

**2023-2024 Vice-President External
Report to GSA Council for the 6 November 2023 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Hamid Hassani
Date: Nov 6, 2023

Dear Council Members,

I hope this report finds you in good health and high spirits. In my role as the Vice President External of the GSA, I am thrilled to provide you with updates on our recent activities and initiatives.

Post-Secondary Education Task Force Meeting (18 Oct)

During the Post-Secondary Education Task Force meeting on October 18th, the board's interest was primarily directed towards the initiatives of Public Interest Alberta (PIA), with a specific emphasis on the province's post-secondary education sector. The Alberta government's approach, particularly in relation to a pension panel, met with substantial resistance from those present. The conversation also touched on the "Save our SPP" campaign as well. For more detailed information, the PIA website was referenced, especially the page dedicated to the campaign aimed at safeguarding the Canada Pension Plan:

<https://www.pialberta.org/saveourcpp>

Moreover, there was an indication of an impending housing campaign, though details were scant, with attendees encouraged to look out for forthcoming details. Finally, the meeting concluded with a pointed question regarding the Minister of Advanced Education's capability to manage the Post-Secondary Education portfolio, highlighting possible concerns about leadership within the sector. I note that this topic was also mentioned in the previous meeting as well.

ab-GPAC Board Meeting (Oct 20, 27):

The board meeting goes well, and we are discussing a few internal issues that we have. Currently, we are still thinking and planning about our advocacy week, which we anticipate is going to be soon. We have outlined several key activities and objectives for this important week, with the aim to engage with stakeholders and increase the visibility of our initiatives.

Meeting w/ Chancellor Garritty and GSA Execs (Oct 24):

On a pleasantly warm evening, we gathered with Chancellor Garritty in the art building for a productive session. The atmosphere was cordial, setting the stage for a meaningful exchange of ideas. Each executive took the opportunity to outline the priorities for their respective positions, and we explored various ways in which the Chancellor could lend support. It's important to recognize that the Chancellor's role does not come with direct power within the university's governance structure; instead, her influence is more nuanced, with the potential to significantly shape our institution's trajectory.

A significant portion of our conversation focused on the affordability crisis, with particular emphasis on the housing challenges facing Edmonton. I engaged the Chancellor in a detailed discussion about the 'study and stay' plan for graduate students, an initiative that holds considerable appeal for international graduate candidates. This is a topic I have consistently highlighted in previous council reports, and I made sure to introduce new angles to further the Chancellor's understanding of the issue.

For example, I pointed out that despite the Government of Alberta's high demand for MSc programs in dentistry, there is still no clear strategy to retain these medical professionals within the province. This gap represents not just a missed opportunity but also a critical area for potential development.

Overall, the meeting was a success, and we departed with the mutual intention to continue our dialogue. The Chancellor was receptive to our perspectives, and we are optimistic about the prospects of further collaboration.

In-Person Meeting - Board of Governors Chair (Oct 25):

Another important meeting with the chair of the board of governors and Kate Chisholm commenced with the now-familiar tradition of sharing our priorities. We delved into the current situation within the GSA, examining the progress made towards our long-term goals and identifying any potential roadblocks. I cannot share many details about the exact conversation since it includes some confidential notes. However, a significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to reviewing the operational plans, with Kate providing insightful feedback based on her extensive experience. Kate very kindly shared some notes about the relationship that we have with different parts of the university, such as FGSR, and advised us on how we can forge a robust relationship to empower graduate students. Overall, it was a great meeting, and we are looking forward to having more meetings with the board of governors.

Forward Slash Event (Nov 2):

At the recent Forward/Slash YEG meeting, I had the privilege of engaging with a dynamic group comprising local business owners, entrepreneurs, and Mayor Amarjeet Sohi of Edmonton. The discussion was centered around the economic development and innovation within the city. It was a remarkable opportunity for me to advocate for the importance of bridging the gap between academia and the business community, as well as the local government.

Mayor Sohi was particularly vocal about the need for a collaborative effort to create an inclusive economy that benefits all layers of society. His vision for Edmonton is one that encompasses every citizen, with a special emphasis on lifting the community through economic opportunities.

One of the highlights of the meeting was a presentation that put Edmonton's achievements in perspective — our city boasts a lower poverty rate compared to many of the 200 cities around the world. This statistic not only reflects the current state of the economy but also the potential for future growth and stability. The conversation was a clear indication that there is a shared enthusiasm for leveraging the knowledge and skills of our graduate students.

In summary, the meeting left us with a sense of optimism and a roadmap for future collaboration. There's a collective anticipation for the initiatives that will arise from this synergy, aiming to integrate the expertise of graduate students into the fabric of Edmonton's economic framework.

For more information, please check this website: <https://forwardslashyeg.ca/>

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 16 October to 20 November 2023 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

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| 18 Oct | Post-Secondary Education Task Force Meeting |
| 20 Oct | ab-GPAC Board Meeting |
| 24 Oct | Meeting w/ Chancellor Garritty and GSA Execs |
| 25 Oct | In-Person Meeting - Board of Governors Chair |
| 27 Oct | abGPAC Meeting |
| 2 Nov | Forward Slash Event |