

**2022-2023 Vice-President Student Services  
Report to GSA Council for 20 November 2023**

To: GSA Council  
From: Muhammad Haseeb Arshad  
Date: 06 November 2023

Dear Council Members,

I hope this report finds you with the best of health. For my meetings from 17<sup>th</sup> of October to 06<sup>th</sup> of November, I will use the following space to summarize some of the important ones.

- **VLHR Committee Fall Meeting #1 (October 17<sup>th</sup>):**

During the VLHR Committee Fall Meeting #1 on October 17<sup>th</sup>, the committee discussed several important topics. Firstly, they reviewed the recent visit of Miceal Fakhri, which had been funded by ASSET. Fakhri, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, focused on food security during his visit. The event included a community gathering organized by Elizabeth Onyango (Assistant Professor, School of Public Health) and a launch event with the Dean of ALES. Fakhri also gave a 45-minute talk to an undergraduate class. The committee noted Fakhri's interest in returning in a formal role, potentially after his term as a UN rapporteur.

Another key point of discussion was an evening lecture held at TIMS at 6 pm. Feedback on the event space was positive, and ASSET's provision of underground parking was appreciated. However, there were concerns about the low student turnout, prompting the suggestion to improve demographic targeting and early sign-up promotions through student groups to increase attendance.

The meeting also touched upon the invitation extended to David Boyd, the UN Special Rapporteur on the environment. While Boyd couldn't attend this year due to his busy schedule, he expressed a willingness to come next year after the completion of his term. The committee viewed this as a potential opportunity, considering that inviting Boyd after his term might allow for more candid discussions on environmental issues.

- **GSA Coffee Break x DOA (October 18<sup>th</sup>):**

During the GSA Coffee Break x DOA meeting on October 18<sup>th</sup>, myself, Brandy and Venassa met with Heather Ritz (Wellness Supports and Days of Action Coordinator) to discuss the planning of a collaborative event scheduled for November 24<sup>th</sup>, titled "GSA Coffee Break x Campus Social Hour." The primary objective of this partnership was to create a dedicated DOA's World Hello Day event specifically tailored for graduate students.

Several key details of the event were discussed during the meeting. These included the planned activities, such as a mocktail contest, a coloring contest, a giant Jenga game within the FGSR boardroom, and a cornhole throwing game outside Triffo Hall, contingent on weather conditions.

We have almost finalized most of the work related to these activities, so please reach out to your constituents, and ensure that you promote this event, as it will be a good networking and socializing opportunity.

- **GSA x Collective Tea Time meeting (October 18<sup>th</sup>):**

The GSA x Collective Tea Time meeting on October 18<sup>th</sup> primarily revolved around planning and discussing the potential collaboration between GSA, ASSET, and Unitea for a collective tea time event. Originally, the plan was to host this event during October's coffee break, but due to time constraints, it was decided to reconvene and explore new dates for the event.

During the meeting, Vanessa proposed two alternative options for the event's timing. The first option was to align the collaboration with the Fall Socials event scheduled for the middle of November. The second option was to consider hosting the event on December 15<sup>th</sup>, which would coincide with our last coffee break of the year.

It was agreed that further discussions would be needed to confirm the availability of ASSET volunteers during the proposed dates, and I am hoping to have a follow-up meeting in the first week of November to assess the feasibility of the event to make further arrangements.

- **CFB Annual General Meeting (October 18<sup>th</sup>):**

The CFB Annual General Meeting had a primarily social orientation. Erin (Executive Director of CFB), and Jessica Dugan (current Board Chair) provided a brief overview of the year's statistics regarding the utilization of CFB by both students and faculty members. Additionally, a quick business meeting was held on the side to update one of the policy statements concerning the utilization of CFB's resources, aligning it with the Canadian Excellence Standards for Food Banks.

During the meeting, a significant highlight was the formal induction of six new board members through a formal motion. After the business meeting, all attendees were encouraged to offer feedback on the services provided by CFB and express their expectations for the coming years. The event also featured complimentary food and drinks, enhancing the social and engaging atmosphere of the meeting.

- **CFB October Board Meeting (October 23<sup>rd</sup>):**

The board meeting started with ED's report where she confirmed the location of a community pantry in the Rutherford Library atrium, set to open in January 2024. Additionally, she mentioned that the Grocery Bus is now successfully launched at CSJ, and that CFB are actively seeking volunteers for the upcoming Trick or trEAT event on October 28.

She also introduced the new Dietetics Intern Mariana who started on 16<sup>th</sup> October and will be running office hours till November.

Regarding Fiscal Sustainability, Erin shared several funding updates including a \$24,000 annual grant from AASUA, \$2,000 from CSL's small grant fund, along with an additional \$3,600 for hosting CSL students. The board was also appreciative of the fact that the GSA has agreed to assist in running a referendum to add a CFB fee for graduate students, with a presentation scheduled for the November council meeting. The board was briefed on the plan to apply for a Capacity Boost Grant from Food Banks Canada to acquire an electric van for shared use with the SU. Lastly, Erin noted that she will be presenting at GFC, and it is anticipated as a potential fundraiser organized by the GFC for CFB.

All board members were also encouraged to take part in sub-committees where policy, finance and board development issues will be discussed in more detail.

Since this was the first board meeting after the AGM, the chair, secretary, and treasurer were appointed as usual practice. Next meeting will be on November 18, where the next year's priorities will be discussed and set.

- **Graduate Students & Tutoring Services (October 23<sup>rd</sup>):**

The October 23rd meeting focused on the possibility of a summer teaching program for graduate students to teach high school students. The meeting was organized by the Ravina Sanghera (Dean of Students) at the request of Beshoi. Lewie mentioned that the University of Melbourne has a similar program, which could benefit both the university and graduate students by showcasing the educational system to prospective students and enhancing teaching skills of graduate students. Blessie Mathew (Director of the Career Centre), emphasized the need for proper training and suggested that the GSA provide a draft proposal for the program. The response from the Dean of Students and the Director of the Career Centre was positive, and we are committed to working on a draft proposal to present to the Dean of Students.

- **Meeting w/ Chancellor Garrity and GSA Execs (October 24<sup>th</sup>):**

During the meeting with Chancellor Peggy Garrity and GSA Execs on October 24th, the discussion primarily revolved around the challenges faced by international course-based master's students. Beshoi presented the results of a financial assessment survey, highlighting the need to improve the standard of living for these students. Chancellor Garrity inquired about the reasons behind their difficulties, and it was suggested that the issues may stem from the lack of financial support through scholarships and loans. Additionally, the absence of supervisory mentors for guidance and access to mental health resources was mentioned. I pointed out that many top North American universities offer financial aid to international course-based master's students, a support not currently available at our university. The group sought the Chancellor's support in advocating for this with the Board of Governors.

- **In-Person Meeting - Board of Governors Chair (October 25<sup>th</sup>):**

During the in-person meeting with Kate Chisholm (Chair of the Board of Governors), the discussion centered on the priorities for the year. DEOs shared their respective initiatives and sought advice from Kate in her capacity as Chair. Her candid insights were highly appreciated, particularly regarding how to present advocacy efforts to university officials in a more objective manner.

Specific topics included addressing issues with the GRAF contract, with a focus on making it resemble more of an employment contract to better protect the rights of graduate students as a part of their union. Additionally, the meeting touched on concerns related to university residence situations, international students' immigration issues, the possibility of starting a graduate co-op program and the growing apprehensions among graduate students concerning rising inflation. Kate's guidance and input were valuable in navigating these important matters.

- **DoA Committee Meeting (October 25<sup>th</sup>):**

The DOA Committee Meeting was divided into two parts. In the first part, the committee discussed feedback and statistics related to the recent World Mental Health Day event held on October 10th and the Mindfulness Walk that took place on October 12th. During this discussion, some concerns were raised regarding the level of student participation in the Mindfulness Walk.

In the second part of the meeting, the committee received a comprehensive update on the progress made by the World Hello Day working group. It was explained that there would be two separate events to celebrate World Hello Day. The first event, scheduled for November 21st, would be geared towards undergraduate students, and would occur in Rutherford on North campus, as well as in an appropriate location at CSJ. The second event, set for November 24th, would be hosted in Triffo Hall and would be a collaboration with the GSA coffee break for graduate students. The November 21st event would run from 11 am to 2 pm, while the GSA event would take place from 12:30 pm to 3 pm. ASSET and Unitea would be contributing volunteers, and a social calendar displaying all the events happening in November would be made available on the DOA website. Additionally, it was decided that the first working group meeting for World Social Justice Day would be held on November 1st.

- **Hello Day Programming Meeting (October 26<sup>th</sup>):**

During the Hello Day Programming Meeting, several important topics were discussed. First, there was an update on the Graduate Student Campus Social Hour, where ASSET, Unitea, and DOA volunteered to organize activities. One notable activity was the Mocktail Naming contest, featuring small prizes, and this event would involve 6-8 DOA volunteers. Notably, Courtney Wagner (Program Lead, Development and Alumni Relations) had prepared several mocktail recipes, which would be displayed on boards or banners for students to enjoy during the event.

The discussion also touched on the venue for the CSJ (Campus Saint-Jean) event, although it was mentioned that finalization was still pending.

In terms of programming, plans were made for a coloring program in collaboration with Counselling & Clinical Services. This initiative aimed to engage students in creative and relaxing activities. The meeting also covered the allocation of tables for different locations, with 5 tables designated for Rutherford, 2 in CAB, and 2 coffee tables in the event space. Additionally, support from three CCS team members was secured for setup, hosting, and cleanup.

Lastly, the meeting covered the November 24th Coffee Break, focusing on game selection, volunteer recruitment, and the need to reserve additional space for activities.

- **GSA/Parking Services Meeting (October 27<sup>th</sup>):**

During the GSA and Parking Services Meeting, one of the primary topics was the possibility of making parking appeals accessible to the public. However, it was deemed infeasible due to the high volume of complaints and insufficient staff to manage such a system.

Tiffany, during the meeting, was tasked with finding an innovative solution for displaying signage to indicate whether a parking lot is open or closed. This issue, particularly concerning the Windows parking lot, was identified as a major concern that required careful attention.

Randa Kachkar (Manager, Parking Services and Vice-President Facilities & Operations - Parking) provided valuable information that students have the option to reach out to the parking service office if they

believe they have received an erroneous parking ticket. They can also launch an in-person appeal for quicker updates on the status of their appeal by visiting the customer service agent at the front desk of the parking service office.

Overall, the meeting aimed to address parking-related issues and explore solutions to improve the parking experience for students.

These were the highlights of the meetings that I have attended up until the submission of this report. I look forward to working with all the members of the GSA Council. Please feel free to reach out to me at vpsse@ualberta.ca if you have any concerns or would like to discuss any matters with me.

Thank you,

**Muhammad Haseeb Arshad,**

Vice-President Student Services 2022-2023

*Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 16 October to 06 November 2023 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.*

17 Oct	VLHR Committee Fall Meeting #1
18 Oct	GSA Coffee Break x DOA
18 Oct	GSA x Collective Tea Time meeting
18 Oct	CFB Annual General Meeting
23 Oct	CFB October Board Meeting
23 Oct	Graduate Students & Tutoring Services
24 Oct	Meeting w/ Chancellor Garrity and GSA Execs
25 Oct	In-Person Meeting - Board of Governors Chair
25 Oct	DoA Committee Meeting
26 Oct	Hello Day Programming Meeting
27 Oct	GSA/Parking Services Meeting