revenues twice per year, but the GSA is a twelve-month operation.

Roy Coulthard (Senator) stated: I am happy to speak in favour of this motion. Although the Board is generous in crediting me with this, I hadn't seen the budget until Council saw it this year. It is quite an experience going from the budget in 2009. At the end of February, someone would take the spreadsheet and make the budget. We had budget lines that had not been used in eight years and people had also gotten rid of budget lines. It was a frustrating endeavour as we didn't even know what our student numbers were. Some interesting projections ended up happening that didn't come true. This budget has tied up all the loose ends. As an aside, with the budget that preceded it involved dipping into GSA savings. With this budget, we don't have to do that to cover a deficit. What else GSA members are getting you have already heard about from Ashlyn and Ellen. We don't have to dip into the reserves.

Isaac Odoom (Councillor-at-Large) asked: I would like some clarification on the Budget Narrative, page 6.13. It states that the CRO is paid an honorarium for managing GSA elections. Does this amount of money go to the DRO as well as and the CRO?

Ashlyn Bernier (President) responded: Just the CRO. The deputy would receive the honorarium only when they have to step in and fulfill the CRO's duties. As the CRO is doing the majority of the work and taking on the responsibility, they are paid the honorarium.

No further questions.

Speaker Fred Wu: All those in favour of the motion passing?

Motion PASSED unanimously.

7. GSA 2012-2013 Budget and Expenditure Quarterly Financial Report

Members had before them an outline of issue and the GSA Quarterly Financial Report (High Level Summary), which had been previously distributed on 01 February 2013. Ashlyn Bernier (President) presented the items.

Ashlyn Bernier (President) MOVED:

“That the GSA Council, acting on the unanimous recommendation of the GSA Board (GSAB) and the GSA Budget Finance Committee (BFC) **receive for information** the GSA 2012-2013 Budget and Expenditure (Quarterly) Report.”

SECONDED by Asif Siddiqui (Councillor-at-Large).

Ashlyn Bernier (President) then introduced the item and made the following points:

- The Quarterly Report is intended to bring Council up to speed on the budget, for information, and to keep the GSA Council apprised of the financial systems
and
- She asked Shirley Ball (GSA Accountant) if the GSA was on track and Shirley responded that the GSA is on target and noted that since there are only two months left in the current fiscal year, only these two months required a forecast.

No debate. Motion PASSED unanimously.

8. Budget Principles, Practices, and Procedures

Members had before them an outline of Issue and recommended changes to Budget Principles, Practices, and Procedures, which had been previously distributed on 01 February 2013. Ashlyn Bernier (President) presented the item.

Ashlyn Bernier (President) MOVED:

“That the GSA Council **approve**, on the unanimous recommendation of the GSA Board and the GSA BFC, the proposed revisions to GSA Policy on “Budget Principles, Practices, and Procedures,” as outlined in the attached three-column documents, effective immediately after the first reading.”

and

“That the GSA Council **approve**, on the unanimous recommendation of the GSA Board and the GSA BFC, the proposed revisions to GSA Bylaw, Part XII: Finances, as outlined in the attached three-column documents, effective upon the second reading in March.”

SECONDED by Cathleen Edwards (Physical Education and Recreation).

Ashlyn Bernier (President) then introduced the item and made the following points:

- That starting at page 8.31, the proposed changes and rationale are detailed;
- In summary, several of the proposed changes are purely editorial and involve changing out-of-date phrasing to put the GSA closer in line with other budgetary practices and follow the recommendations by the auditor; *and*
- These proposed changes will allow greater flexibility in the interpretation of the Budget Principles, Practices, and Procedures.

No debate. Motion PASSED unanimously.

9. GSA Referendum on Continuation of the U-Pass Program

Members had before them an outline of issue and proposed wording of the referendum question on the continuation of U-Pass, which had been previously distributed on 01 February 2013. Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) presented the item.

**Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) MOVED that Council approved the attached wording on page 9.2 for the U-Pass referendum.
SECONDED by Ashlyn Bernier (President).**

Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) then introduced the item and made the following points:

- It is up to the Council to approve the referendum so that the U-Pass agreement can take effect;
- This agreement has been approved by all of the city councils and needs to be approved by the student councils;

- The proposed fee increase is less than what was actually negotiated. This is due to subsidizing by the University of one-sixth of the negotiated price; *and*
- 96% of students pick up their U-Pass, indicating the service is well-used by students, and Council is encouraged to support the U-Pass program.

The floor was then opened for debate.

Hamid Ramezani (Chemistry) asked: How much is the price that you negotiated this year? What would appear on the fee assessment?

Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) responded: This negotiated price would begin in Fall Term 2013. The actual price will be \$122.92.

Susan Cake (Sociology) asked: With U-Pass exemption criteria, does that mean affected students don't get the U-Pass at all or that they are able to opt out?

Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) responded: When you register, you are assessed the fees. If you fit the criteria, you can opt out.

Leanne Labossiere (Earth and Atmospheric Sciences) asked: If students are engaged in field work, how do they prove they are exempt?

Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) responded: This would have to be confirmed by their supervisor and the Office of the Registrar.

**Ashlyn Bernier (President) MOVED to amend the current wording to state that students would be "eligible for exemption" for the U-Pass. SECONDED by Susan Cake (Sociology).
No objections. Motion to amend PASSED.**

Fred Wu (Speaker) reminded Council that they are now considering the motion, as amended. No further debate.

Council VOTED on the main motion. Motion PASSED unanimously.

In addition, Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) stated: Special thanks to Heather and Daniel for their hard work on this.

10. Elections

None.

11. Special Business

None.

Reports**12. President****i. President's Report:**

Members had before them a written report, which had been distributed on 08 February 2013.

**Ashlyn Bernier (President) MOVED to go into closed session.
SECONDED by Tessa Hawkins (Art and Design). No objections. Motion PASSED.**

**Brent Epperson (Vice-President Labour) MOVED to go out of CLOSED SESSION.
SECONDED by Asif Siddiqui (Councillor-at-Large).
No objections. Motion PASSED.**

In addition, Ashlyn Bernier (President) noted:

- In regards to graduate reorganization, formerly called FGSR reorganization, the GSA Board has received a draft of the action plan;
- The main action in this initiative is having grad units, whether these units are considered departments or something else, come up with a strategic management plan for graduate education;
- They would present their ideas on how they would assess the quality of graduate education, assess where they are, and assess where they want to be;
- There may be five-year management plans and the departments would be held accountable, possibly financially, to this plan;
- A draft of the action plan will be provided for March Council;
- In March, the Dean of FGSR, Mazi Shirvani, will be present at Council to answer questions on the action plan;
- Catherine Swindlehurst, who prepared the consultative report, will also be present;
- Her report is 160 pages long, but the elected officials will be providing an executive summary to Council;
- The Interim Provost and Vice-President Academic, Martin Ferguson-Pell, is not able to attend Council in March, but will come to April's meeting. By this time, the plan may have undergone reiteration;

- The GSA continues to work closely with administration on this;
- Martin Ferguson-Pell has had his term as Interim Provost extended for an additional year until summer 2014, as Carl Amrhein has requested additional leave; *and*
- Most of the GSA's contact has been with Martin Ferguson-Pell and the GSA is able to effectively work with him. This is good news as we have built up a relationship with the Interim Provost.

The floor was then opened to questions.

Hamid Ramezani (Chemistry) asked: Do you think it would have been easier for us to work with Carl?

Ashlyn Bernier (President) responded: I can't answer that. I did speak with Carl recently and he indicated that he would like to meet with the elected officials before their terms are up in order to touch base and develop a relationship.

No further questions.

ii. GSA Board

Members had before them a written report, which had been distributed on 08 February 2013. The report stood as submitted.

iii. Budget and Finance Committee

Members had before them a written report, which had been distributed on 01 February 2013. The report stood as submitted.

iv. Governance Committee

Members had before then a written report, which had been distributed on 01 February 2013. The report stood as submitted.

v. Nominating Committee

Members had before them a written report, which had been distributed on 08 February 2013. The report stood as submitted.

13. Vice-President Academic

i. Vice-President Academic's Report

Members had before them a written report, which had been distributed on 08 February 2013. In addition, Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) noted the following:

- The attributes and competencies are now at a stage where a report is being put together with structures;
- Committee members were asked to go to their departments and come back with a plan and how to implement;
- The committee is not aware of any specific direction from the Committee on the Learning Environment, except that there has been resistance from some Deans;
- There will be more to report by the end of April, hopefully;
- With FGSR/graduate reorganization, Martin Ferguson-Pell gave an update at a recent meeting;
- Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) is disappointed that the administration is not following their own timelines, but noted that the GSA has guidelines with the action plan;
- Another venue where Councillors and graduate students can ask questions is the President's Address in ECHA;
- Interested members do need to register in order to attend;
- There has been discussion about the USRI evaluations and what it means for students to fill out those forms;
- The AASUA is contesting the notion of students not really giving appropriate comments all the time;
- The questions on the form do not appear to lead to good responses; *and*
- This issue is still under discussion and Council will be kept informed about updates.

The floor was then opened to questions.

Hamid Ramezani (Chemistry) asked: How much impact does the GSA have to change the reorganization proposal?

Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) responded: We have a bigger role to play in this. There is the potential with this to make the GSA stand out and we are also represented by graduate students on the Working Group for Quality Measures.

Isaac Odoom (Councillor-at-Large) asked: Is the USRI review something the University is proposing?

Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) responded: The issues is based upon studies from Oxford and is part of a bigger discussion in academia. It is a messy issue, but it is in the pipeline and hopefully something good will come out of it. The questions don't seem to yield good responses.

Isaac Odoom (Councillor-at-Large) supplementary: The USRI includes evaluating teaching assistants. It's very important for students and their future teaching.

Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) responded: They are trying to move onto online evaluation. It is a touchy subject. The GSA can look into this in the future and consider how to how to make the current questions better.

Brent Epperson (Vice-President Labour): To go back to Hamid's question, from my experience sitting in on the working groups, the influence of the GSA depends more on the GSA than the University. If we take a leadership role, we are incredibly influential. The administration is now expanding it beyond FGSR reform into graduate studies reform. There are still some uncertainties, but we are getting a clearer picture as time goes on. The GSA is able to take a leadership role in meetings by suggesting measures and that's the attitude we have to take. All the students involved in the working group are graduate students.

Asif Siddiqui (Councillor-at-Large) asked: A lot of professors don't know what proper actions should be in their classes. What about the development of a professors' code of conduct, like a student code of conduct?

Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) responded: It's really difficult to tell professors what to do. I don't know what we can do with that one.

Asif Siddiqui (Councillor-at-Large) supplementary: I've had professors who've changed the deal mid-course and singled students out. If there is something that can be done realistically, it should be done. What do you think of that?

Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) responded: Students have the ability to contact the Associate Dean of Students with specific issues. The development of guidelines for professors might be useful or a list of attributes, maybe.

There were no further questions.

14. Vice-President Student Services

i. Vice-President Student Services' Report

Members had before them a written report, which had been distributed on 08 February 2013. The report stood as submitted. In addition, Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) noted:

- There is a New Student Experience Working Group. New students receive a lot of orientations and information from different places on campus;

- The problem is that some of this information may overlap or be unnecessary for the student;
- This working group is attempting to come up with a simple system to streamline the orientation experience and provide better information on which sessions new students should attend; *and*
- With the new online application system for the professional development awards and the child care grants, feedback and suggestions for improvement about the online application system would be appreciated from Council members and students;

The floor was then opened to questions.

Qiang Li (Councillor-at-Large) asked a question about having the forms be fill-able and able to be submitted online.

Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) clarified that the Councillor was referring to the GSA Awards and not the grants and bursaries.

No further questions.

ii. Student Affairs Advisory Committee (joint chair: Vice-President Student Life)

It was noted on the Agenda that no meetings were needed for the Student Affairs Advisory Committee that month.

15. Vice-President Student Life

i. Vice-President Student Life's Report

Members had before them a written report, which had been distributed on 08 February 2013. The report stood as submitted.

- It was noted by Speaker Fred Wu that Huimin Zhong (Vice-President Student Life) was not able to attend Council this month since she was away for a family emergency.

ii. Awards Selection Committee

It was noted on the Agenda that no meetings were needed for the Awards Selection Committee that month.

16. Vice-President Labour**i. Vice-President Labour's Report**

Members had before them a written report, which had been distributed on 08 February 2013. The report stood as submitted.

Brent Epperson (Vice-President Labour) MOVED to go into closed session.

Hamid Ramezani (Chemistry) SECONDED.

Motion approved.

Asif Siddiqui (Councillor-at-Large) MOVED to go out of closed session.

Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) SECONDED.

Motion approved.

ii. Negotiating Committee

It was noted on the Agenda that members were to refer to Item 16 i – VPL's Report.

iii. Labour Relations Committee

It was noted on the Agenda that no meetings were needed for the Labour Relations Committee that month.

17. Senator**i. Senator's Report**

No report was required at this time. In addition, Roy Coulthard (Senator) noted:

- The Senate Committee had met this week and spent some time going over the Senate Task Force recommendations;
- There are 11 recommendations ranging from whether the University is doing enough for students to find employment after graduation to bullying on campus;
- A very interesting Senate Plenary is expected as discussion will occur in depth on these recommendations; *and*
- It is novel that the Senate has a task force as there has not been one since 2005. Suggestions made by the Senate Task Force have been broad-based so far, and will be difficult for the Administration to attack directly.

18. Speaker**i. Speaker's Report**

No report was required at this time. In addition, Fred Wu (Speaker) noted that there would be a social event after Council and members were welcome to attend.

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

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 08 February 2013. The report stood as submitted.

In addition, Danial Prins (CRO) noted:

- Nominations have closed;
- Graduate students, including Council members, are welcome to go to the GSA website to see the video interviews of the candidates; *and*
- Voting is important.

Nathan Andrews (Vice-President Academic) asked: Last year the candidates came and gave a two minute speech to Council about their platform. Will that happen this year?

Danial Prins (CRO) responded: No, there are more candidates this year than last year and there is not enough time for each one to speak at Council.

Isaac Odoom (Councillor-at-Large) asked: To follow up to Nathan's question, the work of Council is important and I think we should have the candidates speak to Council for maybe 20 minutes, for the record. My supplemental question: Has there been a need so far to get some assistance from the DRO for this election?

Daniel Prins (CRO): No, it's all under control.

Roy Coulthard (Senator): Would you agree that Councillors should go back to their respective departments and encourage their constituents to vote?

Daniel Prins (CRO): Yes.

Roy Coulthard (Senator) supplementary: So people should be encouraged to go back to their departments and vote.

Daniel Prins (CRO): Yes.

Ashlyn Bernier (President): I have some more information about candidates not presenting at Council. We have completed the taped interviews and posted them online and we encourage all Councillors to view the videos to get a good idea about what each candidate is standing for. There are ten candidates this year, and it would be an unfair advantage for those who could attend Council to speak over those who might not be able to attend due to family commitments or classes.

No further questions.

ii. Elections and Referenda Committee

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 08 February 2013. The report stood as submitted.

20. GSA Management

i. Executive Director's Report

Members had before them a written report, which had been previously distributed on 08 February 2013. The report stood as submitted. In addition, Ellen Schoeck (Executive Director) noted the following:

- It is a historic night for the GSA with the budget approval;
- Acknowledgement of Evan Berry on the Budget and Finance Committee, as he has put in hours on the budget;
- Also acknowledgement of two at-large students on the Budget and Finance Committee who both brought tremendous experience about budgets;
- In the ED Report, the tables on 20.0 and 20.1 indicate our corporate presence in the form of our various corporate agreements;
- These types of documents were not readily available before 2010; *and*
- Bylaw and policy review will happen in the future in order to streamline the GSA operations even more and free up staff time.

No questions were asked.

Question Period

21. Written Questions

No written questions were received prior to the meeting.

22. Oral Questions

Roy Coulthard (Senator) asked: For the Vice-President Student Services, in light of the U-Pass referendum question, how long will it be before ETS implements smartcard technology so that there will be real numbers to base the program on?

Naseeb Adnan (Vice-President Student Services) responded: They are testing pilot software which will be in effect in 2015. More accurate data will be used for the next negotiation. Other questions for the future include how to integrate the ONEcard with a smartcard. Will there be two different cards for students?

Isaac Odoom (Councillor-at-Large) asked: I would like an update on the transparencies measures.

Fred Wu (Speaker) responded: The names and departments of Council members are now on the GSA website for your constituents.

No further questions.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 pm.

DRAFT Report from the Graduate Studies Consultation

Catherine Swindlehurst
Special Advisor to the Provost
1/17/2013

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Definitions.....	6
Background	7
Issues with the current state of graduate education.....	7
Differences between graduate education and undergraduate education.....	8
Heterogeneity of viewpoints	9
Past reviews of FGSR and Graduate Education.....	9
Goals of Consultation.....	10
Methodology.....	10
Overarching concerns	11
Communication around the change process.....	11
Role of FGSR in Graduate Education at the University of Alberta.....	12
Faculty oversight vs. FGSR oversight	13
Downloading of administrative tasks.....	15
Long-term institutional strategy for graduate studies.....	15
Provost’s Innovation Grants	15
The Four Key Issues.....	16
Administration	16
Issues.....	16
Communication between FGSR and its constituents.....	17
Operational inefficiencies	18
Applications and admissions.....	21
Funding allocation for graduate studies	22
Awards administration.....	22
Dispute resolution and academic appeals.....	23
External Examiners.....	24
Training for graduate coordinators, administrators, and supervisors.....	25
Graduate Student Perspectives	26
Best practices and ideas.....	26
Summary of Issues	27

Recruitment	27
Issues.....	27
Institutional messaging around recruitment issues.....	28
Department and institutional roles in recruitment	28
Recruitment administration.....	28
The recruitment offer – funding, timing and the ‘Edmonton Effect’.....	28
Communication to potential graduate students	31
Recruitment strategies.....	32
Graduate Student Perspectives	34
Best practices and ideas.....	34
Summary of Issues	35
Quality Measures	35
Issues.....	36
Quality assessment of programs vs. students	36
Reasons for quality measures.....	36
Potential implications of quality measures.....	37
Institutional vs. discipline-specific measures.....	38
Validity of data	38
General indicators of quality.....	38
Suggested measurement approaches.....	39
Graduate Student Perspectives	41
Best practices and ideas.....	42
Summary of Issues	42
Professional Development.....	42
Issues.....	43
Faculty/departmental vs. institutional role	43
Professional development areas.....	45
Accessibility of offerings	45
Non-academic streams	46
International student offerings.....	46
Graduate Student Perspectives	47

Best practices and ideas.....	47
Summary of Issues	47
Other University Models.....	48
Postdoctoral Fellows.....	49
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	49
Next Steps	52
Appendix I: Participants in the Consultation Exercise	53
Faculties/Schools and Departments:	53
Graduate Students	56
Administrative Units	56
Others	57
Appendix II: Email to Department Chairs	58
Appendix III: Memo to Deans	60
Appendix IV: Visits to University of Toronto and University of Waterloo	62
University of Waterloo (December 18, 2012).....	62
University of Toronto (December 19, 2012).....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Executive Summary

The University of Alberta has a strong national and international reputation for the high quality of its graduate education. We are proud of our graduate students and our graduate programs, which are a hallmark of our excellence as a research-intensive university. Like our research programs, which are evolving to incorporate new concepts, innovations, and methodologies, graduate education at the University is evolving to meet the needs of students, disciplines and employers.

Many changes have taken place in a relatively short space of time. Our graduate student population has grown by more than 40 percent in the past 10 years, and we have expectations for further growth. Our community of international students has increased considerably, especially in the last five years. The number and breadth of our programs has grown to meet emerging needs and demands from students and employers. And more of our students are pursuing non-academic careers after graduation, both by choice and because of the shrinking academic job market. The landscape for graduate education has changed, and our institutional systems must adapt to support it.

This situation is not unique to the University of Alberta. Many Canadian institutions, including the University of British Columbia, the University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo, to name a few, are developing and implementing strategies to support and grow graduate student programs, so that their graduate offerings are competitive and their students are successful over the long term.

There is the perception on campus that University of Alberta has a tremendous opportunity to improve graduate student experience, right from recruitment and admissions, to educational opportunities, through to convocation, and our relationship with our alumni. Areas for improvement include streamlining and evolving administrative systems to better support students and programs, which currently place a heavy burden on all administrators; development of clear and consistent institutional strategies and goals around graduate education; improving communication between Central Administration, FGSR, departments, faculties, and students; clarifying roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities for the graduate student experience, from students and supervisors, to departments, faculties, FGSR, and central administration; and developing and delivering high quality professional development, both discipline-specific programs, and broad-based offerings across the institution.

In response, the Acting Provost organized a consultation of departments, faculties, and graduate students to understand the current state of graduate studies on campus, including its successes and pressures, and to identify the changes necessary to ensure the continued success of our students, programs, research and teaching. Between November 1 and December 20, 2012 (with a small number of interviews conducted in early January), more than 220 people were interviewed, including 44 departments, and 18 faculties/schools, 15 central administrative offices, and more than 40 graduate students. The internal consultation was paired with visits to the University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo, in order to understand the evolution of graduate programs at other Canadian institutions and gain insight and understanding from their experiences of change.

This report is a summary and synthesis of the issues and recommendations for improvements to graduate education at the University of Alberta, reported by students, departments, faculties, and some administrative units. These recommendations are:

1. **Implementation of online admissions, administration and scholarship systems.** This must be seen as the highest priority for graduate studies at the University of Alberta. The current paper-based system is archaic, labour-intensive, and inefficient, and poses an institutional risk to the long term growth and success of graduate studies. The implementation of an online system will address many of the administrative inefficiencies highlighted by departments/faculties, particularly if a system is chosen with little customization (i.e., one that encourages streamlining of underlying administrative processes). Proper resourcing and championship at the highest levels of the institution, and clear communication and consultation with department/faculty stakeholders, are necessary to ensure success and timely implementation.
2. **Establishment of a clearly articulated long-term strategy for graduate education at the University of Alberta.** Graduate education at the University of Alberta needs a clear strategy – with identified vision, mission, goals, and metrics – that is effectively communicated to the campus community, and around which faculties and departments can implement their own graduate management strategies.
3. **Establishment of a clear vision and governance mandate for the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research that is focused on the establishment and maintenance of policies and standards.** There is a vital role for a central graduate studies administration that provides an institutional umbrella for the establishment and maintenance of graduate standards and policies/procedures across the university. It is vital to the integrity and reputation of the institution that this responsibility be held centrally, and not at a faculty/departmental or program level. Under the leadership of a Dean and Vice-Provost, the roles and responsibilities of FGSR need to be clearly defined and articulated to the campus community.
4. **A clear definition of FGSR’s executive and service functions, to streamline administrative processes and reduce duplication, and enable FGSR to provide effective oversight and support to departments/faculties.** FGSR should take a leadership role in supporting faculties, departments, and students, which differs from its current perception as a policing and/or permission granting body. FGSR needs to pull back from transactional administration, some of which currently duplicates efforts within departments/faculties, and instead focus on the establishing institutional standards, and providing oversight and advice on policies and procedures. The executive function of FGSR needs to be clearly established according to its governance mandate, so that its services can be effectively and efficiently focused on supporting the needs of departments/faculties and students. FGSR should set clear expectations on timeliness and quality of services, and should be held accountable to these standards.
5. **Establishment of quality measures and a more significant role for FGSR in the University unit review quality assurance process.** Quality measures should be established in consultation with faculties and departments and should relate to long-term institutional strategy around graduate studies. The measures should recognize the differences between disciplines, and should be

focused on assessing the quality of programs, and not students. Quality assessments should be tied to current unit review processes to leverage information and resources.

6. **Establishment of clear communication channels between FGSR and faculties and departments.** Communication between FGSR and the rest of campus is perceived to be inefficient and ineffective, which reflects wider communication issues on this campus, as well as universities across Canada. There needs to be more transparency about FGSR's policies and processes, in order to reduce widespread perception of FGSR as a black box. More efficient communication mechanisms must be developed, in order improve consultation with departments/faculties and students around changes to procedures, deadlines, etc. This may include a restructuring of FGSR Council to make it a more effective policy and standards decision-making body.
7. **Establishment of seamless communication with prospective and current students.** Currently there are many messages presented to students around application, admissions, and program administration, which is confusing, and in some cases, misleading. Students need to have access to clear, concise, consistent and timely information on FGSR and faculty/department websites, and access to a straightforward application process. There should be common templates for websites, forms, and offer/admissions letters to ensure consistency and clarity across the institution. A graduate studies' strategy around social media should also be developed.
8. **Enhanced recruitment strategies that include multi-year funding packages that are competitive with other leading universities.** Department/faculties should be encouraged and supported in developing multi-year recruitment strategies that focus making our programs more competitive in attracting high-quality Canadian and international students.
9. **Implementation of a web-based, individual student progress tracking system.** A student navigation bar should also be developed so that students, departments, and FGSR can effectively monitor and support student progression through their programs.
10. **Establishment of institutional strategy for developing and delivering professional development opportunities.** There is a need for the establishment of broad-based PD opportunities that are coordinated with more specific program/department/faculty offerings. These opportunities should leverage existing and upcoming programs across campus to establish a coordinated effort for efficiently and effectively delivering and developing relevant and accessible (i.e., both timely and cost-effective) PD programs for Masters and PhD students, and where appropriate, post-doctoral fellows.

The next step in improving the graduate experience at UAlberta is to develop a process for building an action plan and timelines for implementing these recommendations.

Definitions

There are a number of terms used in this document that should be clarified to avoid confusion:

- **Graduate education** – broadly defined in this document, as the entirety of the graduate student experience on campus, including recruitment, programs, student experience, administration, and organization of graduate studies on campus. It includes the Faculty of Graduate Studies and

Research (referred to specifically in the document as FGSR), but also includes students, departments, faculties and central administration, as well as their activities around the broad concept of graduate studies.

- **FGSR** – issues pertaining to the Faculty are identified as such, all other issues are broadly defined under the term ‘graduate education’.
- **Departments/faculties** – used to indicate the view of departments and non-departmentalized faculties, as opposed to larger departmentalized faculties, which are referred to separately.
- **Faculties and departments** – used to indicated departments and all faculties (whether departmentalized or not). Similarly, the term ‘faculty’ refers to all faculties, unless otherwise indicated.

Background

Graduate education is critical to the University’s success. High quality graduate programs and strong, well-supported graduate students are key components in fostering excellence in academic research and teaching across the academy. Institutional support for graduate students and programs, therefore, form a key part of our institutional vision *Dare to Discover* and our strategic plan, *Dare to Deliver*.

Many UAlberta programs are nationally and internationally recognized for their strengths in research, teaching and preparation of students for their chosen careers. The quality of our programs is very high, and the needs of our programs and students are evolving. As is the case with many of our institutional peers across Canada, we need to look at how we support these programs administratively and institutionally, in order to maintain and grow our success.

The consultation focused on understanding how we, as an institution, can best support the delivery of an engaging and enriching graduate education and experience, and the improvements we should make to keep pace with the changing demands of graduate education in Canada.

Issues with the current state of graduate education

There are indications to suggest that graduate education at the University of Alberta is experiencing significant changes. Concerns about what these changes mean, and the impact they are having on graduate education, particularly on recruitment and retention of graduate students, have been raised internally at all levels of the University, from students and departments/faculties, through to the highest levels of administration, and externally in the reviews of FGSR and the Provost’s Office, and through comparisons with our U15 counterparts. Many departments/faculties report declining application rates from Canadian students, even in programs that have traditionally been successful attracting large numbers of students from across the country. We have the highest proportion of international students of all of the U15 universities, at approximately 40%, with department totals ranging from around 10 to 90%. And our numbers of Tri-Council scholarship recipients are declining in comparison to our key competitors across Canada.

The academic quality of our programs is generally very high and we are competitive with programs across Canada. There are, however, several administrative issues that have been identified by FGSR, departments, faculties and students that may be having a negative impact on our ability to recruit and retain students. These issues include:

- length of time between application and admission decision is having a negative impact on our ability to recruit competitively, especially for top Canadian students;
- recruitment of graduate students that often passively, rather than actively seeks top talent, including those graduating from UAlberta's undergraduate programs;
- inability of many departments/faculties to offer multi-year offers to students, as is the standard at other Canadian universities;
- duplication of efforts between FGSR and departments/faculties, which hinders our ability to be nimble in providing student offers and admissions;
- communication bottlenecks between FGSR and graduate programs resulting in frustration for students, departments, faculties and FGSR;
- perception of many thesis-based students that they are not being adequately prepared for non-academic careers.

The number of graduate students at UAlberta has increased by more than 40% over the last 10 years, but the administrative support for programs and graduate studies, more generally, has shrunk over the same period. It is widely recognized that our current administrative systems, broadly speaking, are not as efficient as they might be, and our department/faculty graduate administrators and FGSR staff are at capacity.

Differences between graduate education and undergraduate education

Graduate and undergraduate activities have different policy environments and administrative needs, with graduate education requiring more qualitative decision-making, especially around admission (e.g., understanding academic CVs), funding, leaves of absence, etc. The quality of decision-making – from the first decisions of who to admit, and recruitment funding, to nominations for scholarships, and administration of the student's program – means that there are far more decisions for graduate programs than for undergraduate. These differences between undergraduate and graduate programs, policies and processes suggest that economies of scale may not be achievable in combining graduate/undergraduate administration.

The current state of the administrative interaction between the FGSR and the departments/faculties is a combination of standard one-over-one approval, data entry, and additional processing in the system, much of which has no undergraduate equivalent. For example, when a department sends the FGSR a form to request a medical leave of absence for a graduate student, FGSR provides automatic one-over-one approval (as the form is complete). FGSR then enters the information into Campus Solutions, and undertakes a series of additional activities, including managing scholarship payments, and cancelling the student's term registration so tuition and fees can be reimbursed.

Every decision about a graduate student starts with the student's department/faculty. Recognizing the primacy of the academic judgment of department/faculties, FGSR's one-over-one approval is strictly limited to checking compliance with internal and external policies, and does not involve any value judgement (e.g., FGSR approval of external examiners for doctoral defenses does not involve any FGSR assessment of the academic stature or reputation of the examiner). However, the current process of allowing exceptions to the rules is not geared towards improving the quality of decision-making in the long run, but tends to be reactive to student situations that are perceived to be unique.

Heterogeneity of viewpoints

The University of Alberta is a large institution, with 18 faculties and 68 departments, spread across 5 campuses, that represents a variety of disciplines and viewpoints around graduate student education. The University is home to large graduate programs with more than 500 students and small ones with less than half a dozen. The large faculties host the majority of graduate students on campus, but there are many smaller non-departmentalized faculties that offer a variety of specialized graduate programs. There are thesis-based research programs, for Masters and PhD, and course-based Masters programs, each with different goals and outcomes.

However, proposals to establish a mixed or hybrid approach to graduate student administration, whereby some faculties are perceived to have responsibility for their programs and students, while others do not, was seen by most faculties, departments and students to be a disastrous approach, one in which no one is clear about roles, responsibilities, and accountability. Several departments and faculties advocated that either well-thought out, substantive changes were implemented, or none, that there was no room for half-measures in the University's strategy around graduate student education.

Past reviews of FGSR and Graduate Education

The need for change to our current practices has been highlighted in a number of formal and informal reviews of graduate education on campus, including an Informal Study of Graduate Education at the University of Alberta (2006 – led by Jane Watkinson), the FGSR Unit Review (2008), the Advisory Task Team on the Administration of Graduate Student Services (2009 – led by Dru Marshall), and comments made in the MacKinnon Report on the Provost's Office (2011).

While these reviews differed in their scope and goals, there were several recommendations that were consistent across the reviews, including:

- Clear definitions and understanding of roles, responsibilities, and accountability of central administration, FGSR, faculties and departments.
- Strong leadership for graduate studies on campus that clearly articulates the vision, and develops a long-term institutional strategy, for graduate education to internal and external stakeholders.
- Efficient and effective administrative systems (including electronic documents and records management) that support, rather than provide roadblocks for graduate education.

- Clear and consistent communication across the institution about program and research strengths on websites and other media, in order to attract graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to campus.

These reviews were focused on FGSR, and did not look at graduate education, broadly speaking, such as the relationships between departments and FGSR, and the administrative responsibilities and accountability for graduate students in departments/faculties, faculties, FGSR and central administration. None of these reports differentiated actions that should be taken by FGSR from those that would naturally be the responsibility of the department, nor did they specify measures that would ensure consistent improvements across graduate programs.

Based on recommendations from these reviews, FGSR implemented several changes to its administrative organization, including streamlining many processes. However, it is clear from many responses during the consultation that the perception of many departments and faculties is that these changes did not address the underlying organizational issues with graduate student education, and with FGSR, more specifically. Most departments/faculties urged for more substantive changes to the University's support for graduate education, in terms of resources, administration and strategy.

Goals of Consultation

The aim of the University of Alberta is to provide an engaging and enriching graduate student experience from recruitment through to convocation, from prospective student to alumni. In order to understand current perceptions of graduate student education on campus, faculties, departments and students were interviewed.

The aim of the consultation was to identify and understand:

- Where current administrative issues are arising, in terms of gaps in service, bottlenecks, funding concerns, etc.,
- Best practices and how these might be implemented across the institution,
- Where improvements should /could be made from the perspectives of graduate students, departments, and faculties (and also what should not be changed), and
- Views of graduate students, departments and faculties on the current discussion around graduate student education.

Methodology

Under the leadership of the Acting Provost, Martin Ferguson-Pell, a consultation of departments, faculties, students and administrative units was undertaken to understand the current state of graduate student education and experience at the University of Alberta. The consultation was conducted by Catherine Swindlehurst, Special Advisor to the Provost, between November 1 and December 20, 2012 (with a few interviews conducted in early January). In total, more than 220 people were interviewed, including 44 departments, and 18 faculties/schools, 15 central administrative offices, and more than 40

graduate students (for a complete list of those interviewed, please refer to Appendix I; for a list of questions that was supplied to the department and faculty participants prior to the consultation meeting, please see Appendix II).

The Dean and Manager (HR and Finance) of FGSR were consulted throughout the process to understand, at a high level, FGSR policies, processes and business systems. At the request of the Dean of FGSR, the staff of FGSR was not consulted at this stage of the change process.

In order to understand the broader context of Canadian graduate education, and the experiences of other leading Canadian universities, a team from the University of Alberta – Mazi Shirvani (Dean and Vice-Provost, FGSR), Art Quinney (Senior Advisor to the Provost), Ashlyn Bernier (President, Graduate Students' Association), and Catherine Swindlehurst – visited the University of Toronto and the University of Waterloo, and met with their School/Office of Graduate Studies, faculties, and graduate students.

This report is a summary and synthesis of the views, at a high level, that were expressed in these meetings. The recommendations emerging from this report are an aggregation of the broad themes expressed both in individual meetings, as well as perspectives and recommendations from previous reviews of graduate studies.

Overarching concerns

There were several overarching concerns about the evolution of graduate education at UAlberta and the change process that permeated the meetings with departments, faculties and students. The success of graduate students and programs was seen as critical for faculties and departments, particularly where undergraduate programs and research initiatives were closely tied to graduate education. There was almost universal agreement that the current state of graduate student administration was unsustainable over the long term, particularly with the recent and anticipated future growth of the graduate population and faculty/departmental budget reallocations. Many departments/faculties urged for any changes to graduate student education to be made with careful consideration of institutional, faculty and department goals, budgets, and concerns around graduate education and students.

Communication around the change process

Most departments, faculties and graduate students expressed concern for what they saw as confusing and conflicting communication around the current discussion of changes to graduate student education. There was a call for transparency around the process, which was perceived by many to be happening behind closed doors. There was concern expressed in a few meetings about whether, in fact, graduate studies needed changing, and what the context was for the current discussions around change.

In particular people expressed concern about what they saw as shifting proposals for change between discussions that occurred over the summer of 2012, and the Acting Provost's Memo to Deans in October (see Appendix III), which was distributed unevenly to departments across campus (via faculties and FGSR Council); and the information presented by FGSR to FGSR Council around the consultation process and

proposed changes, that was seen to conflict with messages from the President, the Provost's Office, and in the consultation meetings.

The following concerns were raised during the consultation:

- Worry that decisions were being made, and agreements reached, behind the scenes.
- Suspicion around why such an important initiative would be happening when the Provost is on leave.
- Perceptions that changes had already been decided, and were based on resources to a small number of hand-picked departments/faculties that had been pre-determined.
- Doubts as to whether any changes would be made since changes had been discussed in the past with little action; or if changes were made, that they would actually be of benefit to graduate student education.
- The timeline was too short, and things felt rushed.

The vast majority of departments/faculties and students called for improvements that would make an appreciable difference to the graduate student experience. The following suggestions were made to help clarify and support the change process:

- A broad-based visioning exercise for graduate student education to identify goals and to create a strategy that aligned with reality of graduate studies on campus.
- Need for transparency around the decision-making process that provided regular and consistent communication, and substantive opportunities for input.
- Careful messaging around graduate student education and the need for change that clearly articulated the goals of the process in a positive and inclusive manner.

Role of FGSR in Graduate Education at the University of Alberta

The vast majority of departments/faculties agreed that there was a need for institutional oversight of graduate education, and a small proportion expressed satisfaction with the current organization of graduate education across campus. Many departments/faculties and students, however, expressed concern and/or confusion about the role of FGSR in the graduate student experience, and the current and evolving distribution of responsibilities/accountability between departments/faculties and FGSR.

When departments/faculties were asked about the "faculty" or executive functions and the service functions of FGSR, as compared to those of the departments/faculties, there was general consensus on what the roles and responsibilities of FGSR were, or should be:

- Executive functions:
 - Maintenance and development of clear, consistent policies;
 - Establishment of University standards;
 - Quality assurance for graduate studies – ultimately the degree is from the University, and therefore institutional quality standards must be upheld centrally;
 - Registrarial functions, including recordkeeping and maintenance, FOIPP issues;
 - University leaves for students, and other institutional approvals;
 - Institutional history.

- Service functions:
 - Clear, consistent, and timely advice that provides support to departments/faculties on policies and procedures, especially when situations are outside of standard;
 - Advice on international transcripts and accredited institutions;
 - Fraud prevention;
 - Final requirements check for degree;
 - Thesis services; and
 - Central coordination of professional development.

There were several roles/responsibilities where departments and faculties agreed that FGSR did not play a role, including:

- Graduate student experience – must happen within departments/faculties;
- Student recruitment – largely happens at the level of individual supervisors, programs, and departments/faculties;
- Adjudicating student applications, and letters of offer (including funding) – happens within departments/faculties.

There were several roles and responsibilities of FGSR, for which there was not consensus amongst departments/faculties, including:

- Credential checks for external examiners – there was division as to whether this was best handled at the department or faculty level, where there was discipline-knowledge; or whether this required institutional oversight.
- Leadership for graduate education across the campus, and advocate both on and off campus for the importance graduate students to research and teaching.
- Affiliation of graduate students to FGSR – while some of the larger faculties recommended that FGSR no longer have students of its own, there was no clear consensus of this idea across campus.

Faculty oversight vs. FGSR oversight

There has been discussion on campus over the last year about the possibility of delegating some or all of the responsibilities for graduate students from FGSR to faculties. As can be imagined, there were mixed reactions to this scenario.

For the larger faculties, there was consensus in their perception that the current administrative structure and business processes of FGSR were not adequate and/or not functioning optimally, and that responsibility and oversight for graduate students and graduate programs might be better served at the faculty level. There was particular concern expressed that currently there was little communication between FGSR and the faculties around graduate education strategy, administration, and resources because FGSR dealt directly departments and programs.

This view was strongest in Science and Engineering, which together are responsible for one third of the graduate students on campus. These deans advocated for the dissolution of FGSR, with the

responsibility and oversight devolved to the faculties, accompanied by a corresponding allocation of resources to support the administrative activities at the faculty level.

The other large faculties expressed frustrations with the current administrative organization of graduate education, and called for major reforms of the current system, but did not see the dissolution of FGSR as the only, or necessarily the best solution. Alternatively, they suggested that a major overhaul of FGSR's current structure and functions might solve many issues. There was recognition that the faculties might be more efficient and/or effective than FGSR at some administrative functions, and some decisions would benefit from being made within the faculty culture. The large faculties cautioned against proposing a system of 'half-measures' or a hybrid approach, which they urged would be disastrous for graduate education.

Most of the smaller faculties and many departments expressed strong concerns about delegating administrative responsibilities for graduate students to the faculties. Most departments and smaller faculties saw the need for a centralized body to develop and maintain standards, and to provide advice on policies and procedures, which they perceived as sometimes vague or difficult to interpret. They worried about the replication of efforts across campus that could accompany the delegation of responsibilities, which would have massive budgetary implications without any apparent benefit over a centralized model. There were also concerns expressed about the lack of expertise and experience around graduate student policies and procedures at the faculty level that could result in dysfunction, delays and deviation from university standards. Some departments worried that faculties might not be able to resource graduate functions adequately, particularly if the current cycle of budget reallocation continued.

There was recognition among some faculties that certain processes/services were best done within a centralized office, especially advice on international transcripts, and detection of fraudulent documents. Many departments/faculties stated that they did not have the resources or expertise to adequately deal with these processes. Centralized administration of institutional awards was also seen as critical by many departments/faculties, which recognized that Tri-Councils and other organizations had set processes around how they interacted with universities. It is worth noting that some processes for graduate education (e.g., altering registration) require a level of access to, and knowledge of, the system that departments/faculties do not have.

Some departments/faculties questioned whether there was expertise within the Registrar's Office to administer some of these services, with the understanding that there were differences in graduate and undergraduate administration, particularly in terms of qualitative administration of graduate students, in terms of application assessment, awards qualification/ranking, etc. Some departments/faculties suggested that administrative functions that did not require in-depth knowledge of programs and students should remain centralized.

Downloading of administrative tasks

The top administrative concern of all departments and faculties was the fear of further downloading of administrative tasks onto department graduate coordinators and administrators, without adequate resources. All departments and faculties stated that any increase in administrative tasks that resulted from changes to FGSR and graduate education, more broadly, must be supported by a corresponding increase in resources from central administration. The message was clear: graduate administrators were overworked and at, or beyond capacity, and there was no room for downloading more tasks. Departments/faculties also made it clear that graduate coordinators/chairs were also at capacity. Many chairs expressed fears that if administrators and coordinators/chairs were expected to take on more work, departments would have difficulty in attracting and retaining these positions, especially since many graduate coordinators/chairs did not receive full teaching relief, or stipends to offset their administrative loads.

Long-term institutional strategy for graduate studies

There were concerns expressed over the perceived lack of consistency in the institutional strategy around graduate students and education. There was a consensus that departments/faculties were willing to do what they could to support central initiatives, but there was also a deep frustration with what they considered competing or inconsistent goals, such as growing the international student population and increasing our success rate in Tri-Council scholarships.

When asked whether a clear 3-5 year strategy around graduate studies was desirable, most departments/faculties agreed that having a longer term vision and institutional goals for graduate education, one around which faculties and departments could plan and be measured against, would be highly desirable. One of the striking features of our decentralized decision-making system is that outcomes-based accountabilities have never been explicitly defined, even at points where system-wide changes occurred, such as when the entire assistantship budget was allocated to departments/faculties.

Many departments/faculties also suggested linking quality measures to the institutional and/or department/faculty strategies would avoid negative perceptions of measuring for measurements' sake. Some departments/faculties expressed concern over the feasibility of establishing a longer term strategy when funding structures of Tri-Council and provincial granting agencies were in such flux.

Provost's Innovation Grants

Many departments/faculties expressed support for the Provost's Innovation funding program during the interviews, and noted that they had submitted proposals. There were, however, some disappointment expressed at the lack of feedback provided about the proposals after the final submission. Several departments/faculties noted that there had been general comments about common themes provided at the FGSR Council meeting, but many wished to know which other departments/faculties may have had proposals similar to theirs so that they could work together to develop ideas further.

Many departments/faculties commented that they would be interested in this program continuing, although with some modifications, including shorter proposals, more and smaller awards, more feedback on proposals submitted, as well as communication about similarities between unsuccessful proposals.

The Four Key Issues

The interviews focused on examining department/faculty and student perceptions of how the University is supporting graduate education in four key areas that arose consistently in the reviews and discussions of graduate education and FGSR in the past few years:

- effective administrative processes based on clearly defined and distributed roles and responsibilities which eliminate needless duplication, decrease confusion, increase efficiency and speed of all processes, and improve the support of graduate students from application to convocation;
- improved recruitment practices which are competitive with peer institutions and have greater success in targeting and attracting Canada's top candidates;
- clearly defined quality standards and measures which will ensure consistency in admissions, programming, and degree requirements across all faculties and departments; and
- relevant, meaningful, and enriched professional development programs and opportunities for graduate students to help them prepare for both academic and non-academic employment in the future.

The next section of this report focuses on comments made in departments/faculties and students around these four issues, both in terms of issues raised, and best practices identified. The vast majority of the participants in the consultation were pleased with the quality of programs, but everyone had suggestions for improvements in the four key areas. Accordingly, issues are outlined first, followed by issues specific to graduate students, and finally best practices, as identified by the participants.

Administration

Effective administrative support was universally seen as critical to the success of students and graduate programs. There were several key issues identified by departments, faculties and graduate students around the broad concept of administration for graduate education on campus. Many of these issues were specific to FGSR, but many also related to the broader issues on campus, including roles/responsibilities and accountability; and training and advice for departments/faculties to support and improve their administrative systems and student/program strategies and decision-making.

Issues

The main issues can be grouped in the following categories:

1. Communication between FGSR and its constituents (faculties, depts., students, alumni)
2. Operational inefficiencies

3. Applications and admissions
4. Funding allocation for graduate studies
5. Awards administration
6. Dispute resolution and academic appeals
7. External examiners
8. Training for graduate coordinators, administrators and supervisors

Communication between FGSR and its constituents

There were strong concerns raised by many departments, faculties and students about poor communication between the various stakeholders in graduate education on campus, specifically FGSR, departments, faculties, students, and central administration. Many expressed frustration that messages were communicated through various channels – administrators, coordinators/graduate chairs, chairs, deans, central administration – resulting in inconsistent, confusing and sometimes contradictory information. This lack of consistent communication was seen as symptomatic of the larger communication issues at the University (and perhaps all academic institutions), more generally.

Many departments/faculties called for better communication between FGSR and its constituents, especially in terms of getting feedback to FGSR about current policies, procedures, and the state of graduate studies more generally. Some departments/faculties expressed their frustration that while FGSR had mechanisms for disseminating information, communication was very ‘top-down’ with no room for discussion or feedback from the departments/faculties about how the proposed/implemented changes affected operations within programs.

Specific issues raised by many departments/faculties included:

- Many departments and faculties referred to FGSR as a ‘black hole’, in terms of communication and transparency around graduation education business processes, roles and responsibilities.
- FGSR Council was seen by most graduate coordinators as an effective way of finding out about changes to FGSR policies and procedures, but there was recognition that often this information was often not translated to graduate administrators, department chairs, and/or supervisors. Some departments and faculties tried to overcome these issues by holding regular intra-faculty graduate coordinator/chair/associate dean meetings in order to share information and best practices. It was also noted by some departments/faculties that not all graduate chairs/coordinators attended FGSR Council meetings regularly.
- Many Deans expressed concern that there was no direct communication channel between the faculties and FGSR, since FGSR tended to deal directly with departments through FGSR Council. It was recognized by many departments and faculties that information at Deans’ Council was not necessarily passed onto departments; and information from FGSR Council was not necessarily reported back to their departments (to chairs and/or professors), or to their Deans.
- There was concern expressed about differing messages concerning possible changes to graduate studies received from FGSR Council, Dean’s Council, President’s Advisory Council (Chairs), GPAC, from senior leadership in FGSR, and in the consultation meetings.

There were also concerns expressed by some departments and faculties about the effectiveness of FGSR Council as a communication and decision-making body, given its large size. Some departments/faculties noted FGSR Council has over 100 members, with little faculty representation at the Associate Dean level, particularly from the large faculties. There were suggestions from some departments and faculties that a restructuring of FGSR Council might make it more effective.

Operational inefficiencies

While some departments/faculties admitted that their own administrative systems could be improved, there was general frustration around FGSR's service orientation and its ability to provide timely service, support and advice to departments/faculties. FGSR processes were seen by many to be archaic, overly bureaucratic, and/or broken. There was almost universal support for FGSR staff, but not its business systems. FGSR noted that its internal processes were affected by four factors:

- its responsibility to ensure compliance with a large number of internal and external policies,
- the individual service levels that students and departments require,
- its small staff complement (twenty in all divisions, one-seventh the size of the Registrar's Office), and
- the paper-based systems that continue to claim an ever-increasing share of staff time.

Paper-based systems

There was universal frustration expressed by departments/faculties about our current paper-based administrative system, which was described as archaic by many people. There were calls for the creation of an electronic system wherein all of a student's documentation would be available in one file, from application to admission, through to convocation, that would be viewable by department administrators, graduate coordinators/chairs and FGSR. Some people expressed confusion and concern over reports from FGSR Council that an electronic system was forthcoming, but had received no details about the timeline, the system, or consultation with departments/faculties around requirements.

Specific concerns that were raised by many departments/faculties included:

- The need for electronic signatures, which would alleviate many bottlenecks for processing, etc.
- The reliance on paper-based forms for awards, extensions and exemptions, which often resulted in time delays through requests for further information (e.g., multiple memos being typed and sent to FGSR, after requests for clarification or more detail).
- Many departments/faculties reported that they would walk over documentation to FGSR on a daily basis to avoid the 2-day delay in using campus mail.
- Issues resulting from lost documentation, both within the department/faculty and at FGSR.
- Almost universal frustration about FGSR's use of pink slips to highlight issues with applications, etc. Not only was the use of the pink slips seen as demoralizing, it was also seen as a waste of time when rather than returning forms to the departments/faculties through campus mail (which added at least two days to process), a phone call or email, was more efficient, especially if there was no error or issue, but simply a case of miscommunication.

Shadow administration systems

The need for paperless systems were seen as universal in all of the department and faculty meetings, and many either had, or were in the process of, implementing their own systems in absence of a campus-wide solution. All departments and faculties were in favour of a centrally-implemented, resourced and administered system, but frustrations over time lags and worries about efficiencies were prompting many to consider their own IT solutions.

Many departments/faculties reported implementing their own shadow systems for admissions and for tracking student progress through their programs. The type and complexity of these systems seem to vary greatly from files in filing cabinets, excel spreadsheets, to custom IT systems designed in-house. Where shadow systems were not in place, some departments/faculties were looking to establish their own systems, but were waiting for information about FGSR's upcoming system implementation.

Inefficient systems

There was general consensus that FGSR's administrative processes and business systems needed to be improved and streamlined significantly, in order to create an organization that was supportive of departments/faculties and their needs, rather than policing them. While many departments/faculties recognized that FGSR had recently streamlined many of its processes, many departments/faculties felt that a major change in FGSR's administrative systems needed to take place. These concerns included:

- Lack of communication around policies (especially changes and exceptions) after they are approved by FGSR Council, including awards procedures (which in some case were seen to be inconsistent year to year), and deadlines.
- Duplication of efforts in FGSR and departments/faculties where information had to be processed twice (i.e., once onto a form, and once into Peoplesoft).
- Fragmentation of checks and balances between departments/faculties and FGSR, and within FGSR that caused delays and miscommunications, particularly around issues addressed through FGSR's general phone numbers and email enquiries. There was frustration expressed around inconsistencies in advice and responses, workflow issues, and inefficiencies with the current paper-based system.

Several departments/faculties raised concerns around specific issues, including:

- Re-admission to programs – several departments/faculties expressed concerns around what they saw as FGSR's role as final arbiter of when students could be re-admitted to programs. Some departments/faculties felt that decisions as to timing of student re-admittance should be based on departmental capacity to take students back into the program, especially supervisor and funding availability. FGSR noted that no readmission occurred unless it had been recommended by the department/faculty.
- Weak students – many departments/faculties expressed frustration around difficulties in ending programs for students who they perceived were not capable of completing the requirements. Some departments/faculties felt that FGSR processes created delays for students leaving the programs, which was a disservice to the students, and to the programs. There was little

recognition for FGSR's role in maintaining standards in terms of following due process for the protection of the student and the departments/faculties.

- Annual reporting – need for a navigation bar. Some departments/faculties have their own systems to track students, while others leave it largely to supervisors. Examples of milestones tracked included coursework completed (both core course fulfilment and options), candidacy exams, meetings with supervisors, supervision committee established, etc.

Advisory services

While there was recognition that policies and procedures should be developed through a centralized body or committee, and questions relating to them should be addressed through central office such as FGSR, it was generally believed that FGSR's current advisory/support system for departments/faculties was in need of improvement. Many departments/faculties reported the following issues with FGSR's advisory/support services, which they perceived to be worsening over the last several years:

- Lack of response to phone messages and/or emails in a timely manner, particularly for urgent matters. Several departments/faculties reported that help line numbers were often not answered, and messages were not returned. In some cases, voicemail boxes were full or not operational, or emails went unanswered for several days, and in some cases, weeks, or never.
- Lack of clear case manager, which sometimes resulted in multiple people handling and/or responding to specific enquiries, sometimes with different and/or conflicting responses. If answers were unclear, or incomplete, or the situation evolved (requiring further advice), then some departments reported having to start over, usually with a new person within FGSR. This would result in time lags due to having to re-explain the issues and/or inconsistent responses to the issues.
- Perception of duplication of efforts between department administrators and FGSR administrators, particularly in assessing applications, awards, external examiners.
- Frustration about the information available on the FGSR website. Several departments/faculties reported that:
 - Information was difficult to find – the website was not organized intuitively, links were broken, and/or information was not linked to other sites and could only be found through extensive Google searches.
 - Information on the website was unclear or outdated.
 - Information was not relevant to department or program situations.

Most departments/faculties recognized that FGSR had made changes to their departmental/faculty support services to reduce response times, but many complained of the resultant inefficiencies of FGSR's improvements to their systems. The greatest concern was around FGSR's changing approach to client management, wherein FGSR no longer had specific individuals assigned to individual departments/faculties or alphabetical ranges of students. There was perceived value in dealing with a single person who built a relationship with a number of departments/faculties, and therefore understood their cultures and contexts. While it was recognized that the new organization at FGSR was designed to be more efficient and to offset issues associated with decreased FGSR staffing levels, many

departments/faculties saw it as having the opposite effect. Some graduate administrators and coordinators/chairs admitted that they had developed ‘work-arounds’ to the current system in terms of connecting with specific individuals at FGSR, or elsewhere on campus. FGSR noted its belief in the fundamental importance of client service (for both departments and students), but stated that much of its process redesign had been driven by the need to manage its work with reduced resources.

Applications and admissions

Application and adjudication processes vary across departments/faculties, although broadly speaking there is consistency in the overall process. Some departments/faculties have a pre-application process that vets potential applicants before they pay for online admission through the formal FGSR process, others do not. FGSR reported that the online system receives around 9500 applications per year, and recognized that pre-application vetting likely culls thousands more (estimates from FGSR were 14,000-15,000 applications in total) before they entered the online system.

There was a feeling among departments/faculties that they had already taken on the majority of administrative tasks from FGSR, and there was no capacity to absorb more administration without additional resourcing. Furthermore, most departments/faculties saw an economy of scale and expertise around central administration of certain functions, including international transcripts and fraud-prevention. While all departments/faculties felt qualified to make decisions on applications from Canadian students who had attended Canadian institutions, there was a real concern about the ability to deal with international transcripts, particularly from institutions not on the departmental radar. It was felt that downloading this task, which many department administrators felt was already in process (with international GPA calculation, for example) was better situated centrally both in terms of expertise, and time. The ability to check for fraudulent documents was similarly seen as best done within a central unit.

There was consensus among departments/faculties that the current practice of departments setting their own minimum standards, which met or exceeded those of the institution, was successful. Professional programs urged for more authority for departments/faculties to determine offers to candidates that were below minimum standards, but who were exceptional in other parts of their applications, especially where life/work experience carried a heavier weighting. Frustration was expressed by some departments/faculties that the FGSR push-back on students who did not meet the minimum University’s minimum standards for admission, was simply an administrative exercise to create a paper-trail for audit purposes and that in no circumstances (except in the case of fraudulent documents) did FGSR refuse to admit students who were supported in writing by departments/faculties.

While departments/faculties felt they did most of the administrative work around application and determining successful applications, there was concern expressed in some departments/faculties that they did not have the authority to issue admission letters to students, except conditional offers contingent on FGSR approval. While some departments/faculties valued the oversight function of FGSR, the majority saw departments/faculties as best placed to make decisions on students, and argued that it was in the departments/faculties’ best interests to only admit students that have the best chance of success in their programs.

Some departments/faculties stressed that while they had good processes in place to ensure quality standards, they worried that other departments/faculties may not have the same level of quality and therefore required some oversight. There was concern expressed that without proper oversight, corners could be cut within some departments/faculties, and the overall university standards would suffer. Similarly, many departments/faculties saw value of having external oversight to ensure that professors or departmental committees operated within acceptable standards, particularly on admissions and external examiners. Many departments/faculties suggested that being able to point to an external/higher authority to enforce standards, took pressure off individual department chairs.

Funding allocation for graduate studies

There was almost universal concern and confusion from departments/faculties around the University's graduate studies budget allocation and the funding model. There were calls from many departments/faculties for transparency around the budgeting process. Many departments/faculties commented that they did not understand the funding model wherein there was perceived inequality between departments/programs, which was not necessarily based on student numbers, etc. It was widely believed that the allocation was based on historical precedence without recognition that funding situations have changed, especially around PI grants and external funding opportunities, but also graduate student program growth in new areas. Some departments commented that not knowing the funding formula means simply doing what was done last year, rather than being strategic about funding decisions.

Specific issues included:

- Mixed understanding across campus about the allocation of funding for teaching and research assistantships (TAs and RAs). Some departments/faculties expressed concern over what they perceived to be an inequitable distribution of funding that concentrated TAs in a small number of faculties.
- Timing of budgetary allocations between faculty and departments were perceived to vary widely.
- Some departments reported being unaware of any funding for graduate studies being given to them by their faculties.

Awards administration

While most departments/faculties saw value in FGSR's administration and oversight of university-wide awards, many departments/faculties called for the delegation of departmental and faculty awards.

Specific concerns included:

- Changing awards processes were perceived by many departments/faculties to be frequent and confusing, with little transparency around deadlines, processes, feedback, etc.
- The need to streamline, and as much as is possible, standardize processes for award application (e.g., GPA calculation, reference letters, on-line forms).

- Inefficient communication of deadlines which sometimes had departments/faculties scrambling at the last minute. FGSR noted that most of its internal deadlines were tied to external deadlines (e.g., Vanier), which varied from year to year, were not announced very early.
- FGSR interaction with donors – there was concern expressed by some departments/faculties that interaction with donors, especially around the establishment of new awards, did not seem to be a FGSR priority, which many saw as posing a significant risk to the institution. Some faculties proposed that faculty or central advancement officers may be better situated to deal with donors and the establishment of department/faculty awards. FGSR noted that this was both a resourcing and a systems issue, and it was making ongoing efforts to assist the various advancement officers in establishing new awards. FGSR further noted that it did have its own advancement officer, so the work referred to was being done by the Dean and the senior APO using an archaic in-house system that needed to be replaced.
- Delays in awarding scholarships and payments of awards.

There was almost universal support among the relevant departments/faculties for FGSR's transfer of NSERC award nominations to the faculty level. Most departments and faculties agreed that the new process more efficient and effective. There was recognition among the SSHRC faculties that a similar process change for SSHRC award ranking did not make sense, given the small allotment of awards.

There was concern expressed by some departments and faculties over AI-TF awards process. In particular, some departments worried that if this process was devolved to the faculty level that the awards would no longer be perceived to be prestigious. It was felt by some that open competition across the university was necessary. FGSR noted that given the very small number of AI-TF awards available, devolution would not be feasible even if the other concerns could be addressed.

There was concern expressed by many departments/faculties what they saw as the institutional pressure to apply for Tri-Council awards, with no support for awards process. Many departments/faculties urged the following changes, if the university was serious about winning more national scholarships:

- Feedback from awards committees on improvements applications needed in order to be considered in subsequent years;
- Clear timelines from FGSR, especially around deadline dates;
- Clear criteria and expectations set out to students, departments and faculties;
- Transparency in selection process, including guidelines for ranking.

Dispute resolution and academic appeals

There were mixed perceptions around FGSR's role and effectiveness as an arm's length arbiter of disputes between graduate students and supervisors/departments/faculties. Some departments, especially those in smaller faculties, valued the independence of FGSR in dispute resolution. In particular, some departments/faculties mentioned the value of FGSR's Associate Deans, in their capacity as advisors and arbitrators, to rule on issues, especially emergency or critical issues, and to back departmental decisions. There was concern from several departments/faculties that the current system

of departments/faculties not being assigned to individual associate deans meant that their interaction was becoming less personal, which made dealing with emergent issues more difficult.

Some larger departments, especially those within larger faculties, felt that this dispute resolution may occur more effectively at the faculty level, where there was still independence, but also recognition of department and/or faculty culture and precedence in dealing with issues.

There were concerns raised by some departments/faculties that increasingly they saw FGSR acting as judge and advocate for the student, which put FGSR in an inherent conflict of interest situation, and forced departments/faculties into what they saw as undesirable or untenable situations in dealing with students. There was recognition from some departments/faculties that FGSR had implemented a more standardized approach to student discipline, which was sometimes at odds with department culture and conventions, or with how things had been done in the past.

FGSR noted that the University had a fundamental commitment to the fair and equitable treatment of all students, so that what may be perceived by a department/faculty to be advocacy for a student may be no more than an insistence on due process over past practice. FGSR stressed that the importance of following due process could not be overemphasized in the context of student discipline, termination of programs, etc. The FGSR Associate Deans had completely up to date knowledge of how the definition of due process continued to evolve through the University Appeal Board, the GFC Academic Appeal Board, and court cases. There was a call by many departments/faculties for the establishment of clear communication between all parties of these evolving processes and procedures.

Generally departments/faculties favoured a standard approach to issues and policy exceptions, where resolution was sought at the department level (and then to faculty, if appropriate) before involving FGSR. There was also concern expressed from many departments and faculties that there was no clear path for elevating issues, which they felt should always be addressed at the supervisor or department level in the first instance. It was reported that many times students or supervisors would go straight to FGSR, circumventing departmental processes. FGSR noted, and many departments/faculties agreed, that Associate Deans would contact the graduate chair/coordinators when they approached by their students, so that the departments/faculties could deal with the situation directly.

External Examiners

There was consensus that external examiners were vital to the PhD defence process for external validation of students' research. Many departments and faculties maintained that having the external examiner on site was hugely valuable, if not essential to the student experience, as well as building the reputation of the program, department/faculty, and the institution. Many departments/faculties reported trying to bring as many examiners to campus as budgets allowed, in order to create networking opportunities for faculty and students, and educational and research opportunities through lectures/seminars, which was impossible with Skype or telephone examinations.

Most departments/faculties urged for more funding to bring external examiners to campus, which was they reported as largely being funded out of individual professors' or departmental budgets. There was

recognition that FGSR provided some funding for examiners (around \$60,000 per year), but most departments/faculties felt that that the amount was not enough. FGSR noted that given the number of examinations on campus each year, a budget of \$500,000 would be needed to cover expenses for all examiners. Some departments/faculties expressed embarrassment at not being able to provide even small honoraria to external examiners.

Many departments/faculties felt that decisions around external examiners should be left to departments/faculties, which they felt were best placed to identify discipline experts, and to understand criteria for choosing examiners. There was recognition by some departments/faculties that FGSR's role in assessing external examiners was to ensure that they fell within University policy, and not an assessment of the quality or suitability of the examiner; but this recognition was not universal. There was concern expressed by some departments/faculties around duplication of efforts between departments/faculties and FGSR: in many cases external examiners were contacted by both offices, which led to confusion for the examiners, especially as to which office they should submit their final reports.

FGSR noted that the various roles and responsibilities were defined both in policy and in FGSR communication with the external examiners. It further stressed the importance of adhering to minimum standards (e.g., that the external examiner be at arm's length) since these examinations led to the granting of the University's highest credential.

Many departments/faculties saw value in central oversight around examiners to avoid potential conflict of interest situations. Benefits cited included:

- ensuring examiners had not examined elsewhere on campus within the regulated timeframe;
- ensuring arm's length assessment of students' work;
- perceived legitimacy of the invitation to the prospective examiner, when the institution, rather than the department/ faculty, issued the letter.

Training for graduate coordinators, administrators, and supervisors

There was recognition by most departments/faculties that FGSR was invaluable in providing information and holding the institutional memory for graduate education policies, procedures and processes on campus. Many departments/faculties saw FGSR as a lifeline for new departmental staff, both for graduate coordinators/chairs and administrators. Several departments/faculties cited the value of FGSR in-department training assistance for admissions, etc. There were calls by many departments/faculties for more training for administrators, and for a community of knowledge to be established to mentor newer administrators.

Some departments/faculties also called for the implementation of a mandatory new faculty orientation session that would include roles and responsibilities, rules and regulations, and expectations around graduate supervision. Other components could include conflict resolution, motivating students, etc. While some departments/faculties cited the manual for supervisors, many departments/faculties noted that there was not requirement or expectation that new supervisors read it. It was universally agreed

that supervisors needed to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities to their students, and vice versa.

Graduate Student Perspectives

While all of the students interviewed recognized that they were members of FGSR, and not of their faculties or departments, the vast majority of them identified with their departments and/or programs. Many students reported not understanding the role of FGSR (except those who had dealt with conflict issues), and many reported issues in dealing with FGSR for payroll, awards application, and general enquiries. Furthermore, it was noted by some students, that while FGSR provided advice to departments/faculties on procedures and policies, students instead relied on their department administrators for advice in navigating the system, or Graduate Students' Association.

Graduate students' comments on the issues surrounding administration reflected some of department concerns, including:

- The FGSR website was difficult to navigate, and often the information they were seeking was confusing or non-existent.
- Need for navigation system, so that students could track progress within their programs, and be aware of upcoming deadlines for programs, scholarships, etc.
- Establishment of clear expectations between supervisors and students to avoid conflicts, etc.
- Support for students who are in conflict with their supervisors. Many students reported that they felt that there was no clear path for them to seek support.
- Need for centralized services in order to ensure consistency, maintain standards and objectivity.
- Fears about overloading departmental administrators, who they felt were at capacity, or beyond.

Other areas of concern included:

- Proposed tuition fee increases and the effect on students.
- Lack of support for permanent residency application, despite intrinsic expectation in the offer letter that this process would happen.
- Transparency and accountability of departments/faculties in program delivery and student support.
- Need for graduate student advisors at faculty or FGSR level.

Best practices and ideas

Several ideas and practices were suggested for improving the administration of graduate studies on campus, some of which are listed below:

- Online application and student tracking system – the Department of Computing Science developed their own system over 10 years ago, which streamlined the application assessment process within the department by allowing potential supervisors and graduate committees to access student application files. All of the students' records are kept on an electronic database, with which the department can conduct statistical analysis for each program.

- Development of an effective and up-to-date departmental manual for policies and procedures – several departments/faculties have created handbooks that answer FAQs around administrative tasks and student issues, as they relate to their programs.
- Google calendar for FGSR deadlines – a shared calendar for deadlines that is easily updated, and provides deadlines for the upcoming year.
- Posting actual FAQs on FGSR website, which are updated on a regular basis, would cut down on confusion and time spent on ‘standard’ problems.
- Establishment of a graduate coordinator school, as implemented at some other Canadian universities.
- Training for supervisors (see also Professional Development).

Summary of Issues

The major issues highlighted in meetings with departments, faculties and students were as follows:

- Need for paperless admission and administration systems (with consultation/input from departments/faculties) ;
- Need for streamlined processes/systems that eliminated duplication;
- Need for changes in FGSR culture from policing function to advisory/support services, especially those that are department/faculty-focused;
- Need for effective communication of FGSR policies and procedures, and deadlines, as well as changes to them;
- Need for clear and consistent messaging on website for students, departments, faculties.

Recruitment

There was universal agreement among departments/faculties and students that recruitment for graduate students was centred around the program, funding, and in the case of thesis-based programs, the supervisor. Most departments/faculties were interested in improving their recruitment practices and processes in order maintain and/or improve their competitive position in comparison to other Canadian universities.

Issues

There were several key recruitment issues identified by departments, faculties and graduate students, in terms of attracting students to University of Alberta programs. The main issues can be grouped in the following categories:

1. Institutional messaging around recruitment issues
2. Departmental and Institutional roles in recruitment
3. Recruitment administration
4. The recruitment ‘package’ – funding, timing and the ‘Edmonton Effect’
5. Communication to potential graduate students
6. Recruitment strategies

Institutional messaging around recruitment issues

There was considerable concern expressed by graduate students and some departments/faculties about the messaging around graduate student recruitment in terms of trying to attract ‘better’ graduate students; the implication being that the current cohort of graduate students was sub-standard or poor. It was felt by those who raised this issue that this messaging was unhelpful, and that careful consideration of messaging should be considered.

Department and institutional roles in recruitment

All departments/faculties perceived that recruitment primarily took place within departments/faculties, whether at the level of the program, discipline, or individual supervisors. There was a general lack of understanding by many departments/faculties, therefore of FGSR’s and the university’s role in recruitment. Some departments and faculties were aware of FGSR’s attendance at a few large recruitment fairs, both in Canada and abroad, but most questioned the effectiveness of this approach. The exception to this perception was FGSR’s participation in the China Scholarship Council (CSC) fair, which several departments/faculties saw as very useful. FGSR noted that UAlberta has the highest number of CSC in Canada. There was recognition that students generally were not applying to the University of Alberta (such as might be the case with Ivy League schools, for e.g.), but are applying to work with individual professors and/or take individual programs. Attracting successful students, therefore, depended on the reputation of individual faculty members and/or departments/programs, combined with competitive funding packages that were offered early in the application cycle.

Recruitment administration

Many departments/faculties were concerned about the perceived duplication of efforts around the recruitment process between departments/faculties and FGSR, and between similar programs, and the effect this was having on recruiting students. While duplication in administrative process has been discussed above, comments around recruitment issues included:

- Duplication in graduate programs, particularly across health and natural sciences, and the need for these programs to work collaboratively to attract students across disciplines. Concerns were raised about losing good students who may not be applying to the most relevant program, since the application process made it impossible to apply to multiple programs.
- Students receiving two letters from the University – an offer letter from the department/faculty and an admission letter from FGSR. There were concerns from some departments/faculties that this could be confusing to students.
- Capacity issues in recruiting students. Many programs looked for quality students rather than quantity, with the deciding factors being the availability of supervisors (and grant funding), and the balance between graduates and undergraduates. Some departments/faculties saw a contradiction in growing graduate programs within an environment of shrinking academic job opportunities.

The recruitment offer – funding, timing and the ‘Edmonton Effect’

There was almost universal recognition that the recruitment offer, that is to say the package of funding, timing, and location (assuming the student’s fit with supervisor and program) was key in convincing

students to choose the University of Alberta as their destination. Many departments/faculties expressed concern and frustration that they were not able to recruit more top tier students both nationally and internationally, who might be applying, but in many cases not accepting offers to the University.

Recruitment Funding

There was an almost universal call for more funding for graduate student recruitment in order to compete nationally and internationally for students. It was recognized by most departments/faculties that many Canadian universities provide funding packages of 3-5 years for PhD programs in their offer letters to students. While some departments/faculties could make 3 year offers, most made 1-2 year offers with the expectation that students would apply for scholarships. Funding for Masters students was also seen as problematic, but not to the same extent as PhD issues. This perceived inability to offer competitive packages was seen as the main limitation in attracting top students.

Many departments/faculties perceived a disconnect between graduate student funding and the push to increase the number of graduate students on campus, in that there seemed to be less funding available – for both recruitment and administration – for more students. This situation was seen to be exacerbated by the unstable research granting environment, from both Tri-Council and provincial sources. There were calls from some departments for their faculties to establish bridge funding (and where already established, to increase the amount of funding available), in case PI grant funding was cut or not renewed. This funding mechanism was seen as a critical element of graduate programs where there were minimum funding requirements.

Some departments/faculties also called for the development of an institutional recruitment strategy, around which departments/faculties could plan. There were also calls for more clarification around FGSR current funding programs for recruitment, especially the funds available for bringing prospective applicants to campus. Some departments were aware and made use of these funds – \$20,000 from FGSR's operating funds – while others were not sure how to access them.

There was almost universal agreement that delegation of recruitment funding to the departments/faculties has allowed them to be more strategic and nimble with their offers, and to use funds according to departmental/faculty principals and culture. Some departments have instituted minimum funding for students, others have not. For those that have set minimum support levels, some commented that strategic advice from FGSR, and/or best practices from other departments/faculties, around implementing and managing minimum funding levels and multi-year offers would be helpful and welcome.

Many departments/faculties discussed funding issues specific to international student recruitment, including:

- **Need to recruit international students who provide own funding through government scholarship programs.** Many departments/faculties questioned how we, as an institution, better attract funded students. There was a call by many departments/faculties to make recruiting these students a high priority of the university.

- **Departmental/faculty funding for international students.** Some departments/faculties noted that they offer international graduate students one year of funding (often through supervisor's grants), with the hope that scholarships through Alberta Innovates, or other funding programs eligible to international graduate students will cover subsequent years of their program. There was recognition that this strategy made it difficult to attract top international recruits.
- **Differential fees for international students.** Many departments/faculties expressed frustration at the high fees for international students, which in many cases were offset by departmental/faculty funding or from supervisors' grants. Many of these departments/faculties saw the differential as a tax from central administration. Some conceded that this differential made sense for undergraduate students, but not for graduate students, which put the University at a distinct disadvantage as compared to other Canadian schools, where it was perceived that central administration covered this difference. There seemed to be little recognition/knowledge of UAlberta's very low tuition compared to other Canadian schools, particularly in comparison to international fees at other U15 universities.

Other concerns around funding included:

- Institutional role in lobbying government, Tri-Councils, and other external organizations (e.g. professional bodies) to provide more funding for graduate students.
- Some departments/faculties disagreed with the practice of allowing graduate students to hold multiple awards, seeing it as an unfair concentration of resources at the expense of other students. Some felt that this situation encouraged competition and resentment, rather than collaboration between students in the same departments/faculties. FGSR noted that departments and adjudicators had the ability to use the holding of other awards as a *selection* criterion; rather than as an *eligibility* criterion, as stated in the old scholarships policy.

Timing of offers

Delays in processing applications and issuing final admission letters were a prime concern of most departments/faculties, and many placed the blame on long FGSR processing times, which some departments/faculties reported delayed offers by several weeks. While many departments/faculties appreciated some level of oversight, most felt that the cost, in terms of losing students to other institutions, was too high. To address this issue, in October 2012, FGSR instituted a 2-day turnaround in processing applications. Many departments/faculties had yet to see this change, as it was early in the application season, so could not comment on its effect. Those that had already experienced this new process were highly supportive of it.

Many departments/faculties reported instituting rolling admission deadlines, which had helped in timeliness, both in communicating offers to students, but also in dealing with FGSR bottlenecks, particularly in busy months within the application cycle. These departments/faculties recognized the need to get offers quickly to those students whose credentials 'leapt off the page'. Some departments/faculties reported assessing and providing offers to students once or twice during the admission cycle, based upon the meeting schedule of their graduate committee. While some

departments/faculties felt that this system worked well for them, others did not and reported that they were looking at ways of becoming more nimble in making offers to top students.

Some departments/faculties expressed concern about the perceived disconnect between graduate student funding allocations from their faculties, scholarship deadlines, and application deadlines, which made it difficult to know how much money was available for offers. Confusion about the amount of funding available meant that some departments felt that they could not 'be bold' in their offers, which meant that money was left on the table at the end for individual student offers and sometimes at the end of admissions cycle. Many departments/faculties stated that they were unwilling to take risks around funding offers to students that could potentially expose them to a funding deficit.

'The Edmonton Effect'

Most departments/faculties noted that Edmonton was not a 'destination city' in Canada, as compared to Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal; and therefore, it was difficult to entice Canadian students here, particularly students from Ontario. Many departments/faculties expressed frustration that senior university administration did not seem to recognize the difficulties UAlberta faced as an institution in overcoming this reality, and the negative perceptions of Edmonton as a northern city. Most agreed that the university needs to be that much more attractive, and the overall recruitment packages have to be that much better in order to convince students to come here. Some departments/faculties called for the institution to leverage its relationships with the City and the Province in order to build the University's and City's reputations.

Communication to potential graduate students

There was almost universal agreement that communication between potential students and supervisors/programs was a key part of the recruitment process, in terms of program information and requirements, supervisor availability (where applicable), enquiries, and in some cases, application support. There are a wide variety of practices and philosophies around interaction with potential students, ranging from extensive communication between supervisors/administrators and students both pre-/post-application and acceptance, to little or no contact outside the formal application process.

It was widely recognized that most recruitment was done informally through departmental and faculty websites, particularly those of individual supervisors. Many departments/faculties reported frustration around finding adequate advice and resources for website design and maintenance; and some noted that a graduate student template, that conveyed information clearly and was easy to update, would be highly desirable; as would resources to develop and maintain websites. Most departments/faculties expressed a desire to update and maintain their websites, but felt they lacked the personnel/resources to do the job adequately. Website design was one of the projects funded by the Provost's Innovation Grants, and FGSR reported that work was starting on this initiative, in cooperation with Web Strategy.

Several departments and faculties were concerned that the duplication of information on both FGSR and department websites was confusing to recruits for the following reasons:

- Students needed to check to several places in order to understand programs and application processes.
- Perception that FGSR did not contact departments/faculties before posting information on its website, and therefore FGSR webpages that highlighted departmental programs were sometimes out of date and/or inaccurate. FGSR noted that the only departmental information currently on its websites was links to departmental websites, in terms of program information and deadlines.
- Several links on FGSR websites were broken.
- Relevant information was sometimes buried within FGSR websites.
- No standard template for FGSR and departmental graduate student websites.

Other issues included:

- Need for social media in recruiting students and building relationships, but many departments/faculties did feel they had the expertise, time, money to implement programs.
- University recruitment brochures did not adequately cover departments/faculties and/or programs, and sometimes contained out of date or misleading information.
- Some departments/faculties, particularly those in the health sciences noted that there were common misconceptions about eligibility for graduate programs by potential applicants. In particular, some clinical departments and pharmacy noted that it was commonly misconceived that students required MDs or Pharmacy degrees in order to do graduate studies in those departments/faculties.

Recruitment strategies

There was wide recognition that, as an institution we need to understand why many Canadian students were choosing not to come to the University of Alberta, the reasons for which may differ across departments/faculties. It was agreed that department and supervisor reputations clearly played a critical part in the decision-making process, but in order to establish a successful recruitment strategy, we needed an understanding of how the following issues also played a role:

- competitive funding packages,
- timing of offers,
- perceptions of quality of life in Edmonton,
- accessibility of program information on websites, etc.,
- the clarity/ease of application process,
- applicant engagement and/or interaction with department prior to and post-acceptance, and
- quality of research environment – academic reputation.

There was a call by many departments/faculties for a longer-term university vision around recruitment, and the development of a consistent strategy and institutional goals. Developing recruitment strategies over longer period of time (e.g., 3-5 years), rather than changing focus each year, as is the current perception, was seen as a way of enabling departments/faculties to plan their own strategies. There was frustration expressed by many departments and faculties about the perceived change in strategy

from year to year around graduate recruitment. Specifically there was concern about the drive to increase international students one year, followed a drive for Tri-Council scholarships in the subsequent year, which, of course, only available to Canadian students. Several departments/faculties also expressed frustration around their lack of success with their recruitment efforts (i.e., ‘we’re doing everything we can think of’) and some stated they would welcome institutional or faculty assistance in strategy planning and development.

It was noted by FGSR and by many departments/faculties that many programs do not have a long term strategic enrolment or recruitment plan. There were many reasons cited for this:

- Limitations in training and knowledge to develop such a plan.
- Funding limitations, since funding was allocated year-by-year. It was recognized by many departments/faculties, however, that in most cases, the funding levels were consistent year to year.
- In departments/faculties where funding packages relied on external PI awards, planning was based on the availability of supervisor funding to support graduate students.
- In departments/faculties where faculty numbers were declining, they were at capacity in terms of the number of students that could be accepted, and any strategy would change as faculty numbers changed (i.e., retires vs. hires).
- Accountability-resourcing disconnect – the need for direct connection/understanding of the resources available before decisions can be made about student offers, etc.

Some departments/faculties discussed the idea of developing joint recruitment strategies with aligned departments/faculties, in order to pool resources and attract a broader pool of applicants. It was felt that approach might also help recruits understand the differences between programs and make better choices. Furthermore, the establishment of joint programs between disciplines was seen as a way of attracting more students, and where these programs crossed faculties, some departments/faculties suggested there might be a role for FGSR to play in helping bridge faculty divides.

Many departments/faculties proposed bringing potential students to campus for a weekend to meet with faculty and current graduate students to understand the program and meet their potential cohort. It was perceived that this was common practice in many US universities, and increasingly common in Canada, with University of Calgary cited as one example. Many departments/faculties reported bringing in individual recruits to meet with supervisors and other current students (or in many cases, supervisors met students at conferences), but many also saw value in bringing in a cohort of students, with the idea of integrating them into the department/discipline and/or institutional culture early to create a collaborative and social research atmosphere from first interaction. It was proposed that this could be done at the program level, the department level, the discipline level that brings students together across departments and faculties, and/or at a thematic level that brings together disciplines around a common issue/theme (e.g., neuroscience); but that it would need proper planning to ensure optimum coordination and leveraging of resources.

There was also recognition that departments and faculties needed to be more pro-active in recruiting our own undergraduate students into graduate studies. Some departments/faculties cited the need to overcome the current image issue with graduate studies in terms of ‘what do you do with an academic degree when academic job market is shrinking?’ Several departments and faculties reported presenting research and graduate options in some undergraduate classes, and holding student research days. Several departments/faculties urged for more undergraduate research opportunities to promote graduate studies through the undergraduate research initiatives and summer research studentships, although it was noted that funding for studentships was declining, particularly through Tri-Council sources. Some departments/faculties highlighted their outreach efforts into schools, recognizing that recruitment started early, and cited the effectiveness of summer camps/schools, science fairs and student symposia in promoting graduate studies.

Many departments/faculties cited their professors as the best recruitment tools, especially through conferences, and acting as external examiners, guest speakers and/or visiting scholars at other universities. While some professors actively recruit through their network of colleagues throughout the discipline, it was felt that many did not take an active interest in recruitment, either because of time constraints or other priorities.

Graduate Student Perspectives

Graduate students’ comments on the issues surrounding recruitment reflected some of department concerns, including:

- Recruitment choices were based on reputation of department and supervisor, funding package and communication with the department/supervisor prior to and during the application process. Decisions were also based on student experiences, including interdisciplinary research opportunities, broad range of faculty, collaborative culture, leading research, scholarly activities (e.g., speakers, conferences, journals), low teaching burden, etc.
- Timing of the application process seemed late, as compared to other institutions. US application deadlines were reported to be in October/November.
- UA undergrads who were now graduate students reported finding out about graduate study opportunities through NSERC research sessions and the graduate expo.
- Confusion over funding guidelines and how they differ between departments, in some cases, even in the same faculty.
- Lack of Canadian students in some departments.
- Need for graduate student orientation that coincides with student and university schedules.
- Communication from supervisors and departments was a key factor in the decision-making process, especially around program expectations and funding packages.

Best practices and ideas

Several ideas and practices were suggested for improving the recruitment of graduate students to campus, some of which are listed below:

- Centralized department or faculty list of supervisors that had availability for students resulted in larger number of higher quality student enquiries and applications.
- Gold standard of recruitment would be coaches recruiting players – they rely on the reputation of themselves as coaches, as well as the program; they have a budget to recruit; can guarantee a package when they talk to recruits (and their parents).
- Online orientation course – interactive online course that includes information about discipline, program, short bios, etc.
- Using FGSR recruitment funds to bring top students to campus to meet with students and staff results in high acceptance rate (but also recognized that the FGSR fund is only \$20,000).
- Supervisor interviews before offering students admission.
- Leveraging the university's international agreements in a discipline-specific manner to attract students to programs.
- Recruitment advisory officer that can provide advice to faculties and departments on best practices, resources, opportunities for cross-campus collaboration, upcoming events, priority list of venues, etc.
- Current students Skype with prospective students to introduce them to the program and answer questions, etc.
- Leveraging expertise in departments/faculties and amongst students to create promotional material for programs.
- Focusing international recruitment efforts in targeted areas/institutions, especially those in the United States.
- The use of national and international collaborative research programs to connect with students at other institutions. For example, one department is using the iGem program to make contact with iGem students at other universities.

Summary of Issues

The major issues highlighted in meetings with departments, faculties and students were as follows:

- Need for long-term institutional strategy around graduate recruitment, with which departments/faculties can coordinate their strategies
- Need for funding, resources, etc. for stronger recruitment packages
- Need for shorter timelines to offers
- Need for sharing of best practices for recruitment between departments/faculties
- Need for coordination of messaging on websites between FGSR and departments/faculties

Quality Measures

While the design and delivery of high quality graduate programs was a primary focus of all departments and faculties, understanding how quality is recognized and measured was less clear. Quality measures and assessments was the one of the most contentious issue raised in the consultation meetings (the

other one was resourcing/downloading concerns), with many departments expressing grave concerns about the identification and implementation of institutional quality measures for graduate studies.

Issues

The main issues can be grouped in the following categories:

1. Quality assessment of programs vs. students
2. Reasons for quality measures
3. Potential implications of quality measures
4. Institutional vs. discipline-specific measures
5. Validity of data
6. Suggested measurement approaches

Quality assessment of programs vs. students

Strong concerns were raised by several departments/faculties about measuring the quality of programs versus the quality of students, the latter of which was judged by many to be an unfair and unjustifiable burden on students. According to these departments/faculties, quality measures must be centred on the productivity and outcomes of departments, and not on their students, who must not be held responsible or accountable for the success of their department.

Reasons for quality measures

There is an overarching concern about the reasons for quality measures around graduate studies on campus, stemming from what many departments/faculties saw as a lack of communication and consultation around the impetus and goals for implementing metrics. These concerns were heightened by discussions around tying quality measures to funding allocations in some way, and perceptions around the potentially devastating effects this would have on graduate programs, and in some cases the undergraduate programs they support (e.g., TA allocations). There were also fears that assessments tied to funding would punish struggling and/or underperforming programs, forcing closures and creating negative long-term impacts for the breadth, depth, and overall quality of programs at the University of Alberta.

There was also concern expressed by some departments/faculties around the current environment which seemed to advocate for the increased need or desire to measure academic disciplines in terms of quality, output and outcomes. This perceived need to quantify the unquantifiable was seen as problematic by a number of departments/faculties, but there was also recognition by most, that some sort of quality standards, or approach to assessing a program's success was necessary, and in some cases, desirable in terms of ensuring the current and future success of students. Some departments/faculties cited the RAE process in the United Kingdom as an example of the disastrous effects that quality assessment can have on programs and collegiality/collaborations within and across institutions. Some others questioned the ability and suitability of FGSR to oversee quality measures, given the perception that the quality of graduate programs should be tied closely to department and faculty unit review processes.

There was an appreciation that quality measures could and should be attached to a longer term university strategy around graduate studies, and how effectively departments and faculties were addressing and attaining those strategic objectives. There was a desire for departmental efforts to be recognized in terms of reacting positively to targets set by central administration, which in some cases deviated substantially from department strategies. Having a longer term and consistent strategy, against which departments and faculties could be assessed was seen by many as a positive step forward.

Potential implications of quality measures

There were grave concerns about measures that were easy to quantify, but were at best meaningless, and at worst created incentives to ‘game’ the system, or had unintended consequences that would be damaging to graduate programs. Many departments/faculties called for more research on which quality measures would be meaningful, at a discipline level, and warned that implementing an assessment program without due diligence and care could be disastrous for programs and graduate students.¹

Likewise concerns were expressed about identifying and implementing measures that were perhaps more meaningful, in terms of understanding and addressing issues around the quality of the student experience, but that were difficult and time-consuming for departments/faculties to collect. There were fears that such assessments, although useful to the programs, would put an undue burden on departmental administrative staff, which was already stretched to the limit. Many departments/faculties warned that, without proper resourcing, the demands of assessment would mean that choices would have to be made about other departmental graduate functions, in terms of ‘something having to give’.

There were concerns from some departments/faculties that instituting quality measures would create competition, rather than collaboration between programs. Many departments/faculties called for a quality assessment framework that sought to move the entire curve upwards, not just a handful of programs, to the detriment of others. There was almost universal agreement that strength across the academy had to be the goal, and therefore a mechanism to share information, and disseminate best practices needed to be established. There were also concerns expressed over the need to establish a departmental baseline, against which quality could be assessed, rather than an arbitrary and universal standard that would unfairly compare departments/faculties. Some departments/faculties cited the unit reviews as a possible source for baseline data. Most departments/faculties urged that quality assessments needed to be constructive and supportive of program growth and development, and not policing nor punitive.

Several departments/faculties also urged for recognition of the distinction between individual program goals/outcomes. Any quality measures, therefore, need to be sensitive to the differences between Masters and PhD programs, in terms of admissions, evaluation of program, training, and outcomes. It was argued that what was valued in Masters students was different from PhD students: e.g., the Masters programs was more focused on coursework. Furthermore, there were differences cited in the

¹ The publications of the Association of North American Graduate Programs are a comprehensive source of information on this topic.

definitions of Masters students, depending on discipline, as well as professional/course-based programs. Several departments/faculties argued that professional Masters students were not generally pursuing academic careers, and therefore their programs should not be assessed as if they were. Quality indicators such as papers and grants were not relevant to these programs, as compared to career outcomes, and some departments/faculties felt that their students were given short-shrift in terms of scholarship opportunities, despite their high levels of achievement.

Institutional vs. discipline-specific measures

There were concerns expressed in every department meeting about across the board quality measures that sought to compare dissimilar departments/faculties (i.e., comparing apples to oranges, or in the university context, chemical engineering to drama), particularly amongst departments/faculties that were not in natural sciences and engineering. There were fears that measures would be imposed that put the social sciences and humanities disciplines at significant disadvantage, particularly if numbers of publications, or years to completion put them in direct comparison with STEM faculties. Suspicions arose in some departments that having metrics tied to funding allocations would lead to a reallocation of funding from departments deemed unsuccessful to those that were more successful, creating a funding vacuum in some disciplines.

Validity of data

Concerns were expressed about the validity of data collected for such measures, in terms of the current differences in the data collected by FGSR, Strategic Analysis, departments and faculties, which were perceived by many departments/faculties to be significant. The question of which data would be used, and how it would be collected, was raised by a number of departments and faculties as a significant issue.

General indicators of quality

All departments and faculties stated that they offered high quality graduate programs, but acknowledged the difficulty in defining what ‘high quality’ meant in terms of specific metrics. Many discussed the challenges in measuring “I know quality when I see it”, particularly when considering multiple points of view.

There was universal agreement that the quality of the student experience within the program needed to be a large part of quality measures. There was acknowledgement that students had the talent, but needed a strong program to develop their skills to the highest level. Student support was seen as a key factor, in terms of enabling students to have the academic freedom to develop themselves. This included support for creating a community of scholars amongst graduate students and faculty members, in which collegiality and the quality of supervision was paramount. Some cited the level of care provided to students, particularly in non-academic matters, as a major factor in student success. Many departments/faculties lamented the fact that these elements were difficult to assess, and that there were no institutional rewards for good supervision or strong departmental support.

Suggested measurement approaches

When framed in terms of department-centred quality measures that compared like-programs within the discipline (across Canada, and internationally), as opposed to general measures across campus, many departments/faculties came up with similar measures that they would consider.

Many departments/faculties said that the now-defunct graduate program unit review process had been very useful for assessing quality of programs. The unit reviews had provided external validation of programs, as well as useful feedback for improvement. There were also concerns expressed about increasing demands on administrators who are already working on department/faculty unit reviews, and the necessity and/or utility of adding another assessment on top of this process. Several departments/faculties urged alignment between the various review processes, in order to leverage information and efforts. There was also a call from some departments/faculties about incorporating current metrics and statistics that FGSR and faculties collected into the discussion around quality to better understand the institutional context.

All departments/faculties made at least broad suggestions for quality indicators and/or measurements. Some of these measures were already in use within their unit reviews, and others were perhaps ‘typical’ indicators for the discipline. While some departments/faculties expressed concerns over the uniqueness of their program or their discipline, which resisted broad comparisons, all suggested some quality indicators. Common themes included:

- **Productivity indicators** – students are being provided opportunities to present their work at conferences, publish in journals, etc.
- **Peer-review indicators** – Scholarships, including Tri-Council, Vaniers, Trudeaus, but also other external peer-reviewed scholarship opportunities not currently counted (e.g., graduate student equivalents of Howard Hughes, Wellcome Trust, Gates, etc.).
- **Outcome indicators** – students are being hired in academic and non-academic positions related to their training.

Many departments/faculties also suggested specific ideas for metrics:

- Minimum requirements for courses, which can vary depending on what supervisory committees require
- Minimum funding for students
- Conversion rates for recruitment, from application to acceptance
- Number of supervisory meetings, monitored by graduate coordinator/chair
- Number of students – meeting enrolment targets including international and domestic students
- Completion rate
- Scholarly activity during programs, including publications, conferences and winning awards at conferences
- Student satisfaction
- Retention rate within program
- Scholarships – both national and international, as well as industry support

- PI grant funding, as it relates to student recruitment and funding

There were several indicators that were viewed as problematic, including:

- **Time to completion** – had mixed support on campus, with some programs seeing this as an effective measure, while others did not. Concerns about this metric included:
 - Differences between disciplines in average completion times.
 - If programs are advertising a 4-year completion time, then it needs to be possible to complete the program in 4 years. There are many programs which have an expectation of a longer completion time, and this needs to be relayed to students and university administration.
 - Impact on scholarly work if students were ‘forced’ to complete their programs prematurely.
 - Impact on the program’s ability to take on more students, if current students have longer completion times.
 - With slim opportunities in the academic job market, many departments/faculties felt keeping students in program a bit longer was beneficial.
 - With no ability to have weak students exit programs, many departments/faculties feared that these students would have an undue negative effect on overall completion rates.
- **GPA** – was seen as too easy to ‘game’ and would result in grade inflation, which some saw as already problematic in terms of scholarship applications.
- **Tri-Council, Vanier and Trudeau Scholarships** – were seen by many departments/faculties as problematic, especially those that did not have a track-record of success in these areas, either due to misalignment with Tri-Council funding opportunities, a large proportion of international students, and/or small departments/faculties. There was also concern about including students who received Tri-Council scholarships prior to commencing graduate programs at UAlberta, which were felt to reflect the quality of students’ previous university. There were also concerns expressed over measuring student quality more generally, as well as using scholarships as a measure since it was recognized that top students didn’t receive Tri-Council scholarships for many reasons (including not applying for them in the first place). There were worries expressed by some departments/faculties that the university was becoming an ‘awards mill’ without an appropriate cost-benefit analysis for the amount of student and department time and energy it takes for the application process.
- **Retention rates** – in some health science and science programs, some departments/faculties expressed concerns about retention rates of students, when some of their students left programs to enter MD or other professional programs. They urged that this reason for leaving the program should be seen as a positive outcome, and not negative attrition that counts against the program.
- **Exit surveys and alumni surveys in determining student experience** – most departments/faculties saw surveys as invaluable to assessing their programs, but cited administrative burden in tracking and surveying students. Some departments/faculties and

graduate students saw exit interviews as problematic since the lack of anonymity in smaller departments/faculties could affect students' ability to get reference letters, etc. from past supervisors.

- **Short-term vs. long-term measures** – there was recognition by many departments and faculties that quality measures need to integrate short-term and long-term indicators, particularly those relating to graduate recruitment strategies.

Graduate Student Perspectives

Graduate students' comments on the issues surrounding quality measures reflected some of department concerns, including:

- Level of support from supervisors and departments/faculties was not consistent across the institution;
- Effect of budgetary restraints on quality of program, including administrative support, course offerings, supervisor time;
- Lack of differentiation between Masters and PhD coursework in some programs;
- Potential of metrics to be driven by science and engineering standards, which may not be relevant or helpful to other disciplines;
- Implementation of standardized measures that were not indicative of quality, that could be manipulated, or would only be used to gain stature in international rankings;
- 4 years was not a realistic timeframe in which to complete a PhD program. If programs are advertised as a 4-year program, then students should be able to complete program (all things being equal) in that time;
- Ensuring that students gain the knowledge and skills they need to be successful;
- Need for evaluation process and reward system for supervisors through FEC, or other mechanism;
- Funding tied to quality measures that creates a punitive atmosphere for struggling programs;
- Unintended consequences of metrics that have harmful effects on program quality;
- Annual reports should form some basis of quality measures.

Suggested indicators of quality programs included:

- Research opportunities for graduate students;
- Administrative and financial support for graduate students to complete programs;
- Research that benefits wider community and opportunities to share research, and the relevance of research;
- Good supervision, including standards around supervision, personal interaction between supervisors and students;
- Opportunities for graduate students to meet with colleagues from across campus, to build community of scholars and promote interdisciplinary relationships/activities;
- Dedicated graduate student space;

- Programs that stressed quality of students over quantity, so that there is value in student-supervisor relationship;
- Productivity of supervisors in terms of publications, awards;
- Intelligently designed programs with wide-range of valuable courses, top professors and unquestionable scholarship.

Best practices and ideas

Several ideas and best practices were suggested around quality assessment of graduate programs on campus, some of which are listed below:

- Annual department meeting with graduate students to understand their quality of life and experience with supervisors.
- Some universities have implemented a fund for teaching relief for students in the final term of study to encourage them to complete their programs faster.
- The establishment of an MOU between student and supervisor that outlines expectations for both parties, where this was congruent with departmental culture. Most supervisors appreciate transparency in dealing with their students. There were concerns expressed by some departments/faculties of a changing attitude amongst graduate students who saw their programs as jobs, with TAs defining their hours of work, rather than research training programs. It was felt that clearly outlining expectations between supervisors and students, and having a record of this within a student file, would be beneficial to all parties.
- Measures of quality around international student support, both economically and socially. Some departments/faculties stated that this would be difficult to measure, but that it was important for international students to understand what the University offered them, in terms of the 'entire package.' Indicators of quality support programs could include the implementation of a transition year, specific websites for international students, departmental buddy or mentorship program to help students, keeping international student numbers at a sustainable level.

Summary of Issues

The major issues highlighted in meetings with departments, faculties and students were as follows:

- Quality measures should relate to long-term institutional strategy around graduate studies.
- Quality measures should be sensitive to differences between programs, disciplines, and faculties, and should be focused on programs, not students.
- Quality measures should be meaningful, but not onerous for departments/faculties to collect.
- Quality assessments should be tied to current review processes to leverage information and resources.

Professional Development

The need for professional development (PD) for graduate students was seen as universal amongst all departments/faculties. Broadly speaking, PD is intrinsic to graduate programming, which of course, is

focused on education and research training; and forms part of the University's academic plan, *Dare to Deliver*, to offer "a comprehensive range of training, development and leadership opportunities in non-disciplinary skills to graduate students and post-doctoral fellows." The scope and magnitude of training varies across programs, as do the views on the need for training opportunities outside of graduate student programming.

Most departments/faculties and graduate students saw benefit in providing PD opportunities as part of overall graduate education, both discipline-specific and university-wide. Many saw value in offering PD to students outside of their programs, as an integral part of their overall training for 'career readiness'. Some suggested that it could be offered/advertised as part of the overall 'package' of benefits for University of Alberta graduate students, that could be promoted along with scholarship opportunities, department programs, etc., as an integral part of recruitment.

Issues

There were several issues identified by departments, faculties and graduate students, in developing and implementing relevant and valuable professional development programs for graduate students:

1. Departmental vs. institutional role
2. Professional development areas
3. Accessibility of offerings
4. Non-academic streams
5. International student offerings

Faculty/departmental vs. institutional role

There was division of opinion as to the importance and utility of professional development offerings outside of departmental programs. Most departments/faculties agreed that there was value in having central offerings for PD opportunities particularly in 'soft skills' and teaching and general academic skills that were not department or discipline specific. Some departments/faculties, however, expressed concern about the benefits of cross-campus PD opportunities since it was perceived that so many skills were faculty or discipline specific, and the fact that students would be taking time away from their programs to participate in institutional offerings. The usefulness of courses that were aimed at engineering, social sciences, humanities, natural and physical sciences and health sciences was seen by some as resulting in course offerings that would be so generic or watered down, as to be useless.

Several departments/faculties reported having put considerable effort in developing their PD programs that included support for academic and non-academic streams. Departments/faculties reported a wide variety of professional development opportunities within their programs, largely dependent on the culture of the department/discipline and PD philosophies. Many departments/faculties felt that they offered adequate to superb professional development within the parameters of their programs, which effectively socialized their students into the program and profession. Typical examples included pro-seminars and courses that covered topics such as:

- Research methodologies

- Developing academic CVs
- Grant writing tips
- Reviewing and giving feedback on Tri-Council and other scholarship proposals
- Close supervisor/mentorship of students , which was seen as the basis of PD for students
- Editorial help to shape manuscripts for submission to journals, etc.
- Student-led conferences
- Scientific integrity and research days

However, some departments/faculties expressed concern over their role in providing PD opportunities for non-academic careers, since as academic units they felt they were ‘in the business’ of providing academic training for academic career paths. While all departments/faculties recognized that not all of their graduates pursued academic careers, some departments/faculties felt it was beyond the department remit to provide more general career training, and saw this instead as an institutional role.

Many departments/faculties called for institutional consistency and a strategy for establishing broad-based skills programs to provide foundational training in particular areas, which would encourage alignment with program-based PD programs. Many questioned how we might reduce redundancy in offerings and leverage current opportunities across campus, so as to make the best use of current resources. Most people were aware of FGSR’s email list highlighting PD opportunities, but many departments/faculties and graduate students felt that the list was difficult to access/assess in terms of having too much choice, and could be better organized. There was no clear path or system for students to enable them to be strategic in their course selection, in terms of efficiently and effectively building an individualized PD program. A way of combining offerings and efforts was seen as highly desirable, and many saw a role for FGSR to develop programs or to work with others on campus to build programs cooperatively. FGSR noted that its philosophy was that it would partner with whoever is willing to offer PD opportunities, in order to ensure that the opportunities exist.

In particular departments/faculties saw value in the institutional role for:

- **Teaching training** – many departments/faculties lamented the demise of UTS and their teaching program, and lauded FGSR for stepping into the breach to provide TA training. Some departments/faculties questioned having two units on campus providing teaching training – Centre for Teaching and Learning and FGSR – albeit for different audiences. The FGSR teaching program was seen by most departments/faculties as extremely useful. A very few departments/faculties provided their own discipline-specific TA training, but the majority either encouraged students to take courses through the FGSR program (although many departments/faculties considered the full certificate program too onerous for students), or expected that students would learn teaching practices through experience.
- **Ethics training** – the University’s online ethics course was seen by many to be an effective way of delivering material, but many departments/faculties expressed concerns about its content being too general and too ‘watered-down’ to be of much use. Most departments/faculties taught their own ethics courses in addition to the online program.

- **Encouraging interdisciplinary interaction** – many departments/faculties lauded the usefulness of institutional offerings in bringing students together from a variety of disciplines, as a way of creating opportunities for interdisciplinary discussion and relationship building; many graduate students also supported this idea as a way of building a community of graduate students across the institution, which they viewed as otherwise difficult.
- **Leveraging HRS expertise** – there were calls by some departments/faculties to look into the possibility of programs offered by Human Resources Services, particularly in the Skillsoft program that has general programs, as well as more specific certificate programs, such as project management, conflict resolution, etc.

Professional development areas

Departments/faculties mentioned several potential topic areas that were seen as highly desirable skills for students to achieve during the course of their training, outside the remit of their academic programs.

Examples include:

- Project management,
- Conflict resolution,
- Laboratory and/or research management,
- Academic administration (i.e., duties of professors outside of teaching and research),
- Entrepreneurship,
- General business skills – budgeting, time management, etc.,
- Writing skills for both domestic and international students,
- Presentation skills (i.e., public speaking, poster presentations, etc.),
- Leadership.

There was mixed reaction to the idea of a certificate approach to professional development, as has been implemented at other universities. Some departments/faculties cited examples of PD programs internationally that had certificates, which they saw as effective at building the students' CVs by providing evidence of a certain level of achievement in demonstrable skills, and distinguishing graduates from others in their field. Others saw this benefit as minimal, and worried that it would take too much of the students' time away from their programs.

Accessibility of offerings

There was also concern expressed about the accessibility of PD, in terms of when opportunities were offered (both time of year and time of day) that precluded some students from being able to attend, particularly in laboratory-based sciences or part-time students. There were several suggestions made for improving access to opportunities, including:

- offering PD opportunities at multiple times of day and/or year,
- creating a database of on-line offerings based on videos from courses offered on campus,
- establishing protected time for PD, in terms of a number of days or hours per month/year/program (and ensuring that supervisors adhere to, and support this expectation).

Many departments/faculties expressed concern over the high cost of current PD opportunities to students, which could be significant from a student perspective. Some wondered if offerings could be leveraged across campus in such a way to reduce costs of delivery. Others suggested accessing provincial and/or federal programs to support training, particularly in knowledge translation, and for non-academic career paths (examples mentioned: AI-TF, AI-HS, NSERC).

Some departments/faculties highlighted the difficulties students faced in trying to take academic courses outside of those offered by their programs and faculties. With increasing interdisciplinarity of research and programs, many departments/faculties saw urgency in making access to courses across the institution more straightforward.

Non-academic streams

Many departments/faculties saw the need for more information and training around non-academic career streams. It was recognized by some departments/faculties that they had little expertise to train their students for careers outside of academia, since their professional experience was entirely within the university system. Many saw a departmental and institutional role in ensuring that students had knowledge about alternative career paths in industry, government, NGOs and non-profits. There were suggestions for creating mechanisms to encourage discussion about career alternatives, with some departments/faculties suggesting that CAPS may be a logical unit to develop these opportunities in cooperation with graduate programs.

Some departments/faculties and graduate students discussed the merits of creating internship opportunities for students. Some pointed to some European degree programs that allowed for PhD training to take place in industry labs. While it was recognized that facilitating this sort of program was not a short-term goal for UAlberta graduate education, there was a desire by many graduate students and some departments/faculties to encourage closer ties, where appropriate, between industry and academia. Internship programs, along similar lines to undergraduate opportunities currently offered on campus, as well as programs offered by Alberta Innovates and MITACS were seen by some departments/faculties as a means of creating PD opportunities within programs. The limitations and potential pitfalls of establishing these programs within the current confines of the Masters and PhD programs were recognized, particularly in the laboratory sciences or PI-sponsored programs, where taking time away from projects could have considerable impact on research programs and progress. Some departments/faculties saw an institutional role for developing these sorts of programs in cooperation with provincial and federal agencies, as part of an overall graduate education strategy.

International student offerings

Some departments/faculties advocated for additional training/orientation for international students prior to and during their course of study, around the Canadian research environment, expectations around graduate student work (e.g., definitions of plagiarism), writing and presentation skills. Some departments/faculties mentioned that at one time, they had well-developed orientation and specialized skill development programs for international students, that were victims of budget reallocation. These departments/faculties found these programs to be an extremely useful, if not essential support to

create positive student experiences and would like to see similar skills programs developed centrally, through the International Centre and/or UAI. While it was recognized that some of these programs were currently offered by the International Centre prior to the start of the academic year, there was concern that international students needed offerings throughout the year.

Graduate Student Perspectives

Graduate students' comments on the issues surrounding administration reflected some of department concerns, including:

- Many students expressed concerns about the academic culture on campus that they saw as refusing, or slow to acknowledge that many, if not most students, would find careers outside of the academic setting.
- Need for interaction with industry, government and not-for-profit organizations to understand alternative career paths.
- Development of internship opportunities to explore career opportunities – must be supported by supervisors, perhaps funding available to release students from programs for short periods.
- Establishment of a graduate student career fair that is different from undergraduate fairs – organizations looking for higher level of expertise.
- Need for professional development for supervisors – adult education skills, develop culture of learning amongst faculty.
- Opportunities for alumni to come back to campus to share experiences, and utilize PD opportunities

Best practices and ideas

Several ideas and practices were suggested for improving the professional development for graduate studies on campus, some of which are listed below:

- Annual offsite retreat for graduate students to explore PD opportunities, collaboration-building.
- Alumni talks for students about different career paths, and to build networks between staff, students, and alumni.
- International student orientation that includes spoken English classes, research expectations, TA expectations, cultural orientation, etc. – offered before and throughout program.
- Annual allotment of mandatory days for PD training that must be honoured and supported by supervisors.
- Some departments/faculties track students' PD courses, etc. taken outside their degree program.
- Faculty-wide speaker series that brings together students from across disciplines.

Summary of Issues

The major issues highlighted in meetings with departments, faculties and students were as follows:

- Need for coordinated, strategic approach to developing PD opportunities/programs that leverage opportunities across the institution, in a way that builds efficiency and effective delivery.
- Need for soft-skills development for graduate students outside of academic programs.
- Need for information about non-academic career opportunities.
- Need for accessible PD opportunities, in terms of timing, relevance, and cost.

Other University Models

Effective organization and support of graduate education is a clear priority for universities across Canada, and many of the U15 universities have undergone reviews and/or re-organization of their graduate studies administration in the past 5-10 years. Understanding the evolution of graduate studies at other leading Canadian universities is key to identifying and highlighting issues and solutions within the UAlberta context. As part of this consultation, a team from the University of Alberta – Mazi Shirvani, Art Quinney, Ashlyn Bernier and Catherine Swindlehurst – visited the University of Waterloo and the University of Toronto on December 18-19, 2012.

At each university, the team met with leaders and administrative staff from several units within the school/office of graduate studies, as well as faculty administrators and graduate students, to understand the key issues and perspectives around graduate studies organization at each institution (see Appendix IV for a list of participants).

There were several common areas of concern which provide some helpful insight into current issues and discussions at UAlberta:

- **Centralized vs. decentralized services** – both UofT and UW have largely decentralized their graduate studies administration, with many administrative responsibilities and tasks overseen by the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) in each faculty. Admissions, standards and some services (e.g., international transcripts, non-standard applications (e.g., below minimum standards), medical and other leaves, etc.) defense administration, external award adjudication, and thesis submission are still handled centrally.
- **Roles and responsibilities** – both institutions discussed the need for clarity around roles and responsibilities for graduate studies, and some faculty representatives saw this as an on-going process, rather than something that had been resolved during previous re-organizations of graduate studies.
- **Communication** – in both UofT and UW, the central graduate unit has direct communication (through a committee structure) with the Associate Deans (Graduate Studies) for each faculty, in order to facilitate better communication at the faculty level. UofT has undergone a restructuring of their graduate studies committee to create a smaller, more effective decision-making body.
- **Oversight of standards** – both institutions have maintained central oversight of university standards and quality assessment within a central administrative unit (UofT has the School of Graduate Studies and UW has the Office of Graduate Studies).

- **Paperless systems** – both UofT and UW had instituted digital systems for admissions, awards, and student tracking, and there were expressions of shock that UAlberta had not yet undertaken this evolution. Both institutions discussed the efficiencies associated with digital submissions, especially the ability to monitor administrative progress for applications, etc., avoid duplication of efforts, and to perform analysis on key administrative performance metrics. The University of Waterloo was in the process of developing a student self-service navigation system that would update in real-time.
- **Quality measures and assurance** – Ontario universities have a more formalized process for quality assurance through the Ontario Quality Council that has specific measures and targets for graduate programs in all Ontario universities, and these are administered centrally.

Postdoctoral Fellows

There is recognition on campus that post-doctoral fellows (PDFs) are distinct from graduate students. Currently the PDF Office is housed under the Office of the Vice-President (Research), and forms part of that office's strategic plan. This positioning of the PDF Office helps to distinguish the special role that PDFs have on campus, particularly in terms of their contribution to research. While it is recognized that PDFs are research trainees, they are differentiated from graduate students in that they are early-stage professional researchers that have different goals and needs than graduate students.

The University of Alberta is a recognized leader in Canada for developing PDF support and services, and has assisted several U15 universities in setting up their own PDF offices. While UA's model is different from many of its Canadian counterparts in its placement of the PDF Office within the Office of the Vice President (Research), this has been a highly effective model for raising the profile and numbers of PDFs on campus.

The PDF Office is developing a professional development program for PDFs that leverages current offerings available on campus, especially through FGSR, and is looking at establishing new programs for both academic and non-academic streams.

Some departments/faculties called for a greater focus on the role and value of PDFs on campus. Suggestions were made that they should be able to participate in campus professional development programs, they should have support for applying for jobs and other fellowships, and they should participate in industry visits and/or internship programs. There was concern expressed by some departments/faculties that the university needs to recognize that given the current academic job market that PDFs will need to train longer before getting tenure-track jobs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The consultation revealed universal praise for our high quality graduate programs and graduate students. While frustrations were expressed by many departments, faculties and students with aspects of graduate education at the University, these feelings were borne out of a desire to improve the

graduate education experience by providing more effective and efficient support systems for our students, our programs, our graduate coordinators and administrators, departments, faculties and FGSR. There is recognition, given the changes to graduate students and programs, that the current administrative supports and structures are not sustainable over the long-term. This situation threatens our institutional ability to continue to deliver high quality programs and remain competitive for students with our Canadian university peers.

While many people expressed concerns about making changes to graduate education at the University, particularly around the fear of enacting ‘the wrong changes’, there was a great deal of consensus as to what improvements could/should be made. This shared vision of change and the willingness to make improvements presents the University with a golden opportunity.

Based on the comments and suggestions from the consultation meetings that reflected many of the issues and recommendations arising in previous reviews of FGSR and graduate education, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. **Implementation of online admissions, administration and scholarship systems.** This must be seen as the highest priority for graduate studies at the University of Alberta. The current paper-based system is archaic, labour-intensive, and inefficient, and poses an institutional risk to the long term growth and success of graduate studies. The implementation of an online system will address many of the administrative inefficiencies highlighted by departments/faculties, particularly if a system is chosen with little customization (i.e., one that encourages streamlining of underlying administrative processes). Proper resourcing and championship at the highest levels of the institution, and clear communication and consultation with department/faculty stakeholders, are necessary to ensure success and timely implementation.
2. **Establishment of a clearly articulated long-term strategy for graduate education at the University of Alberta.** Graduate education at the University of Alberta needs a clear strategy – with identified vision, mission, goals, and metrics – that is effectively communicated to the campus community, and around which faculties and departments can implement their own graduate enrolment strategies.
3. **Establishment of a clear vision and governance mandate for the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research that is focused on the establishment and maintenance of policies and standards.** There is a vital role for a central graduate studies administration that provides an institutional umbrella for the establishment and maintenance of graduate standards and policies/procedures across the university. It is vital to the integrity and reputation of the institution that this responsibility be held centrally, and not at a faculty/departmental or program level. Under the leadership of a Dean and Vice-Provost, the roles and responsibilities of FGSR need to be clearly defined and articulated to the campus community.
4. **A clear definition of FGSR’s executive and service functions, to streamline administrative processes and reduce duplication, and enable FGSR to provide effective oversight and support to departments/faculties.** FGSR should take a leadership role in supporting faculties, departments, and students, which differs from its current perception as a policing and/or

permission granting body. FGSR needs to pull back from transactional administration, some of which currently duplicates efforts within departments/faculties, and instead focus on the establishing institutional standards, and providing oversight and advice on policies and procedures. The executive function of FGSR needs to be clearly established according to its governance mandate, so that its services can be effectively and efficiently focused on supporting the needs of departments/faculties and students. FGSR should set clear expectations on timeliness and quality of services, and should be held accountable to these standards.

5. **Establishment of quality measures and a more significant role for FGSR in the University unit review quality assurance process.** Quality measures should be established in consultation with faculties and departments and should relate to long-term institutional strategy around graduate studies. The measures should recognize the differences between disciplines, and should be focused on assessing the quality of programs, and not students. Quality assessments should be tied to current unit review processes to leverage information and resources.
6. **Establishment of clear communication channels between FGSR and faculties and departments.** Communication between FGSR and the rest of campus is perceived to be inefficient and ineffective, which reflects wider communication issues on this campus, as well as universities across Canada. There needs to be more transparency about FGSR's policies and processes, in order to reduce widespread perception of FGSR as a black box. More efficient communication mechanisms must be developed, in order improve consultation with departments/faculties and students around changes to procedures, deadlines, etc. This may include a restructuring of FGSR Council to make it a more effective policy and standards decision-making body.
7. **Establishment of seamless communication with prospective and current students.** Currently there are many messages presented to students around application, admissions, and program administration, which is confusing, and in some cases, misleading. Students need to have access to clear, concise, consistent and timely information on FGSR and faculty/department websites, and access to a straightforward application process. There should be common templates for websites, forms, and offer/admissions letters to ensure consistency and clarity across the institution. A graduate studies' strategy around social media should also be developed.
8. **Enhanced recruitment strategies that include multi-year funding packages that are competitive with other leading universities.** Department/faculties should be encouraged and supported in developing multi-year recruitment strategies that focus making our programs more competitive in attracting high-quality Canadian and international students.
9. **Implementation of a web-based, individual student progress tracking system.** A student navigation bar should also be developed so that students, departments, and FGSR can effectively monitor and support student progression through their programs.
10. **Establishment of institutional strategy for developing and delivering professional development opportunities.** There is a need for the establishment of broad-based PD opportunities that are coordinated with more specific program/department/faculty offerings. These opportunities should leverage existing and upcoming programs across campus to establish a coordinated effort for efficiently and effectively delivering and developing relevant

and accessible (i.e., both timely and cost-effective) PD programs for Masters and PhD students, and where appropriate, post-doctoral fellows.

Next Steps

Based on the findings of this consultation, the next step in improving the graduate experience at UAlberta is to develop a process for building an action plan and timelines for implementing these recommendations.

Appendix I: Participants in the Consultation Exercise

Faculties/Schools and Departments:

ALES	John Kennelly, Walter Dixon
Human Ecology	Deanna Williamson, Janet Fast
Renewable Resources	Vic Lieffers, Glen Armstrong
ARTS	Lesley Cormack, Lois Harder
Anthropology	Pamela Willoughby, Andie Palmer, Gail Mathew
Art and Design	Cezary Gajewski, Steven Harris, Dawn McLean
Drama	Kathleen Weiss, Robert Shannon, Ruth Vander Woude
East Asian Studies	Ryan Dunch, Yoshi Ono, Anne Commons
Economics	Douglas West, Brad Humphries
English and Film Studies	Susan Hamilton, Corinne Harol
History and Classics	Ken Mouré, Dennis Sweeney
Interdisciplinary Studies	Sean Gouglas, Maureen Engle, Janey Kennedy
Linguistics	Sally Rice, David Beck
Modern Languages and Cultural Studies	Laura Beard, Andriy Nahachewsky, Jane Wilson
Music	Debra Cairns, Howard Bashaw, Twilla MacLeod
Philosophy	Jennifer Welchman, Amy Schmitter
Political Science	James Lightbody, Ian Urquhart, Malinda Smith
Sociology	Harvey Krahn, Kevin Haggerty, Nancy Evans
AUGUSTANA	Allen Berger

BUSINESS	Joan White, David Deephouse
EDUCATION	Fern Snart, Patricia Boechler
Educational Policy Studies	Jennifer Kelly, Brenda Spencer, Joan White
Educational Psychology	Jacqueline Leighton, George Buck, Brenda Burgess
Elementary Education	Larry Prochner, Anna Kirova
Secondary Education	Florence Glanfield, Bill Dunn, Greg Thomas
ENGINEERING	David Lynch, Steven Dew
Electrical and Computer Engineering	Horacio Marquez, Ying Tsui
Mechanical Engineering	Peter Shiavone
EXTENSION	Katy Campbell, Fay Fletcher, Gordon Gow
FGSR	Mazi Shirvani, Lindsey Rose, Renee Polzein
LAW	Philip Bryden, Russell Brown
LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES	Ernie Ingles, Margaret Mackey
MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY	Hanne Ostergaard
Biochemistry	Charles Holmes, David Stewart
Cell Biology	Thomas Simmen
Dentistry and Dental Hygiene	Paul Major, Carlos Flores-Mir
Laboratory Medicine and Pathology	Michael Mengel, Monika Keelan
Medical Genetics	Michael Walter, Sarah Hughes
Medical Microbiology and Immunology	David Evans, Deborah Burshtyn, Anne Giles
Medicine	Barbara Ballermann, Karen Madsen
Oncology	Sandy McEwan, Andrew Shaw, Jen Freund

Pharmacology	James Hammond, Elena Chavez
Physiology	Jim Young, Greg Funk
Psychiatry	Esther Fujiwara
Surgery	Tom Churchill
NATIVE STUDIES	Brendan Hokowhitu, Chris Andersen, Lana Sinclair
NURSING	Anita Molzahn, Pauline Paul
PHARMACY AND PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES	James Kehrer, Ayman El-Kadi
PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION	Kerry Mummery, Stewart Petersen
PUBLIC HEALTH, SCHOOL OF	Lory Laing, Sentil Senthilselvan
REHABILITATION MEDICINE	Bob Haennel, Tammy Hopper, Liz Taylor, Angela Libutti
Occupational Therapy	Lili Liu, Shaniff Esmail, Yagesh Bhambhani
Physical Therapy	Jaynie Yang, Trish Manns
Speech Pathology and Audiology	Karen Pollock, Vicky Tremblay, Phyllis Schneider
SCIENCE	Jonathan Schaeffer, Arturo Sanchez- Azofeifa
Biological Sciences	Heather McDermid
Chemistry	Jed Harrison, Todd Lowary, Mark McDermott
Computing Science	Mike MacGregor, Joerg Sander, Louise Whyte
Earth and Atmospheric Sciences	Martin Sharp, Thomas Chacko
Physics	Mauricio Sacchi, Sharon Morsink
Psychology	Tom Spalding, Anita Mueller

Graduate Students

GSA Executive	Ashlyn Bernier, Nathan Andrews, Brent Epperson
PhD Consultation Group	7 students - Political Science, Engineering, Medical Microbiology and Immunology, Laboratory Medicine and Pathology, English, Neuroscience, Sociology
PhD Consultation Group	8 students - Political Science, Engineering, Medical Microbiology and Immunology, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Public Health, Medicine, Computing Science, Physical Education and Recreation
Masters (thesis) Consultation Group	7 students – Psychology, Biological Sciences, Pediatrics, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Human Ecology, Engineering, East Asian Studies
Masters (course-based) Consultation Group	2 students - Education
Department of English Graduate Students' Collective	
Political Science Graduate Students' Association	

Administrative Units

Faculty Relations, Provost's Office	Jay Spark, Susan Buchsdruecker
Provost's Office	Murray Gray
Provost's Office	Bill Connors
Provost's Office	Art Quinney
UAI	Britta Baron
Registrar's Office	Gerry Kendel
University Secretariat	Marion Haggarty-France, Garry Bodnar
University Relations	Anne Bailey
Web Strategy	Jennifer Chesney, Tim Schneider, Kyle Kramer, Rehan Asif
Internal Audit	Mary Persson

Office of Advancement
TEC Edmonton
Post-Doctoral Fellows' Office
Office of the Vice President (Research)

Kelly Spencer, Matt Weaver
Pamela Freeman, Noreen Hoskins
Janna Isabelle, Diane Hessels
Richard Fedorak

Others

Executive Professor, School of Business, and Fellow,
National Institute for Nanotechnology
Director, MBA Public Management Stream, University
of Alberta

Peter Hackett

Roger Palmer

Appendix II: Email to Department Chairs

Dear Dr. <name>,

Following on communications about the proposed changes to graduate studies conducted by Martin Ferguson-Pell, Mazi Shirvani and me with a number of stakeholders on campus, I will be conducting an extensive consultation exercise with Faculties, Departments, and relevant administrative units from November 1 – December 15. It is clear from our conversations that there are a variety of views across campus on both current practices and ideas for future improvements. The information I gather from this exercise will identify the current context of graduate studies at the program level, and bring ideas to the table that will provide the framework for discussion and decision-making in the New Year.

I will be meeting with department chairs, associate chairs and graduate coordinators in order to understand the operational and strategic landscape of graduate studies on campus. At the program and department levels, the most useful information will be related to your own programs and experiences, especially identifying what measures best support your students and supervisors.

Through discussions to date, 4 key issues have been identified:

1. **Administration** – It has been proposed that certain aspects of graduate student administration should be (and many already have been) delegated to the Faculties. Aspects could include recruitment, criteria for admission (with minimum standards), review of student transcripts on application, distribution of graduate student funding allocations, scholarship reviews and awards, managing offers to students, supporting students and supervisors, student discipline/student ombuds service, managing candidacy and defence. What aspects could be delegated from FGSR to the Faculties, in order to improve its efficiency and effectiveness? How much of this is already performed at a Faculty or Department level? What is your strategic enrollment management plan? Where are the current gaps, bottlenecks, duplication of efforts, best practices? Where could improvements be made, and what does ‘successful’ graduate studies administration look like? What are the resourcing issues?
2. **Recruitment** – Recruitment is currently led by graduate programs at the Faculty or Department level. However approaches and effectiveness seem to vary widely across programs. What are the current issues with recruiting top-tier graduate students? What could a graduate student recruitment strategy look like at a Faculty or Departmental level? What are best practices across campus? Where could improvements be made? What are the resourcing issues?
3. **Quality Measures** – In order to promote and improve the quality of our graduate programs, the University must have defined minimum standards and established equality measures. What does a minimum standard for a graduate program look like? What quality measures does a successful graduate program implement – both quantitative and qualitative, over the short and long term? How should performance against these quality measures be assessed and rewarded?
4. **Professional Development Programs for Graduate Students** – There are currently a number of professional development courses and programs across campus for graduate students that prepare them for academic careers, but only 40% of our graduates follow this career path. What sort of professional development do our graduate students need in order to prepare for both academic and non-academic careers? What supplementary programs are already in place at the

faculty or department level? What should be developed for graduate supervisors, postdoctoral fellows? Can efforts be leveraged across campus? What does a 'successful' program look like?

Once the consultation process is completed and the findings compiled, four working groups each focussed on one of the identified areas will be formed from FGSR Council and other stakeholders from campus, as identified from the consultation process. These working groups will review the findings, conduct their own research, and will provide input for the next stage of the process.

I would like to schedule a 1 hour meeting with you and/or your graduate chair and coordinator before the end of November. I am happy to work around your schedule(s) and make this as easy for you as possible.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have about this process.

Thanks and all the best,

Catherine

Catherine Swindlehurst, PhD, MBA

Special Advisor to the Provost
Office of the Provost
University of Alberta
2-51 South Academic Building
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G7
[\(780\) 492-9624](tel:7804929624)

Appendix III: Memo to Deans



Interdepartmental Correspondence

Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
 2-36 South Academic Building (SAB)
 Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G7

Tel: 780.492.3443
 Fax: 780.492.1438
 www.provost.ualberta.ca

Date: Friday, October 12, 2012

To: Deans

From: Martin Ferguson-Pell, Ph.D.
 Acting Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

Re: Graduate Student Programs

Over the last couple of weeks I have had the opportunity to meet with each of you to continue the discussions held at the last two Deans' Retreats regarding graduate student programs. Mazi and I have proposed some concepts for change that we plan to present in more detail at the October 17 Deans' Council. The key points that we plan to discuss will be:

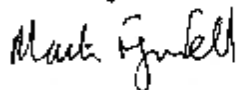
1. The potential for delegating responsibility of some aspects of student admissions from FGSR to Faculties. This would include recruitment, criteria for admission (as long as a minimum standard is met), distribution of graduate student funding allocations, managing offers to students, supporting students and supervisors, managing candidacy and defence.
2. Graduate students would convocate with their Faculty rather than FGSR
3. The FGSR will continue to provide its current levels of administrative support to the graduate programs, including registrarial functions, graduate scholarships, etc.
4. Focus the emphasis of FGSR on promoting the quality of our graduate programs through:
 - a) Defining a minimum standard for a graduate program and then developing, through FGSR Council, quality measures for graduate programs and allocating graduate program resources based on program performance against these quality measures.
 - b) Providing programs for graduate students to supplement courses and programs offered by Faculties (e.g. skill development for presentations and posters, support for scholarship applications, programs on career development (academic, enterprise, government)).
 - c) Support for "navigating" the graduate degree process including the development of an online "navigation bar".
5. Opportunities for continuing professional development of supervisors.
6. Opportunities for supporting post docs as part of the FGSR programs.

We propose that FGSR would continue to be the formal Faculty "home" of graduate students but we would anticipate that FGSR be seen to function as a "Graduate School", providing support, resources, and expertise to support excellence for graduate programs. This is much the model used at UBC and UT for example. We do not anticipate any significant changes in staffing at FGSR. We have briefed

FGSR staff, and will follow-up in writing with additional detail so that they can provide their expertise as we develop in more detail the changes outlined. We have also outlined these concepts with the President of the Graduate Students Association.

These "ideas" are open for full discussion and consultation. I would be very grateful if you would start a discussion with your Chairs and graduate program leads. Mazl will lead this initiative, supported by Catherine Swindlehurst who has been seconded from the Office of the VP Research to this initiative and will assist taking forward the consultation, background research and detailed planning.

Please feel free to contact me at any point with your thoughts and guidance as we take these transformative changes forward.



Martin Ferguson-Pell

G:\AD01-GRAD-4N FGSR Oct 12'12

Appendix IV: Visits to University of Toronto and University of Waterloo

University of Waterloo (December 18, 2012)

Lynn Judge, Director, Graduate Academic Services

Sue Horton, Associate Provost, Graduate Studies (by conference call)

Liz Meiering, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies

Ray Legge, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and International Agreements, Faculty of Engineering

Levent Tuncel, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies, Faculty of Mathematics

Bill Power, Professor, Institute for Quantum Computing

Tracey Sinclair, Assistant Director, Graduate Admissions and Records Systems

Jeanette Nugent, Associate Director, Graduate Recruitment and Admissions

Graduate Student Association (GSA) Executive

Marta Bailey, Assistant Director, Graduate Communications & Postdoctoral Affairs

Dawn Charlton, Strategic Marketing and Communications Consultant

Cathy Newell Kelly, Director, Centre for Extended Learning

University of Toronto (December 19, 2012)

Cheryl Regehr, Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Jane Harrison, Director, Academic Policies and Programs

Brian Corman, Dean of Graduate Studies and Vice-Provost, Graduate Education

Elizabeth Smyth, Vice-Dean, Programs, SGS

Luc De Nil, Vice-Dean, Students, SGS

Heather Kelly, Director, Student Services & Awards, SGS

Jane Alderdice, Director, Quality Assurance & Governance, SGS

Sandy Welsh (Vice Dean, Graduate Education & Program Reviews)

Rob Baker (Vice Dean, Research and Infrastructure)

Mae-Yu Tan, Louis Charpentier, Governing Council

Helen Chang, Graduate Education Researcher

Sally Garner, Executive Director, Planning and Budget

Chirag Variawa, Governing Council Graduate Student Representative

GRADUATE EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

February 2013 (v.3)

The following document is a description of the proposed form in which the graduate education system of the University is to be organized. It is informed by the following principles:

1. The quality of graduate education, systems, and experience involves central units, the Faculties, graduate units (usually departments), and the GSA, all in an essential way.
2. Support for graduate activities must become, and remain, paperless, efficient, up-to-date, and sufficient to provide and support graduate students from recruitment to graduation.
3. Excellence and high standards take precedence over quantity.
4. The University must have a multi-year strategic graduate management plan.
5. Activities impacting individual graduate students and applicants must remain at the local level (departments and graduate programs) to the extent possible, and be supported by more central units.

The design of the proposed organization is based on the feedback received as part of the consultation process, as well as a detailed knowledge of how many other top institutions organize their graduate activities; it is analogous to a blueprint for a vehicle. The creation of a vehicle, however, does not tell us what the destination should be. The institutional graduate strategic plan is where the nature of the graduate education we provide, and the outcomes we hope to see, are articulated. It is proposed that the institutional graduate plan be synthesized from the faculty plans. A template for the faculty plans follows this document.

By the same token, the action plan that follows is only aimed at the creation of the vehicle. A complementary action plan must accompany the institutional graduate strategic plan.

The following provides more details on the proposed way of organizing ourselves, but it is not at the extremely detailed level. Most of the details remain to be worked out as part a consultative process between the departments, faculties, and central units, and many require policy changes that are still to come.

Overview of the blueprint

1. Eventual distribution of activity:
 - a. FGSR Council: Policies and minimum standards, institutional quality measures.
 - b. FGSR Office: Support and training for administrative units, quality assurance audits, program quality reviews (together with the Faculties), advocacy for graduate education and funding, scholarships and awards, graduate registrarial

functions, coordination of existing professional and career development opportunities and development of additional activities, supervisory development opportunities, promotion of graduate education, other activity as directed by FGSR Council policy, (Possible: allocation? of multi-year? adjustable? graduate funding to Faculties).

- c. President and the Provost: Approval of the institutional graduate strategic plan, other support as required.
 - d. Other vice-presidential portfolios: as required.
 - e. UAI: Essential support for international activity including recruitment and multi-institutional agreements, support of international students on campus.
 - f. Registrar, Dean of Students: Student financial aid, Campus Solutions, student services and support.
 - g. HR: Graduate employment.
 - h. Faculties and Departments: Strategic planning (**GSMP** – a possible template follows), graduate funding decisions, graduate program quality reviews (in collaboration with the FGSR Office), graduate program reform/closure, international activity, administrative (one-over-one approval as dictated by policy), marketing of programs including web activity, Faculty- and program-specific standards, professional development opportunities (wherever possible), supervisory quality matters including FEC activity, refinement and evolution of program content including new programs, all decisions regarding admissions, all individual student activity, data entry, support for all measures of individual student success including scholarships, all *quality control* measures, program-specific standards and requirements, all graduate student contracts and funding,
 - i. GSA: As defined by the GSA constitution on behalf of individual students and groups of students, Collective Agreement, input into the formation of central policies and standards, input into professional and career development planning,
 - j. Graduate students: Input into the departmental and Faculty GSMPs.
2. Support (final state):
 - a. Entirely web-based graduate student systems: Admissions, progress-tracking, documents and records management, scholarships and awards.
 - b. Creation of an effective web presence for all graduate programs.
 - c. Sufficient departmental and decanal staff capacity to carry out the functions in 1(g) and 1(h).
 3. Excellence and high standards:
 - a. Faculty GSMP includes explicit standards of excellence for programs, and strategies for maintaining them.
 - b. Best practices in recruitment are developed, such as guaranteed funding?, active recruitment, recruitment of top-quality sponsored students and scholarship holders.

- c. Central oversight over outcomes such as student and employer satisfaction, career training and outcomes, external recognition of students including scholarships.
4. University Graduate Strategic Plan: Four-year plan synthesized from the corresponding Faculty GSMPs, incorporating strategic direction from the President and the vice-presidents.

THE ACTION PLAN

1. Begin comprehensive multi-year IT project to develop the required paperless systems (requires some intermediate solutions for admissions and scholarships).
2. Faculty GSMPs: Once received in draft form, there will be an evaluation and feedback mechanism to enable the Faculties to create the final version of their GSMPs. The University GSMP will be synthesized from these.
3. Communication plan for the Action Plan.
4. Development of a transitional plan (including intermediate solutions to administrative efficiency issues).
5. Planning and training exercise with the Faculties to prepare them to assume new responsibilities.
6. Other actions (e.g., training of departmental staff) as necessitated by developments in other parts of the plan.
7. FGSR Unit Review (winter 2014).
8. New dean of FGSR (summer 2014).

Graduate Strategic Management Plan (GSMP)

Template

Graduate SMPs are the faculties' comprehensive four-year plan for their graduate students, and include all aspects of the graduate education and experience being offered by the faculty, ranging from the marketing of the graduate programs and recruitment strategies and plans, to measures of student success, funding and student support budgets, to quality measures and assessment for the faculty's graduate programs. The University fully expects the participation of graduate students and faculty members in the creation of the faculty GSMPs. Central units (the FGSR, Strategic Analysis, etc.) will provide assistance to the faculties in the creation of these plans.

Once draft faculty plans have been prepared, they will be reviewed by a blue-ribbon panel and will receive comprehensive feedback prior to finalization by the faculties. The panel will then provide a formal assessment of the final plans. These plans will be used by central units (FGSR, UAI, RO, etc.) for effective central planning in order to provide maximum support for the Faculties' individual plans.

The Graduate SMPs will be used by the Provost for the allocation of central resources. Various schemes are possible for translating the formal assessments into allocations, with each scheme having a slightly different impact (for example, some allocation schemes will support recruitment more strongly than ongoing tracking of outcomes). The scheme remains to be decided.

It is expected that in the case of departmentalized Faculties, the Faculty GSMP would be a synthesis of the departmental GSMPs, with additional Faculty-level initiatives directed by the Dean's office.

The GSMP can be organized under four major headings:

1. Measures of student success
2. Faculty aspirations and goals
3. Quality assessment
4. Resources

The template is organized as a series of questions under these major headings. Each specific subsection starts with a series of questions which, if relevant to the Faculty's graduate programs, would have data- or evidence-based answers. Each subsection ends by asking about the Faculty's plans for preserving, increasing, decreasing, or modifying the answers to those questions, as appropriate. These plans can include explicit requests for increased central funding or services.

Template

1. Measures of Student Success

1.A. Completion times and rates (this has to do with graduate students who receive a graduate degree): Are these appropriate for the discipline(s) covered by your Faculty? Are they acceptable in terms of the resources you put into your graduate programs? Is student feedback on completion times and rates satisfactory? What are your plans for affecting completion times and rates?

1.B. Attrition rates and timing (this has to do with graduate students who leave without receiving a graduate degree – how many students, and how far into their programs are they before leaving): Are the attrition rates appropriate for your discipline? Are the reasons for abandoning the program known and acceptable? Is the cost associated with abandoned student programs (total support received prior to program being abandoned) acceptable? What are your plans for affecting attrition rates and timing?

1.C. External recognition of students: What measures are appropriate for determining whether your graduate students are known outside their own programs while they are still in those programs (publications, conferences and presentations, external and competitive scholarships, artistic performances or exhibitions, invited consultancies, periods of employment, etc.)? Is such external recognition important to the students' future employment success? If so, indicate your plans for increasing such external recognition.

1.D. Career paths. What are the most common career paths of your graduates (academia, the government, the private sector, NGOs, etc.)? To what extent can your programs accommodate working professionals (if this is a relevant consideration for your programs)? Are there any plans to create, or modify, programs to affect the answers to either of these two questions?

1.E. Professional development (also called soft or transferable skills): What non-disciplinary knowledge and skills are required and/or useful for the career paths in 1.D? What non-career-specific knowledge and skills are appropriate for your graduate students? What plans do you have for ensuring that appropriate professional development is provided to your graduate students?

1.F. Quality of supervision (thesis-based) and academic advising (course-based): How do you measure the success of the supervisory activities in your Faculty? How do you measure the effectiveness of the academic advice and guidance provided to course-based students (if any)? Is graduate student feedback on the quality and effectiveness of the supervision and academic advising satisfactory? What means do your programs employ to improve the quality of supervision and advisory activity (this can range from methods of dealing with problematic

supervision to improving the quality from good to excellent)? Does the Faculty FEC explicitly discuss and evaluate supervisory activity as part of the teaching assignment of the faculty?

2. Faculty Aspirations and Targets

2.A. Faculty mission and priorities as they relate to the graduate programs, and their connection to *Dare to Discover* and the Academic Plan. (This, for example, could be what you put in the introduction to the graduate section of the self-study for your unit review.)

2.B. The purpose of the graduate programs: What career path(s), if any, are the graduate programs designed to train the students for (please note that the answer to this question is not necessarily the same as the answer to 1.D)? Do you have programs that are not career-specific, and if so, what are they designed to accomplish? How do you measure the success of your programs in delivering what they were designed to? What are the Faculty plans for changing these program structures if appropriate?

2.C. Optimal program size or growth: What is the optimal number, and composition, of graduate students in your programs? How many new student registrations do you need annually to achieve and maintain this optimal number? What are the consequences, if any, of under- or over-sized graduate programs? What is the proper minimum level of administrative support per student in your programs?

2.D. Recruitment: What are your study-permit and domestic recruitment targets? What are your priority countries/regions for international recruitment? What are your recruitment targets and strategies for recruitment from specific universities? Do you have specific targets for categories of students (e.g., scholarship holders, sponsored students, etc.)? What strategies do you have for supporting supervisors who wish to participate actively in the recruitment of students? What are your fast-track admissions processes? What are your active recruitment processes? Are your conversion rates (the number of registrations relative to the number of offers of admission) appropriate, and if not, what plans do you have for improving them? Is your selection rate (the number of offers of admission relative to the number of formal applications) appropriate? How do you market your graduate programs to potential applicants of your choice?

2.E. Internal reviews of graduate programs: What measures (or processes) do you use to evaluate the quality of your graduate programs and their effectiveness in remaining relevant in their disciplines? What strategies do you use for improving and/or terminating programs that

are determined to be ineffective or of lesser quality than required? Do you have any new programs being developed, and if so, what criteria do you use in order to allow a program to be created? What role do shared-credential, exchange, or other types of institutional external agreements play in your graduate strategy?

3. Quality Assessment

3.A. Quality and performance measures: Please provide a possible list of the specific measures and targets against which you measure the success of your strategies.

3.B. Quality control: What processes do you use to monitor the successful implementation and ongoing operations of your various strategies.

4. Resources and the budget: What level of guaranteed minimum support do you provide to doctoral students (amount and duration)? What level of guaranteed minimum support do you provide to thesis-based master's students? What level of guaranteed minimum support do you provide to course-based master's students? What are your existing annual commitments to graduate student support until 2015-2016? What is the total cost of the new recruitment targets stated in 2C? Given the existing commitments and the cost of the new graduate recruits, do your resources match the anticipated costs for the next four years? If not, how do you plan to meet the shortfall?

TO: GSA Council
FROM: Ashlyn Bernier, GSA President
DATE: February 25, 2013

Dear Council Colleagues,

Please find attached (all as one document): (1) the Graduate Education Administration DRAFT Action Plan authored by Mazi Shirvani, Dean of FGSR (dated February 2013) and (2) the DRAFT Report from the Graduate Studies Consultation authored by Catherine Swindlehurst and based on her initial consultations on graduate education administration at the U of A. Please keep in mind that Catherine's DRAFT report is a collection of observations and recommendations gathered from the University community, whereas the DRAFT Action Plan is Administration's first take on defining the parameters of graduate studies reorganization and formulating some initial strategies for moving forward.

As you have heard from me before, the GSA has been actively involved in this initiative since August 2012, and we are glad to finally see a proposal that we can share with our constituents, provide feedback on, and ensure that the graduate student voice is heard. As Administration moves forward with the implementation of this plan, the GSA elected officials and all GSA members must continue to be actively involved, taking every opportunity to share our thoughts, concerns, and ideas. There are aspects of this plan which cause concern but there are, likewise, potential benefits inherent in a re-shaping of graduate student experience at the U of A. It is of great importance that the GSA remain involved in the shaping of this initiative.

There are several upcoming opportunities for you to do this. First, please take the time to read the Graduate Education Administration Draft Action Plan. It is neither a long nor complex plan. Feel free to share the entire document with your fellow graduate students. **On February 27, at the President's Town Hall**, take the opportunity to ask the President questions you have about the initiative, the Draft Action Plan, the reasons for it, potential outcomes, etc. **At GSA Council on March 11**, come armed with questions, ideas, and suggestions, as Mazi Shirvani, the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, and Catherine Swindlehurst will be present. Feel free to invite your colleagues to come as Guests of Council, (please note guests are asked to sign in upon arrival and will need to exit the meeting for any closed session discussion). Please invite guests to arrive at 6 pm for the start of Council. **At GSA Council April 8**, the Interim Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Martin Ferguson-Pell, Dean Shirvani, and Catherine will be coming, so again, invite your colleagues, and be ready to ask tough questions.

For example, some of the questions that your GSA representatives have been asking throughout this process are: (1) What is the route through governance for such major changes? Will students have a concrete (*i.e.* voting) role in the outcomes? (2) What will the role of FGSR be in the "steady state"? (3) How will we measure, as an institution, if this plan is working? To date, the report has followed a consultative route and been seen by: Deans' Council (February 6, 2013); Vice-Provosts' (February 11, 2013); Chairs' Council (February 12, 2013); PACC (February 19, 2013); GFC Executive Committee (March 4, 2013); FGSR Council (February 13, 2013); GFC Academic Planning Committee (February 27, 2013). It will be presented, for discussion, to the **GFC Executive Committee (March 4, 2013)** and to **General Faculties Council (March 14, 2013)**. What has not yet been defined is the approval process and the stages of implementation.

As I have indicated, there are several opportunities to ensure your voice is heard in this process. Without active participation from graduate students in this initiative, we cannot ensure that collegial governance is upheld. This initiative will change the face of graduate education at the U of A, and it is imperative that we are actively involved.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,
Ashlyn Bernier, GSA President

**GSA President
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Ashlyn Bernier, President
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

It has continued to be a busy month for the GSA and for myself. Some key reflections and priorities since my last report:

- The GSA continues to work closely with FGSR on the graduate studies initiative at the University and Council will hear more from both Dr. Mazi Shirvani (Dean of FGSR) and Dr. Catherine Swindlehurst at the April meeting of Council, which will also be attended by the Acting Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Martin Ferguson-Pell. This continues to be a top priority for the GSA.
- With the release of the Provincial Government's budget on March 7, 2013, the funding to post-secondary institutions has been dramatically affected. The GSA will continue to closely follow Administration's response to this budget and the development of the Comprehensive Institutional Plan (CIP) for 2013, which will be affected by the Provincial budget.

I would be happy to report further orally.

Sincerely,



The following is a list of meetings that I attended between February 9 and March 8, 2013:

11-Feb	T-BAC/M-BAC
11-Feb	GSA Council
12-Feb	Meeting with Campus Social Workers
13-Feb	Lunch with Chancellor
13-Feb	GSA Board
13-Feb	FGSR Council
13-Feb	President's Reception for Associations
14-Feb	Graduate Student Tuition and Funding Data Committee
19-Feb	BoG Safety, Health, and Environment Committee
20-Feb	Meeting with Dean FGSR

6.1

20-Feb	GSA Board
22-Feb	Collective Bargaining
25-Feb	BoG University Relations Committee
25-Feb	BoG Learning and Discovery Committee
26-Feb	BoG Finance and Property Committee
27-Feb	Meeting with VP Advancement
27-Feb	GSA Board
27-Feb	GFC Academic Planning Committee
28-Feb	President's State of the University Address
04-Mar	Meeting with Dean of Students
06-Mar	GSA Board
06-Mar	TDIMM Partners Dinner

**GSA Board
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council

From: Ellen Schoeck, Executive Director and Coordinator of the GSA Board; Heather Hogg, Director of Operations; and Courtney Thomas, Associate Director.

Date: March 8, 2013

The Board reports regularly to Council by listing its agenda items, motions/agreements, and main items of discussion. Motions of Agenda approval and approval of the Minutes are not included unless there were amendments made. Closed session items are not minuted. The President, Vice-Presidents, Director of Operations, Associate Director, Financial Manager, and I will be happy to answer any questions or provide more information at the Council meeting.

February 6, 2013 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

GSA President's Citation; Grad Education Plan; departmental liaison program; Collective Bargaining; PAW; *and* CIP 2013.

Motions and Agreements:

AB **MOVED** that the GSA Board **approve** the attached terms of reference of the GSA President's Citation for inclusion in the GSA Board Policy Manual. NsA Seconded. **CARRIED**.

AB **MOVED** the recommended motion. NsA Seconded. Two amendments were made in closed session discussion. AB **MOVED** to amend the motion to award a GSA President's citation to the eight individuals agreed to in closed session. BE Seconded. **CARRIED**.

February 13, 2013 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

TD Meloche Monnex Semi-Annual Report, letter to Government regarding provincial budget and post-secondary funding; U of A Pride Week Flag Sponsorship; Bylaw reform; *and* Collective Agreement re-write.

Motions and Agreements:

Board Members **AGREED** that the GSA President should write a letter to students including a link to the provincial budget exercise and talking points that students could share with their MLAs based on the letter posted on the ASSUA newsletter, without reference to percentages, and with a broad positive statement at the end regarding the importance of post-secondary education to diversifying the economy.

Board Members **AGREED** to donate \$200 to the U of A Pride Week Flag Sponsorship.

February 20, 2013 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

An election issue; travel expenses associated with attendance at CASA; keynote address by Premier

Redford; transition; Nominating Committee work to fill GFC positions, departmental liaison initiative; USRIs Working Group; attendance of GSA reps on GFC; *and* Councillors on Board.

Note to Council re Reporting of Travel: At this meeting, Board Members had before them a rough budget for the President's travel to CASA, and GSA policy regarding travel expenses, quoted below:

GSA Policy Manual, Budget Principles, Practices, and Procedures, 3.2.a ("Business Travel"):

"The President will advise the Board about travel related to External Relations (eg Alberta Graduate Council, Western Summit, GU15). Such travel will be reported to Council."

GSA Policy Manual, Budget Principles, Practices, and Procedures, 3.2.c ("Business Travel"):

"All travel and other expense claims must be pre-approved by the President or the Executive Director to ensure that they fit within the budget and align with university policy. Receipts for reimbursement must be submitted to the Financial Manager with appropriate details. Documentation will be scanned and reviewed by the Board prior to posting on the GSA website."

GSA Policy Manual, Budget Principles, Practices, and Procedures, 3.3.a ("Allowable Travel Expenses"):

"University regulations will be observed."

Motions and Agreements: None

February 27, 2013 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

Financial meeting; reallocation of AEGS funds; graduate education at the University of Alberta; U-Pass replacement fees; request for support from the Annual Student Advisor's Conference; departmental liaison initiative; bylaw and policy review; provincial budget and AGC; *and* Alumni Council.

Motions and Agreements:

NsA **MOVED** that the GSA Board allow re-allocation *if necessary* of \$8,000.00 from the PDA fund (leaving a final projected balance of \$5,478.19) and \$18,000.00 from the EB fund (leaving a projected balance of \$11,415) to the CCG fund. BE Seconded. **CARRIED**.

After some discussion of details, Board Members **AGREED** that Naseeb should begin U-Pass replacement fee negotiations by requesting a free initial replacement for a lost U-Pass, followed by a pro-rated fee for second replacements.

Board Members **AGREED** that Ashlyn would make a decision regarding support for the Annual Student Advisor's Conference upon further research, up to \$200.

**Governance Committee
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Ashlyn Bernier, GSA President and Chair of GC
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

As Council may be aware of, there will be a **forthcoming review of GSA Bylaw and Policy** (a process that has already begun). The Governance Committee will begin with an **editorial sweep of these documents**. As stated in GSA Bylaw (Part VII, Standing Committees, 2.2.1.2), the Governance Committee will: “make any routine or editorial changes to the governance documents as deemed necessary by the Committee.”

Editorial changes are not substantial, and includes things such as updating titles, factually incorrect statements, spelling, capitalization, etc. **The Governance Committee will report any wording or rephrasing changes that are made to GSA Bylaw and Policy.**

Ellen Schoeck provides more detail in her report.

I would be happy to report further orally.

Respectfully,
Ashlyn Bernier, GSA President

**GSA Nominating Committee (NoC)
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Lacey Fleming, Vice-Chair of the NoC
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

The report from the GSA Nominating Committee is a summary of discussion/decisions the NoC has made since its last report together with a list of all vacancies filled. The GSA Nominating Committee met on **February 25, 2013** to discuss the process for the upcoming GSA Senator election and decide on its recommendations for the GFC Standing Committees which were sent to the GFC Nominating Committee for consideration.

The Bylaw governing the NoC is located in Part VII, Sections 9.1-9.3. Policy governing NoC is found in of the GSA Policy Manual, "Nominating." As provided for in its terms of reference, the GSA Nominating Committee (NoC) has been conducting business via e-mail.

GSA Standing Committees

1) Judicial Committee

According to GSA Bylaw and Policy, Part VI, Judicial Committee, Composition: "The Judicial Committee shall be composed of eight (8) Councillors who are selected at random as members of the Committee at the outset of each semester."

The GSA NoC selected at random the following Councillors to serve on the GSA Judicial Committee (**note that there is currently no pending business or cases for this committee**, but the Nominating Committee is fulfilling the Bylaw requirement that Judicial Committee membership be selected each term at random):

Megan Caldwell
Emily Herman
Hamman W. Samuel
Nikolas Cavalheiro Zetouni
Igor Pravdivyi
Scott Travis
Lena Saleh
Sascha Bachmann

GSA Council-Elected Officers

The GSA Nominating Committee is preparing the process for the Council-Election of the position of GSA Senator. The term of the current GSA Senator ends May 31, 2013. According to GSA Bylaw, "nominations for Senator will open on April 1 of every year or on another date set by the GSA Nominating Committee in order to ensure that the position of Senator is continuously filled. The nomination period will normally be one month...The Senator shall be elected by a simple majority vote of Council, normally for a one-year term, **at the May meeting of Council**. If the

matter is urgent, a mail or email ballot may be held before the May meeting” (Part IV, Section 3).

The GSA Nominating Committee will be sending an early call in early March for this position through the GSA Newsletter. The GSA NoC has also decided that since the current GSA Senator is involved in a number of Senate committees, **it is urgent to provide between 3-4 weeks transition time for the new Senator** so (in order to provide continuity) the election should happen electronically before May Council.

Delegates Selected by the GSA President

For external committees that call for the GSA President, a Vice-President or Delegate in their Terms of Reference, the GSA President, in consultation with the GSA Nominating Committee, is able to select delegates to serve on these committees. **No delegates have been selected since the last Council meeting.**

Bodies External to the GSA

As noted above, Council has delegated to the NoC the responsibility of filling positions on all committees external to the GSA. Normally, all vacancies are advertised. According to the Policy Manual, “advertising may be waived in instances where, in the NoC’s view, it is urgent to fill a vacancy.”

1) GFC Standing Committees (7)

On **February 6, 2013**, the GSA NoC advertised for the vacancies for graduate students-at-large on the following GFC Standing Committees: GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC), GFC Campus Law Review Committee (CLRC), GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE), GFC University Teaching Awards Committee (UTAC), GFC Academic Appeals Committee (AAC), GFC University Appeals Board (UAB), and the Council on Student Affairs (COSA). The deadline for bios and resumes was **February 20, 2013 at noon**. The GSA NoC received a total of **11 applications** for these positions and also proactively searched for representatives in order to ensure a diversity of faculties are represented on these committees.

The GSA Nominating Committee has selected the following representatives to recommend to the General Faculties Council (GFC) Nominating Committee (NoC). **IMPORTANT NOTE:** though the GSA Nominating Committee has recommended these students to the GFC Nominating Committee, **all students must still go through the GFC Nominating Committee Elections Process, since it is the GFC NoC that elects all representatives to these standing committees.**

ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE (APC): (one graduate student-at-large position)
Alexander Schlacht (PhD Cell Biology).

CAMPUS LAW REVIEW COMMITTEE (CLRC): (two students, either undergraduate or graduate – normally GFC selects one graduate student and one undergraduate student)
Kathy Tang (PhD Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences).

COMMITTEE ON THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (CLE): (one graduate student-at-large position)

The GSA NoC supported the re-election of the current representative on GFC CLE (John Fontaine (PhD History)), who expressed interest in a second term.

UNIVERSITY TEACHING AWARDS COMMITTEE (UTAC): (one graduate student-at-large position)

Jasmin Hirschberg (PhD Modern Languages and Cultural Studies).

GFC ACADEMIC APPEALS COMMITTEE: (four graduate student positions)

All students that expressed interest in the GFC AAC were passed along to the GFC Appeals Coordinator, who will be in contact with students about their interest in service on this board.

UNIVERSITY APPEALS BOARD: (five graduate student positions)

All students that expressed interest in the GFC UAB were passed along to the GFC Appeals Coordinator, who will be in contact with students about their interest in service on this board.

COUNCIL ON STUDENT AFFAIRS (COSA): (one graduate student-at-large that must be an active member of GFC at the time of their election)

The GSA NoC supported the re-election of the current representative on COSA (Isaac Odoom (PhD Political Science) who has expressed interested in a second term.

All students that the GSA NoC did not select at this time to recommend to the GFC Nominating Committee were informed that they were still able to apply directly for these positions through the GFC Nominating Committee (**their deadline for applications was March 4, 2013**).

**GSA Vice-President Academic
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Nathan Andrews, Vice-President Academic
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

I really cannot believe this is my last but one Council report – oh how time flies! But I am glad to say that the interest shown in the GSA through the number of people who ran for elected office does speak to the robustness of our beloved organization. In a recent communication with the acting Provost, Dr. Martin Ferguson-Pell, this is what he said: “congratulations to the GSA for a very competitive election which suggests a strong and healthy Association and community of students who are engaged with building strength and opportunities through our graduate program.” I believe this is well said.

Here are a couple of items from the meetings I attended that I would like to touch on:

Management tool for graduate education

First of all, I would like to inform Council that a **centralized system for managing grad students** is being established – where admissions, applications, etc. will be in one place. This is what the VP IT, Duane Szafron, refers to as “**graduate tracking**” which will help students track their progress in the course of their program, and know exactly the steps left in their program. A call for stakeholders will be made soon and a team will be formed to work on this. This is in line with the graduate studies initiative at the UofA. At the FGSR Council meeting on Feb. 13, this process was referred to as the Graduate Student Management Solution (GSMS). This is all very preliminary so let’s wait and see what comes up next.

Doctoral candidacy discussion

This discussion ensued at the FGSR Policy Review Committee on March 5. The discussion has moved from just a focus on candidacy completion to general deadlines for program requirements. **These requirements include required or optional courses, the academic integrity and ethics requirement, a candidacy exam, and a comprehensive exam in some cases.** The limit for doctoral programs is fixed at six years. A consensus was reached about restricting the **candidacy timeline to three years** because first of all, almost no department officially offers funding beyond four years. Thus, it is reasonable to leave one year of guaranteed funding for the dissertation writing process – and two extra years for those who may need them. There is also room for extension after year 6. Please note that this is a change from the previous two-year timeline for candidacy, which was never followed anyway. This draft policy

change will go to FGSR Council for final approval. Other changes to one-on-one approvals were discussed. I will update Council in my April report on these changes.

Finally, I will like to thank Colin More (incoming VPA) for sitting in at a couple of meetings I was not able to attend in the past week due to schedule clashes. I think he is right on the ball for the job! There are several additional items out of my meetings but these are the ones I want to emphasize here. Please feel free to let me know if you have questions about any of the other meetings listed below.

Cheers,
Nathan Andrews
GSA VP Academic

The following is a list of meetings that I attended between February 9 and March 8, 2013:

11-Feb	M-BAC/T-BAC
11-Feb	FGSR Caucus
11-Feb	GSA Council
12-Feb	Teaching Learning and Technology Council
13-Feb	Lunch with Chancellor
13-Feb	GSA Board
13-Feb	FGSR Council
14-Feb	Graduate Student Tuition and Funding Data Committee
19-Feb	CLE USRIs Working Group
20-Feb	GSA Board
22-Feb	Alumni Council
22-Feb	Collective Bargaining
27-Feb	GSA Board
27-Feb	Premier's Keynote Address
28-Feb	President's State of the University Address
01-Mar	Collective Bargaining
01-Mar	Campus Food Bank Mac n' Cheese

**Vice-President Student Services
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Naseeb Adnan, Vice-President Student Services
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

The month of February was quite exciting as we all were eagerly waiting to see the outcome of the 2013 GSA general election. We got an excellent team of people to run the GSA next year. I would like to congratulate the newly elected executives and my best wishes for them!

The office is preparing hard for the **U Pass referendum** to be held the third week of March. U Pass is one of the most popular and widely used services provided by the GSA and since its inception in 2007, its popularity increased steadily, as the continuous uptake rate indicates. I have updated you from time to time during the negotiations and with all your valuable feedback we reached a reasonable deal. I would like to encourage you all to inform your departments about U Pass benefits and support this great service in the upcoming referendum.

In the **U Pass Advisory** meeting it was noted that NAIT passed the referendum with a 78% vote in favor. There were no issues reported regarding service delivery and Spring/Summer distribution will start in the middle of April. It was suggested by ETS that they conduct an audit at the end of each term; UofA would not be adverse to this as it is better to deal with issues in a timely way. I initiated a discussion on lower replacement fees for lost/stolen U Pass stickers. A document was prepared by the SU comparing the replacement cost among a number of universities across the country. Transit providers are open to discussion but need to review security issues. **The big task remaining is to get the contract signed by the end of April before the changeover of executives in associations.**

New Student Experience Working Group is an initiative involving the SU, GSA, UAI and Residence Services that organizes orientation program for new students on campus. The main idea of the working group is to identify common areas that these groups can collaborate on and thus eliminate redundancy of events. **A website will be launched soon based on interest groups information regarding orientation programs and links will be provided.** I think this is a good initiative as students are overwhelmed with so many events and information at the beginning of fall term and a collaborative effort among different organizing groups will bring some positive effects.

In the **Health Care Advisory Group** meeting the budget for the Health Centre, Sexual Assault Centre, pharmacy and Mental Health Services were presented. Once the SUB renovation is complete the pharmacy may move out of the bookstore into a separate place allowing extended hours of service. They are working on a business plan and, once complete, the plan will be discussed with stakeholders. Provost fellow Robin Everall updated us that number of psychologists to be appointed from the received fund from the provincial government.

89th Ave Housing Project is on target to reach its substantial completion deadline. In the interior, Roxul insulation will be used which is made of natural ingredients, adding value to the globe standard. The **GSA made a request to arrange site visit one week prior to the substantial completion date**, which will provide us an opportunity to see the facility and provide any feedback based on previous experience on grad residence construction.

In the **GFC FDC** meeting, the Department of Medicine general space program and Clinical Sciences Building backfill project functional program were approved. Members were notified about rescission of the UAPPOL long range development plan compliance policy. The plan was approved in 2002, however, later the city made some amendments that overrule our policy. Therefore some changes were made.

Residence Advisory Committee is a newly formed committee to discuss residence issues that do not involve financial aspects, i.e., rent. **Representatives from various students housing were present in the meeting and provided feedback on different issues.** A common concern was the submitting of the budget for activities in residences and getting the money at the beginning of fall term to arrange events. Particularly since residence associations arrange events at the beginning of fall, most money for event organizing is spent at that time of the year. Any delay in fund release causes a burden on the executives. For the coming year, the fund release matter will be given priority so that associations get required funds early. Also a template will be provided so that students running the associations with limited knowledge on budget can prepare one following the common template.

Updates on **negotiation** meetings will be discussed by the VP Labour.

Sincerely,
Naseeb Adnan

The following is a list of meetings that I attended between February 9 and March 8, 2013:

11-Feb	GSA Council
13-Feb	Lunch with Chancellor
13-Feb	GSA Board
13-Feb	Residence Advisory Committee
13-Feb	President's Reception for Associations
14-Feb	Health Centres Advisory Group
15-Feb	89th Ave Student Housing Steering Committee
20-Feb	GSA Board
21-Feb	U-Pass Admin
22-Feb	Collective Bargaining
27-Feb	GSA Board
27-Feb	U-Pass Advisory
28-Feb	President's State of the University Address
28-Feb	GFC Facilities Development Committee
01-Mar	Collective Bargaining
01-Mar	Campus Food Bank Mac n' Cheese
06-Mar	GSA Board

**GSA Vice-President Student Life
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Huimin Zhong, Vice-President Student Life
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

I hope everything goes on well for all of you. First of all, I would like to express my congratulations to all the newly elected officials for their successful campaign. I am confident they will do a great job in the coming year. Next, I would like to express my appreciation for all other elected officials and the GSA staff for covering my portfolios during my time in China in February. For this month, I have several items to bring to your attention.

The university is launching a new project called “Student Connect” by the Office of the Registrar, which aims to put student services on campus into a more accessible one-stop spot. Starting this September, Student Services, such as course withdrawals, fee payment and general information, will be centralized on the first floor of Administration Building. Combined with a new online model, this project would like to establish a first “connecting point” on campus for all students seeking information and help. As part of the project, some units of the Registrar's Office have been moved to other buildings. Please check their website for detailed information.

With the efforts of ASC members and GSA staff, the recipients of the 2013 GSA Awards have been selected! We received more than 180 applications this year in total. The ASC members spent lots of time in the last couple weeks reviewing and scoring the applications. I would like to thank them all for their efforts and time. **The GSA Awards Night will be held on March 27, 2013.**

Lastly, the **International Student Group Activity Fund committee** met and reviewed the application last week. Twelve applications are received and 8 of them are funded. The deadline for the last Student Group Grant for this semester is March 11th. If you or any of your colleagues are interested in applying for this grant, please submit your application as soon as possible.

If you have any question regarding the items above, please always feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Huimin Zhong

The following is a list of meetings that I attended between February 9 and March 8, 2013:

26-Feb	Health Promotion Advisory Committee
27-Feb	GSA Board
28-Feb	Presentation on GSA Awards, Grants, and Bursaries
28-Feb	International Student Group Award Adjudication
01-Mar	Collective Bargaining
01-Mar	Student Connect Advisory Committee
01-Mar	Campus Food Bank Mac 'n' Cheese
04-Mar	GSA Awards Selection Committee
06-Mar	GSA Board

**Awards Selection Committee
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council

From: Huimin Zhong, Vice-President Student Life and Chair of ASC

Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

As stated in GSA Bylaw (Part V: Standing Committees, Awards Selection Committee, 5.2.4.) “The ASC is responsible for selecting the recipients of the GSA Awards” and in 5.2.7. “The list of the recipients of the awards will be presented to Council for information at the regular March Council Meeting.”

On March 4, 2013, the ASC met and selected the following names as recipients of the 2013 GSA Awards:

Graduate Student Community Involvement Award

R. Lisa Bourque Bearskin (Gold); Lisa Belanger (Silver); Jamil Jivraj (Bronze)

Graduate Student Outreach Award

Stefanie Vogt (Gold); Maria Laura Mazzino (Silver); Travis Schoepp (Bronze)

TD Insurance Meloche Monnex Award

Christopher Skappak

Graduate Student Teaching Award

Ian Wilson (Zita and John Rosen Award); Caroline Cheng (Silver); (James) Paul Joosse (Bronze)

Graduate Student Teaching Assistant Award

Corbett Artym (Gold); Christopher Polachic (Silver); Abeed Lalany (Bronze)

Graduate Student Research Assistant Award

Jasper Yeung (CIHR area); Monica Chahal (SSHRC area); Jeffrey Bunquin (NSERC area)

Martha Piper Award

Marianne Clark (SSHRC area); Naga Siva Kumar Gunda and Brian Worfolk (co-recipients for NSERC area)

Graduate Student Interdisciplinary Research Award

Sanjay Beesoon

Graduate Student Rising Star Award

Valerie Miller (Masters); Gabriela Constantinescu (Doctoral)

International Student Award

Megha Bajaj

Academic Staff Award

Margaret Haag

Non-Academic Staff Award

Arlene Oatway

Supervisor Award

Greg Kawchuk (CIHR area); Ingrid Johnston (SSHRC area); Heather McDermid (NSERC area)

Life-Long Membership Award

Todd Rogers

Graduate Student Group Award

Physical Education and Recreation Graduate Student Society (PERGSS)

These awards will be presented at the annual GSA Awards Night, taking place on March 27, 2013. I would be happy to report further orally.

Respectfully,

Huimin Zhong

**Vice-President Labour
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Brent Epperson, Vice-President Labour
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

February 13 President Samarasekera's Reception with GSA President

I attended President Samarasekera's constituency reception with Ashlyn. We had substantive discussions with representatives from NASA, the SU, and the AASUA. I spoke briefly with President Samarasekera about the Government's upcoming budget announcement.

February 14 LRC Meeting:

The LRC met to discuss the University's counter-asks in collective bargaining and to agree on a reply. The meeting ended in unanimous agreement.

February 20 Meeting with Dean of FGSR:

I attended the February 20 meeting with Mazi and Ashlyn. We discussed FGSR reform, graduate supervision, and the GSA's student engagement objectives.

February 22, Collective Bargaining Meeting:

I attended collective bargaining negotiations with the University and GSA negotiating teams. The discussions were fruitful. I will address negotiations in my oral report.

March 1 Collective Bargaining Meeting:

I attended collective bargaining negotiations with the University and GSA negotiating teams. We reached an agreement in principle on the financial side of bargaining. We agreed to devolve re-write tasks to the Collective Bargaining Sub-Committee. I will address negotiations in my oral report.

March 4 Collective Bargaining Sub-Committee Meeting

I met with the Collective Bargaining Sub-Committee (me, Heather Hogg, and Susan Buchsdruecker) to work on the re-write of the collective agreement. We made progress, but agreed that Heather and I needed to meet and discuss some issues with the wording of the agreement before the sub-committee meets again to finalize anything.

March 4 Meeting with Dean of Students:

I attended the March 4 meeting with Frank and Ashlyn. We discussed the GSA's agenda for the coming year and the issue of inadequate/inconsistent prayer and meditation space for religious groups on campus.

March 5 Meeting with Mohammed Hasin Haroon, VPSL-Elect

I met with Hasin. We discussed his portfolio and policy priorities for the coming year.

March 6 Meeting with GSA Director of Operations about rewrite of collective agreement

Heather and I met and worked on the rewrite of the AEGS collective agreement. We hope to complete the rewrite of the collective agreement in our next meeting, then send it to Susan on the University's team.

March 7 Meeting with Colin More, VPA-Elect

I met with Colin. We discussed his portfolio and policy priorities for the coming year.

March 7 Meeting with Simarjit "Monty" Bal

I met with Monty. We discussed his portfolio and policy priorities for the coming year.

The following is a list of meetings that I attended between February 9 and March 8, 2013:

11-Feb	GSA Council
13-Feb	PC Event
13-Feb	Lunch with Chancellor
13-Feb	GSA Board
13-Feb	FGSR Council
13-Feb	President's Reception for Associations
14-Feb	GSA Labour Relations Committee
22-Feb	Collective Bargaining
27-Feb	Premier's Keynote Speech
01-Mar	Collective Bargaining
01-Mar	Campus Food Bank Mac n' Cheese
02-Mar	Meeting with Dean of Students
06-Mar	GSA Board

**GSA Labour Relations Committee
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Brent Epperson, Vice-President Labour and Chair of LRC
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

The GSA LRC met on February 14, 2013 to discuss the **collective bargaining 2012-2013 process**. During this meeting the LRC **provided advice to the GSA Negotiating Committee** concerning negotiations with the University.

I would be happy to report further orally.

Respectfully,
Brent Epperson, GSA VP Labour

**GSA Chief Returning Officer
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Daniel Prins, Chief Returning Officer
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

The 2013 General Election has concluded and official results were released on March 7th. I'd like to offer my thanks to all candidates for their dedication in running for office and in running clean and exciting campaigns. As well, I'd like to thank the Deputy Returning Officer and the members of the Elections & Referenda Committee for their invaluable support and advice during this year's election.

As approved by GSA Council at the February Council meeting, I will soon be **moving forward with a referendum on the renewal of the U-Pass program.** The preparation for a referendum has had some software issues, but I anticipate holding this referendum by no later than the end of March. I will also be preparing for by-elections to fill vacant Councillor-at-Large positions. Finally, I have begun a **review of existing bylaws and policies governing elections and referenda.** With assistance from GSA office staff and the guidance of the members of ERC, I intend to begin an overhaul of these regulations to make the administration of future elections more logical and straight-forward.

As always, feel free to contact me with any questions.

Best,

Daniel Prins, Chief Returning Officer

**Executive Director
Report to Council**

To: GSA Council
From: Ellen Schoeck, Executive Director
Date: March 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

The GSA has reached a number of **important milestones** since our last meeting: **election** of a new team of directly-elected officers; the end of massive production and envelope-stuffing of **T4As**; a **referendum on U-Pass** nearing; **Awards Night ready to go**. **Transition** has started, with the new team attending Board, Council, and ready to shadow the current team as they attend key meetings. We are **creating infrastructure** in many of these areas so that next year's is more a rollout rather than a complete re-think of say, how to prepare for Awards Night.

I am focusing this report on a review of Bylaw and the Policy Manual, which has begun.

The GSA has three governing documents: Bylaw (as referenced in the *Post-Secondary Learning Act*); a Policy Manual; and the relatively new Board Policy Manual (which contains both policy and procedure).

Our governing documents need an overhaul so that Bylaw embraces only our top-tier regulations (which require two readings by Council to change). As it stands, our Bylaws contain numerous policy statements and an abundance of procedure. Changes to the GSA Policy Manual require one reading. The Board Policy Manual can be amended by the Board, with reports to Councils on changes. The GSA Governance Committee (GC) can make routine and editorial changes to Bylaw and the Policy Manual.

Former President Roy Coulthard asked Speaker Fred and me to review our governing documents and **we have a number of sequenced goals:** (1) propose routine and editorial "housekeeping" changes to GC. (2) Propose to Council that chunks of Bylaw be moved to either the Policy Manual or to the Board Policy Manual. (3) Conduct reviews of our most archaic/sensitive subject areas, including judicial and elections. (4) Propose substantive changes to Council.

Items 1-2 will ideally be done in March-May, with the remainder major items staged for June-December.

Also, after talking with President Ashlyn (who chairs GC), CRO Daniel and NoC Vice-Chair Lacey, the consensus is that the Bylaws and PM should be *merged*, so that the reader does not have to examine two documents to find the regulatory framework on, say, elections, finance, etc. An integrated document should be *searchable*. All this will mean a complete renumbering system.

Bylaw and policy was part of my professional life both at the University and as a consultant. I look forward to the review.

Council will be reviewing regular reports and proposals will be on Council agendas throughout the year.

Best,
Ellen

cc Speaker Fred Wu

**Executive Director, Director of Operations, and Associate Director
Report to the GSA Board, February 13, 2013**

Dear All,

Week in Review – Strategic:

- Intensive work has gone into getting command of the **PAW and NPP** MOUs and agreements and grappling with the array of issues that are embedded in each.
- **The release of the draft CIP 2013** has prompted a great deal of engaged thinking as well as discussion as to how the draft CIP intersects with the GSA's SWP and will inform the 2013/2014 GSA SWP.
- Internal planning for the upcoming March GSA Awards Night is intensifying. As with elections, we are working diligently **to build infrastructure and institutional memory in this area.**
- Likewise, **internal planning surrounding elections and referenda** are in the works (including **plans for much needed policy and bylaw review and reform**).
- Ellen, Heather, and Courtney continue to be in deep discussion about **transition**.

Week in Review – Office Operations:

- The office team is engaged with assisting in organizing and preparing for the upcoming **GSA General Election** as well as thinking ahead to next year in terms of workflow.
- The office team is also assisting with tasks associated with the **adjudication of GSA awards** and **Awards Night planning**.
- The first round of **grant distribution using direct deposit** has been completed and everyone is familiarizing themselves with the process.
- Work associated with the upcoming **replenishment of GFC committees** has begun.
- **Comprehensive calendars for work flow and vacations/absences** are being developed – the thirteen month work flow calendar captures key functions and operational elements such as budget preparations and timelines, events planning, and committee replenishment (among other things).
- **Several ongoing research projects** are being handled by the office team (including research on referendum policy in GSA's and SU's across Canada).

**Executive Director, Director of Operations, and Associate Director
Report to the GSA Board, February 20, 2013**

Dear All,

Week in Review – Strategic:

- Ellen is drafting a **transition plan for elected officials; a transition plan for management;** and will be working at home for part of Reading Week reviewing bylaw and policy.
- **The release of the draft CIP 2013 (which was presented to GFC APC for a second time on February 13 – this time for recommendation to the Board of Governors)** has prompted a great deal of engaged thinking as well as discussion as to how the draft CIP intersects with the GSA's SWP and will inform the

2013/2014 GSA SWP.

- Internal planning for the upcoming March GSA Awards Night is intensifying. As with elections, we are working diligently **to build infrastructure and institutional memory in this area**.
- Likewise, **internal planning surrounding elections and referenda** are in the works (including **plans for much needed policy and bylaw review and reform**).
- Deep thought surrounding **the release of the forthcoming provincial budget** and its effects is ongoing.

Week in Review – Office Operations:

- The office team is engaged with assisting in organizing and preparing for the upcoming **GSA General Election** as well as thinking ahead to next year in terms of workflow.
- The office team is also assisting with tasks associated with the **adjudication of GSA awards** and **Awards Night planning**.
- Work associated with the upcoming **replenishment of GFC committees** has begun.
- **Several ongoing research projects** are being handled by the office team (including research on referendum policy in GSA's and SU's across Canada).

Executive Director, Director of Operations, and Associate Director Report to the GSA Board, February 27, 2013

Dear All,

Week in Review – Strategic:

- Work continues on drafting a **transition plan for elected officials and a transition plan for management**.
- A broad **review of bylaw and policy** has begun (this will focus on both editorial issues in current governing documents and more substantive issues).
- Engaged thinking regarding how **the University's draft CIP intersects with the GSA's SWP and will inform the 2013/2014 GSA SWP** remains ongoing, as does thinking surrounding the upcoming **Board of Governors strategic planning session**.
- Internal planning for the upcoming March GSA Awards Night is intensifying. As with elections, we are working diligently **to build infrastructure and institutional memory in this area** and considering ways to manage down both Awards Night and GSA awards themselves.
- Deep thought surrounding **the release of the forthcoming provincial budget** and its effects is ongoing.

Week in Review – Office Operations:

- The office team is engaged with assisting in organizing and preparing for the upcoming **GSA General Election** as well as thinking ahead to next year in terms of workflow.

- Work associated with the **transition plan for elected officials** is also in progress.
- **Lisa will be away from February 27-March 11** for her MA defense and Dyan will be filling her role as Nominating Committee Coordinator during that period.
- The office team is also assisting with tasks associated with the **adjudication of GSA awards and Awards Night planning**.
- Work associated with the upcoming **replenishment of GFC committees** has begun.
- The **GSA firewall recently migrated over to the University's centralized firewall** – an important aspect of streamlining GSA operations.

**Executive Director, Director of Operations, and Associate Director
Report to the GSA Board, March 6, 2013**

Dear All,

Week in Review – Strategic:

- Work continues on drafting a **transition plan for elected officials and a transition plan for management** as Heather heads to three days a week.
- A broad **review of bylaw and policy** has begun (this will focus on both editorial issues in current governing documents and then more substantive issues). **See attachment from Ellen.**
- Planning for the upcoming March GSA Awards Night is intensifying. As with elections, we are working diligently **to build infrastructure and institutional memory in this area** and considering ways to manage down both Awards Night and GSA awards themselves.
- Planning for the **Department Liaison Initiative** is underway. **See attachment from Ellen.**

Week in Review – Office Operations:

- For the last time, **T4s were processed and stuffed into envelopes** by the office team – since the GSA has now transitioned to direct deposit these will be processed in the future by the University.
- Work associated with the **transition plan for elected officials** remains in progress (for example, we will sign a contract soon with Sheraton in Red Deer.
- The office team has been assisting with the **preparation of materials for the March 11 meeting of the GSA Council** and with the **office processes involved in the 2013 GSA elections**.
- The office team is also assisting with tasks associated with the **adjudication of GSA awards and Awards Night planning**.

Item 17- GSA Bylaw, Part XII, Finances: Proposed Revisions

Part 2: Bylaws, Part XII: Finances

1 General		
1.1 The fiscal year of the GSA is from April 1 to March 31.		Now contained in the Budget Principles, Practices and Procedures.
1.2 The President, Vice Presidents, and Directors shall each as individuals have authority as signing officers for the GSA, subject to the restrictions in the Budget Principles, Practices and Procedures Policy		Now contained in the Budget Principles, Practices and Procedures.
1.3 Pursuant to section 97(1) of the Post-Secondary Learning Act, the GSA's financial statements shall be audited annually by a qualified accountant.		Now contained in the Budget Principles, Practices and Procedures.
2. Budget		
2.1 The Director of Finance and Operations and the President, in consultation with the Executive Director , GSA Board, and Budget and Finance Committee, shall draft an annual budget to be reviewed and approved by BFC no later than BFC's last meeting in the February prior to the April in which the budget will take effect.	The <u>Executive Director, GSA Accountant, Financial Manager,</u> and the President, in consultation with the GSA Board and Budget and Finance Committee, shall draft an annual budget <u>as part of a five-year, rolling budget and business plan,</u> to be reviewed by BFC no later than BFC's last meeting in the February prior to the April in which the <u>annual</u> budget will take effect. <u>The BFC will advise and recommend to Council via the GSA Board on the annual budget. The GSA Board will forward BFC's recommendation with its own recommendation to Council.</u>	Aligns with BFC's current mandate in Bylaw to advise on the budget and BFC's current role in Bylaw to "approve the budget". This wording now reflects the actual roles of BFC and the GSA Board in recommending to Council on the budget and five-year business plan.
2.2 Upon approval of the draft budget by BFC, BFC shall recommend the draft budget to Council to be approved by Council no later than the March regular meeting of Council.	<u>Council will receive a recommendation on the annual operating and capital budgets, together with a recommended five-year budget and business plan, no later than its March regular meeting.</u>	Editorial Change
2.3 The process for approving the budget shall follow the process for approval of expenses as outlined in the Budget Principles, Practices and Procedures.		The process for approving the budget is set out in 2.1 above.
3. Extra budgetary Expenditures		Now contained in Budget Principles, Practices and Procedures.
3.1 Approval for extra-budgetary expenditures shall follow the process outline in the Financial Expenses policy		

March 8, 2013

Dear Council,

I am writing to you on behalf of President Ashlyn Bernier, who is in a two-day recovery period from a minor operation and back in action by Monday Council. As background, please read the ED report, which is part of this package of materials, and which has been discussed by the GSA Board.

Succinctly put, the GSA Bylaws and Policy Manual need a complete restructuring before the Board or Governance Committee (GC) can tackle meaty issues for debate by Council. For instance, Council will need to decide, eventually, on how to remove an elected official from office. That is how we are defining “meaty” at this time. We are in the midst of a major **editorial review** overseen by Speaker Fred Wu and me at the behest of former GSA President Roy Coulthard, and with the blessing of the current GSA President Ashlyn Bernier. That review will continue through April under the auspices of the GSA GC.

At issue now is our Bylaws. The GSA must have Bylaws as directed by the *Post-Secondary Learning Act* (the “Act”). The Act gives no definition of the term “Bylaw”; nonetheless our working definition is that Bylaw is our top-tier law -- thus short and sweet, to-the-point, therefore requiring two readings of Council. **Bylaws should be brief.**

The GSA Governance Committee now proposes that policy and procedural content currently in Bylaw (two readings) be moved to the GSA Policy Manual (one Council reading). In addition, the GSA Governance Committee will make editorial changes to Bylaw and Policy (ie nothing beyond housekeeping/routine) so we have a “clean” document to work with. Then, beginning this summer, Council will start to see some proposals for major change to GSA Bylaw and Policy – Bylaw and Policy have not been reviewed for some time.

Here now is the proposal from your Governance Committee, with changes regarded as aligning with U of A norms for what is bylaw and what is policy/procedure:

1. **Retain in Bylaw** the names of GSA standing committees and move all detail to the GSA Policy Manual (ie **no changes**, just a move from Bylaw to the Policy Manual, thus remaining under Council control).
2. **Retain in Bylaw** that *ad hoc* committees may be constituted by Council, but move details (1.92-1.99) to the GSA Policy Manual.
3. **Retain in Bylaw** the names of all caucuses and move detail to the GSA Policy Manual.
4. **Retain in Bylaw** sections on “performance of Officers and Councilors” but move to the Policy Manual section 3 on performance of committee members and performance of representatives on University governing bodies and committees to the GSA Policy Manual, an issue now covered by oversight of the new GSA Nominating Committee.

Once these editorial/structural changes are made, Council will have some substantive issues to debate, eg how to remove an elected official from office and what shape our judicial policy should take.

Here are the links to the Bylaw and Policy referenced in this email:

<http://www.gsa.ualberta.ca/05Governance/~media/gsa/GoverningDocuments/Bylaws.pdf> and

<http://www.gsa.ualberta.ca/05Governance/~media/gsa/GoverningDocuments/PolicyManual.pdf>

Ellen