

GSA Council Meeting - List of Reports Circulated
Monday, December 19, 2016
Cancelled

	Attached Numbered Pages
1. Minutes from the 12 December 2016 GSA Council Special Meeting <i>Attachments:</i>	
• Minutes from the 12 December 2016 GSA Council Special Meeting	1.0 - 1.7
2. President (Sarah Ficko, GSA President)	
i. President's Report	2.0 - 2.2
ii. GSA Board	2.3
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iv. GSA Governance Committee (no meetings this reporting period)	
3. GSA Nominating Committee	
i. GSA Nominating Committee Report (Radim Barta, GSA Nominating Committee Chair)	3.0 - 3.1
4. Vice-President Academic (Firouz Khodayari, GSA Vice-President Academic)	
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5. Vice-President External (Masoud Khademi, GSA Vice-President External)	
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ii. GSA Awards Selection Committee (no meetings this reporting period)	
6. Vice-President Labour (Sasha van der Klein, GSA Vice-President Labour)	
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ii. GSA Negotiating Committee (no meetings this reporting period)	
iii. GSA Labour Relations Committee (no meetings this reporting period)	
7. Vice-President Student Services (Alireza Talaei, GSA Vice-President Student Services)	
i. Vice-President Student Services' Report	7.0 - 7.1
ii. GSA Student Affairs Advisory Committee (Joint Chair: Vice-President External) (no meetings this reporting period)	
8. Senator (Jane Traynor, GSA Senator)	
i. Senator's Report (no written report at this time)	
9. Speaker (Sulya Fenichel, GSA Speaker)	
i. Speaker's Report (no written report at this time)	
10. Chief Returning Officer (Carolina Martinez, GSA Chief Returning Officer)	
i. Chief Returning Officer's Report (no written report at this time)	
11. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (Leigh Spanner, GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Chair)	
i. GSA Elections and Referenda Committee Report	11.0
12. GSA Management (Courtney Thomas, GSA Executive Director)	
i. Executive Director's Report	12.0 - 12.4

Prepared by J Tanguay and C Thomas for the cancelled GSA Council Meeting of December 19, 2015

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GSA Council Special Meeting MINUTES
Monday, December 12, 2016 at 6:00 pm
2-100 University Hall, Van Vliet Complex

IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah Ficko (President)	Ahmed Najar (Councillor-at-Large)	David Li (Electrical & Computer Engineering)	Mischa Bandet (Neuroscience)
Firouz Khodayari (VP Academic)	Swai Mon Khaing (Biochemistry)	Lorna Sutherland (Elementary Education)	Upinder Singh (Nursing)
Sasha van der Klein (VP Labour)	Francesca Jean; Michele DuVal (Biological Sciences)	Shaina Humble (English & Film Studies)	Kelsey Peterson (Occupational Therapy)
Masoud Khademi (VP External)	Graham Little (Biomedical Engineering)	Neil Prather (History & Classics)	Radim Barta (Oncology)
Ali Talaie (VP Student Services)	Trent Nabe (Business MBA)	Mohammed Abdul-Bari (Human Ecology)	Ashley Bahry (Paediatrics)
Sulya Fenichel (Speaker)	Katie Lafreniere (Business PhD)	Jocelyn Beyer (Humanities Computing)	Stephen Hunter (Phys Ed & Rec)
Preshit Verma (Deputy Speaker)	Umme Aulia Munira (Chemical & Materials Engineering)	Faisal Hirji (Lab Medicine & Pathology)	Joshua Yong (Psychology)
Jane Traynor (Senator)	Anis Fahandej-Sadi (Chemistry)	Kris Joseph (Library & Info Studies)	Colin Reynolds (Public Health)
Michelle Campbell (Councillor-at-Large)	Fereshte Talaie (Civil & Environmental Engineering)	Fae Karey-McKenna (Linguistics)	Bethany Hartman (Rehab Med)
Alicia Capello (Councillor-at-Large)	Hamman Samuel (Computing Science)	Michelle Michelle (Math & Statistical Sciences)	Owain Bamforth (Religious Studies)
Colin More (Councillor-at-Large)	Dorian Lang (Drama)	Fahed Elian (Medical Genetics)	Remonia Stoddart-Morrison (Secondary Education)
Nicole Noel (Councillor-at-Large)	Brette Harris (Earth & Atmo Sciences)	Connie Le (Medical Microbiology & Immunology)	Antonio Bruni; Wenlong Huang (Surgery)
Phil Oel (Councillor-at-Large)	Melody Li (East Asian Studies)	Melisa Silva (Medicine)	
Robert Reklow (Councillor-at-Large)	Marcia East (Ed Policy Studies)	Jay Friesen (MLCS)	
Dasha Smirnow (Councillor-at-Large)	Amanda Radil (Ed Psych)	David Parent (Native Studies)	

GUESTS: Steven Dew (Provost & Vice-President (Academic)); Gitta Kulczycki (Vice-President (Finance & Administration)); Philip Stack (Associate Vice-President (Risk Management Services)); Sourav Chowdhury (Chemical & Materials Engineering); Alleson Mason (Educational Policy Studies); Babak Soltannia (Mechanical Engineering); Bijaya Pokhasel (Nursing); Chen Chen (Physical Education & Recreation); Jacqueline Noga (Public Health); Houyuan Luo (Educational Psychology); Ana Anoveros (AFNS); Amrit Bhullar (AFNS); Bozhin Traykov (Sociology); Pradeep D. (Earth & Atmospheric Sciences); Mohammad Daryaei (Electrical & Computer Engineering); Nima Amouzegar Ashtiani (Electrical & Computer Engineering); Jingjie Xiao (AFNS); Lebogang Disele (Drama); Amelia Shi (Psychology).

Speaker Sulya Fenichel in the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. Speaker acknowledged the Traditional Territory of Treaty Six.

Roll Call**1. Roll Call of Council Members in Attendance**

At Speaker's request, attendances were noted by GSA Council Secretary prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Approval of Agenda**2. Approval of the 12 December 2016 Consolidated Agenda**

Members had before them the 12 December 2016 Consolidated Agenda, which had been previously distributed on 9 December 2016. N Prather **MOVED**; A Talaei **SECONDED**.

Motion **PASSED**. 1 Opposed.

Approval of Minutes**3. Minutes from the 21 November 2016 GSA Council meeting**

Members had before them the 21 November 2016 GSA Council Minutes, which had been previously distributed on 2 December 2016. A Radil **MOVED**; D Smirnow **SECONDED**.

N Prather requested an amendment to the minutes to reflect that at the History & Classics book sale, you could have your picture taken with the artifacts if you made a purchase, they were not charging any fees for the pictures. N Prather also requested a further clarification that the History & Classics celebration of Canada's 150th Anniversary will be held in the Old Arts Building on January 18, 2017 from 2:00 – 4:00 pm.

Motion **PASSED** unanimously.

Presentation**4. 2017-2018 Graduate Tuition Fees**

S Ficko introduced the guests Steve Dew (Provost & Vice-President (Academic) and Gitta Kulczycki (Vice-President (Finance & Administration)), and Phillip Stack (Associate Vice-President of Risk Management Services) to GSA Council. She explained that the GSA sent a submission to the Board of Governors (BoG) regarding the proposed increase to the international graduate student tuition.

S Dew began his presentation by outlining the three current motions related to international graduate student tuition: 1) an increase of 3.02% to international tuition; 2) an increase of \$4000/year to international graduate student tuition to be offset by a \$4000/year in financial support; and 3) a differential fee for the specialized Integrated Petroleum Geosciences (IPG) program. S Dew specified that none of these increases were applicable to domestic students whose tuition was frozen by the Alberta Government.

S Dew explained that the \$4000 increase in tuition would be accompanied by a \$4000 in financial support so it was cost and revenue neutral. He specified that this 'sticker price' was not an attempt at finding a backdoor mechanism to increase tuition. He added that tuition would inevitably increase but these increases would go through the normal governance processes. He also noted that this proposal was about marketing. He explained that there was one school of thought that equated higher cost with the perception of quality. He indicated that the U of A tuition fees were very low and that application rates were falling. He explained that there was an issue around demand and that the University's peer institutions had adapted to that school of thought which seemed to have increased demand.

S Dew explained that the University's intake of thesis-based students was limited by the resources the University had to support them. He noted that the admission rates were slowly approaching registrations rates (registrations being students who decided to attend the University). He added that over the past three years, University Administration had noted a decrease in applications. He indicated that this decrease signalled a problem of demand around our programs. He explained that this seemed to be a local issue as every year more international students applied to institutions in North America.

S Dew noted that the University had good physical and anecdotal data that suggested the association between tuition a perception of quality. He explained that when the University increased undergraduate tuition the University Administration noticed an increase in international applications.

S Dew specified that international undergraduate students tuition covered the cost of their education and that in that sense the University was not constrained in how many students they could admit. He mentioned, that as stated previously, this was not true for graduate students as the number of graduate students admitted was constrained by resources.

S Dew indicated that, when comparing the U of A to the other U15 universities, the U of A was less than half of the average (\$15,000). He explained that prospective international graduate students when researching the U of A had little information available if it was not for comparing it with other Canadian institutions. He added that one of the first things these students compared was cost and that the U of A's appeared to be cut-rate. He noted that the objective of the 'sticker price' proposal was to interest prospective graduate students long enough that they would examine U of A's qualities.

S Dew noted that the 'sticker price' proposal was not intended to increase tuition but to change perception. He explained that financial support received by graduate students (about \$70 million) reflected the contributions those students made to the University in teaching and research duties. He indicates that tuition had to stay low as many supervisors had research grants which would be used to pay graduate students' tuition. He explained that increasing tuition only transferred money from the research grants and departments to the University. He noted that this proposal addressed the perception problem without taking money away from researchers and departments. He specified that with a net \$4000 increase and a net \$4000 rebate there was no increased burden on students, researchers, or departments. He added that the \$4000 would be deducted directly off the Fee Assessment resulting in no hassle for graduate students.

S Dew explained that the 3.02% increase for both undergraduate and graduate international students was inflation-related but not related to the Alberta Consumer Price Index (CPI) (which had been the inflationary rate used in the past) and that it was related to the Academic Price Index (API). He noted that the CPI was based on a "basket of goods" calculation from Statistics Canada and that it was a combination of expenditures to accommodate for increases and decreases in pricing on these goods. He also noted that the API represented the University's inflationary costs (salaries, benefits, maintenance, supplies, utilities, and services) and that these University's cost increased at a generally higher rate than the previously talked about "basket of goods" resulting in a decrease ability for the University to cover their costs and provide a quality education. He added that the inflationary increase was not an effort to move costs from one group to another but an attempt to reflect a fair share for all.

S Dew explained that the specialised program in petroleum geosciences is competing with 17 other programs in the world operating at significantly higher prices and that the proposed change would more than double the tuition differential.

S Dew concluded by outlining the consultation and approval route for any tuition changes. He noted that it began with the Tuition Budget Advisory Committee and flowed through the University's governance culminating at the BoG.

N Prather asked if it would be possible to have access to the presentation. S Dew noted that he would resend it to the GSA office as he made last minute changes to include further data and to specifically address the issue of international graduate student tuition. N Prather asked that the decision to implement the 'sticker price' was based on a marketing strategy, a part from an economic rationale what are the moral and the ethical rationales behind this proposal. S Dew noted that this kind of mechanism was a common practice in other universities. He added that what the 'sticker price' was trying to achieve was that prospective graduate students looking for a university would keep the U of A long enough in their list of consideration in order for them to do a sophisticated analysis and to realize that the U of A was a gem. As for the ethical rationale, S Dew noted that the University should be perceived as a top quality institution in the mind of graduate students that could benefit from the University and, likewise, could enrich it. N Prather also asked if there were any mechanisms for current students to provide feedback. S Dew replied that the GSA had consulted graduate students. He further stated that if anyone was asked if they would pay more, everyone would always say no but if you presented them with two different pair of glasses one expensive and the other one at a lower price, there would be a perception of quality associated with the more expensive ones. He added that he wanted to ensure that the prospective students would not discard the University due to its low cost. S Ficko noted that the figure 5 of the GSA submission to the BoG showed that only 18% of the responders noted that cost was a factor that contributed to their decision of attending the University of Alberta.

P Oel asked for an explanation on any adjustments that were made to address concerns that the University Administration received. S Dew noted that the first proposal was a tuition increase of 20% over the next 3 years and that, following feedback from students that this increase would unload the benefits of all students to the only group that could be targeted, the University Administration realised that each group should pay their fair share of the inflationary cost. He added that in an earlier version of the proposal there was the suggestion of creating an emergency fund and that they heard that this fund was not a priority so they took it out of the proposal. S Dew noted that the GSA representatives had asked for more data and that it had been added to the presentation.

H Samuel asked regarding the 'sticker price' proposal if the University was willing to commit to a certain guarantee that the rebate would not stop. S Dew noted that the motion before the BoG noted that the 'sticker price' was not subject to inflationary increase and that it would be offset revenue and cost neutral. He explained that the motion clearly linked the

rebate to the increase and left little room for the 'sticker price' to turn into an increase. He also noted that at this point it was in the hands of the Bog.

M Juhas asked that if the 'sticker price' was cost-neutral for graduate students why not increase it by more if that measure was supposed to increase the number of applications received. S Dew acknowledged that \$4000 was an arbitrary number and that it was an experiment. He explained that if this measure was to go in the direction the University Administration wished they would be happy but that if it failed it would be an easier mistake to undo. He added that the University was moving toward the norm of the other U15 while being cautious.

R Stoddart-Morrison noted that a good, solid, and concrete decision was not based on a perception. She added that it was necessary to market the University in the best way. She then asked whether the impact on the University's reputation had been considered taking into account that current international graduate students would go back home and report on their experiences at the University. S Dew noted that the objectives of the proposal was to increase the desirability of the University of Alberta for top graduate students and that this goal was multi faceted and that the 'sticker price' was only one piece of this bigger strategy. He added that the intent of the proposal was to bring the University closer to its peer institutions and allow prospective students to consider the U of A as a potential destination. He also noted that the intent was not to increase the net tuition for international graduate students, as this would unload the marketing strategy on supervisors and/or graduate students.

R Stoddart-Morrison then asked why this measure had to affect current international graduate student as they were already attending the University. S Dew noted that the University explored grand-parenting current international graduate students but it was decided against as there were no net cost and that it was determined that the University should make a very costly investments in an administrative structure for something that had no real cost as that would equate to a waste of money.

T Nabe asked about research that showed that this perception of higher cost would attract international graduate students. S Dew responded that there was not a lot of research done for graduate students but that the best review was done by Robert Wright (2015) capturing the analysis of many scholarly works. He also added that a major topic discussion with the World's Leading Universities was that link between tuition and perceived quality. He indicated that one the most chosen destinations for students was the United States and the United Kingdom which were the jurisdictions with the highest tuition which certainly pointed out to a good correlation. S Fenichel asked if it would be possible to share that list of references. S Dew agreed to share that list.

C More asked, in taking into account that the proposal was meant to be an experiment, what would be the indicators for failure and success of this experiment. He also asked what was the timeline to make this determination. S Dew replied that the application rates were the key indicators and that if it was noticed that the numbers of applications were increasing it would indicate that the 'sticker price' has had an effect. He added that, with respect to the timeline question, it would take some time for the reputation to be impacted and he specified approximately a 3 year period, unless huge negative changes could be observed.

A Radil asked about the process of the development of this proposal and whether marketing professionals had been consulted and why this proposal was chosen over another one. S Dew noted that the University has a marketing and communications team under University Relations and that the Dean of the Faculty of Business and other deans were involved and consulted. He also noted that he consulted with his colleagues at the other U15 universities. He added that the question of penalties paid for being locked into low tuition rates was key topic of conversation with his colleagues.

M Campbell noted if this 'sticker price' proposal could be viewed as false advertisement. S Dew replied that the University Administration was not making any claims about the University and that they were simply adjusting by the 'sticker price' the tuition for international graduate students.

F Jean asked, considering many graduate students had mental health issues, whether this proposal could increase stress and mental health issues in graduate students. S Dew noted that the 3.02% increase would not generate any new revenue, as it was only to keep up with the inflation in University's costs. He added that the University had strong support for mental health and that these resources remained available for students.

D Smirnow noted that, when the GSA negotiated the stipend in their Collective Agreement (CA) with the university, they negotiated for the CPI but now the University Administration has used the API, which would create a disparity in the increase of graduate students' stipend and tuition. S Dew noted that he was unaware of the details of the Collective Agreement but that using API could be a possibility. S Ficko noted that the CPI was what was currently being employed by the CA..

J Traynor asked whether any other strategies were considered and, if yes, why were they not pursued. S Dew replied that the 'sticker price' proposal is part of a larger strategy but this was the only piece that needed approval by the BoG. He added that this bigger strategy would be rolled out by University Administration.

F Karey-McKenna asked what the University had done to keep the U of A prevalent for prospective graduate students. She added that prospective graduate students were sophisticated consumers and typically more mature. She asked whether the U of A outreach had dropped or is it on par with previous years. S Dew responded that the University Administration needed a multi-pronged approach and that they had not done anything differently; it had been business as usual but that this was not enough anymore. He added that the University's peer institutions had raised their tuition and that the University was trying to respond in this in a no net cost manner. F Karey-McKenna followed up specifying that when she was considering and researching institutions in Canada, tuition was part of her decision but not all of it and that other factors included papers published at the U of A in her field and specific connection to someone working here. She asked whether there was any kind of outreach happening where the U of A representatives actually interacted with those potential consumers. S Dew explained that the University Administration concern was missing that first glance by prospective graduate students. He noted that the University Administration was trying to ensure that the U of A was not eliminated in preliminary graduate school research. He added that the objective was that prospective graduate students would keep the U of A in the running long enough to research U of A's supervisors and facilities. S Ficko indicated that the U of A was currently ranked at number five for Canadian universities. S Dew responded that he hoped students were looking carefully at rankings but that rankings were only one factor in that decision process and that many students applied to less well-ranked universities than the U of A. S Ficko added that in the GSA survey, rankings were one of the highest factors that students relied upon to make their decision.

D Lang asked if the current BoG motion connecting the 'sticker price' with the corresponding financial support would prevent future motions that would make the 'sticker price' permanent without the offset. S Dew replied that he could not make commitments on the BoG's behalf but that he personally had no aspirations to compromise his integrity. He added that the BoG was the final approver and that currently the motion made it clear that the 'sticker price' was linked to the financial support. G Kulczycki added that no change in tuition could happen without going through the governance process. S Ficko specified that the rebate in its current form was added at the General Faculties Council Academic Planning Committee meeting. S Dew further noted that, if the motion was approved, the BoG's intent would be clear and that afterward doing anything different would circumvent that first intent.

L Sutherland expressed appreciation for how much the U of A had grown in the past few decades but also expressed concern that the proposed solution lacked creativity. She asked to speak to other ideas that were explored and the rationale for how to bring better research and stronger innovation. S Dew responded that this proposal was one part of a larger strategy, outlined in the Institution Strategic Plan (ISP). He added that a number of objectives in the ISP spoke to building stronger institutions, building excitement, and world-class excellence and he mentioned the new working groups targeting implementation of these goals. He indicated that there was a bigger ambition and that the 'sticker proposal' was an element of a bigger plan with a lot of details to work through.

C Reynolds asked if in doing this there was any fear of a negative effect on the perception of the institution and could this proposal be perceived as a back door increase or artificial inflation even if it was not the intention. S Dew explained that raising tuition had been used across the country, and that most institutions also included financial supports to avoid losing students. He added that this was a fairly explicit tactic although to explicitly link the increase to financial support was a bit unusual. He further noted that, generally, the return was in the form of redistribution so while this exact formula was new, virtually every other U15 institutions had used a similar strategy. S Ficko pointed out that there was a decreasing trend in the percentage of international students as tuition increases. She added that the U of A and the University of Saskatchewan had the lowest tuition and the highest number of international students. She asked whether there was a risk that the 'sticker price' would screen out certain students. S Dew responded that our number of students was constrained by our resources to support them and that if the real price was increased, fewer people could come. C Reynolds followed up by asking if the University Administration considered how to handle a negative perception, if it was to happen. S Dew stated that the criticism they had seen was limited, as seen in the recent Edmonton Journal articles.

J Beyer noted that there was a financial check in the student visa process where the entire cost of the program was considered and this proposal could represent an additional \$8,000 that students must demonstrate they have. She asked whether this could prevent some students from attending simply because they could not make that demonstration. S Dew explained that this was an offset and it would be listed as such in the invoice given to students. He added that the University admission letter would outline all of the supports the student would receive including the 'sticker price' associated financial support. J Beyer asked for clarification that students would not have to demonstrate that they could pay they extra \$4,000. S Dew explained

that the 'sticker price' associated financial support would be documented so an immigration officer would see that it would be provided, along with other scholarships and supports. He noted that the students would be aware of all their financial support including the 'sticker price' associated financial support. P Stack also pointed out that this would be included in the sample fee schedule available online.

H Samuel stated that there was a perception among international students that they were already being treated unfairly and that as the University was facing higher costs due to the domestic tuition freeze, University administration decided to increase international tuition. He further noted that international students paid more tuition without receiving any additional services. He asked if the University Administration considered how these negative perceptions among international students and alumni would affect the University's reputation in the long run. S Dew responded that the Alberta Government provided the majority of the University's operating funds and that international students who had not been taxpayers here needed to pay for their education. He added that the argument was made by the Government that the share of domestic student increases comes from the operating grant the University received so all parties were contributing the same amount either through tuition or through their tax dollars. H Samuel asked if there was consideration for this negative perception. S Dew responded that the University Administration could not control how someone perceived their actions but that they did not foresee it as an issue.

J Young specified that he was a domestic student. He noted that this meeting felt like the University Administration was telling the students without consulting with them. He asked that, with the 3.02% increase taking into account that many graduate students could barely make ends meet currently, what advice would the University Administration have for those students. S Dew noted that the University provided support to students and that the 'sticker price' proposal recognized that graduate students should not be burdened by further financial concerns.

A Bahry asked why the University Administration was establishing the 'sticker price' if the numbers of graduate students coming to the University was not decreasing. She also asked, considering the granting crisis, would this increase impact supervisors' ability to support their students. S Dew started by replying to the second question by asking for clarification as to what was meant by the granting crisis and he noted that there were some grants, such as CIHR ones, that were becoming more restrictive and less easy to secure. As for the first question, he replied that the desire of the University Administration was to be a top institution worldwide and a destination for top students. He explained that with a lower number of applications we are getting a lower number of top graduate students.

M Juhas asked if, for students who are sponsored by their home country to study at the University, the 'sticker price' meant that the University would lose potential revenue from foreign countries. Subsequently, he asked on what the 3.02% increase was calculated. To the first question, S Dew replied that these sponsorships had their own policies and that these would govern how the foreign country calculated which amount was given to the students and that if the 'sticker price' were given back to them that would be great for the students. To the second question, he replied that the \$4000 would be excluded from any inflationary calculations.

K Lafreniere noted that, as a marketing student, she could understand the logic that there was sometimes a perception that price was an indicator of quality. She asked what other strategies would be pursued to get the U of A to encourage increased applications, noting that prospective students often looked at a series of tiered criteria when selecting a school to attend. S Dew noted that the 'sticker price' strategy would influence a prospective applicant's initial decision to apply to the U of A if they thought, at a basic level and based on relative price, it was a comparator to other top Canadian schools (ie, without looking further at things like rankings, programs offered, etc). He suggested that a higher cost (achieved through the 'sticker price' increase) would ensure the U of A was included on a 'short list' by potential applicants and that, once they had decided to apply, they would notice that the 'sticker price' was rebated.

J Traynor asked whether there were more students choosing the United States because there was some idealisation of the destination. S Dew specified that he would like to provide Canada specific data but specific data was hard to obtain as institutions agreed to divulge data as long as they were aggregated with many institutions and not only a few. J Traynor noted that her questions more specifically about the idealisation of certain schools (eg Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford). S Dew agreed that certain factors as reputation and awareness were to play a role; that certain universities have a very popular 'brand.' He also noted the increase in applications from international students could be seen across the University's peer institutions. J Traynor added that the examples that she chose were extreme examples but more broadly a diploma from the United States was seen more valuable than a Canadian one and that could be why graduate students would apply more often to American universities and in turn American universities could charge more. M Khademi noted that other Canadian peers' universities showed a decrease in applications. S Dew agreed that there are other factors influencing the number of applications and that the University Administration was not pretending to tease them all out however the 'sticker price' proposal was one strategy that could be used to increase the University's number on international applications. F Khodayari noted that for all these

arguments S Dew had only expressed one study where the GSA had found multiple that did not necessarily support the University Administration's points.

P Verma pointed out that increasing the 'sticker price' suddenly could backfire and ask if there were example where a similar surge was successful. S Dew responded that the \$4,000 amount was an artificial number and that specifically because it was not such a large increase they did not believe they would see people dropping away for that sole reason.

P Oel referred back to a previous application drop in 2013 and the possible contributing factors and suggested to keep in mind the current state of the world, especially in the US and the UK, and that Canada and Australia were likely going to notice an increase in demands considering the situations of the US and the UK.

D Smirnow asked if the presenters could speak to the decline in quality of applicants and if there were any indications of this. In addition, D Smirnow pointed out that the GSA had produced a report with recommendations and if these would be considered. S Dew, using the recommendations in the summary section of the report, first addressed the suggestion to grandfather current students and pointed out that there was nothing to grandfather since the 'sticker price' proposal was cost neutral. He further noted that API was a more accurate determinant and that the inflationary increase in major source countries tended to be 6-7% so the smaller API increase was not outrageous. He added that the inflationary cost was transferred across the board. He also noted that these were business decisions and not usually made based on academic literature and that business wisdom came from forums in which information was usually exchanged, between provosts, presidents, and vice-presidents finance. As for engaging in a comprehensive review of graduate student funding, he noted that the University Administration agreed that this was a good idea but that did not preclude the proposal to move forward. For the memorandum of understanding, he noted that he was not a BoG member so that he personally could not make that decision. D Smirnow reiterated the first part of her question regarding the decline in quality of applicants. S Dew responded that the issue they were examining was demand and that there was a quality implication that was inferred at this point but the University Administration were assuming that our pocket of applicants was relatively uniform.

H Samuel stated that in general, international graduate students like the idea of the U of A being higher quality but that they were apprehensive about tuition being used as the sole marketing metric and that University's ranking included tuition and many other metrics. H Samuel noted that he hoped that the University Administration had a good perspective on how their ranking could affect students' choices. S Dew clarified that generally ranking did not include tuition.

F Elian asked if this strategy would affect supervisors' positions on selecting international students rather than domestic students. He added that the 3.02% increase was fair considering that international students had not paid taxes but increases seemed to happen often and that it was harder for international students to obtain loans and funding. S Dew stated that at first glance they did not expect this to have an impact on supervisors. F Elian asked if supervisors were surveyed. S Dew responded that they held roundtable discussions with faculty at several different Council meetings. They also discussed it with FGSR and other institutions. F Elian added that, in reference to the 3.02% increase, his tuition had already increased since he started and he asked if there was a purpose for these continual increases on international students. S Dew explained that there were year over year increases in tuition for international students, typically of 2-3%. He added that he would not deny that this was an incremental cost that could constrain a tight budget but these increases covered the inflationary costs inherent in delivering a program. He further noted that the University could cover their costs or decrease the quality of experience and that the University Administration decided not to wither their programs but to protect them via inflationary increases.

N Noel asked if the same decline in the number of applications from domestic students could be observed. S Dew responded that the domestic application rates were fairly flat to slightly declining and the fluctuations were noticeable in international applications.

R Reklow asked if the 'sticker price' could be used to cut services or other sources of funding. S Dew noted that the University was not looking to eliminate funding to graduate students as it would decrease productivity, in turn decreasing the impact of the University and then undermining the reputation of the University.

N Prather noted that the GSA survey results showed that thesis-based students were more concerned with the affordability of their degree and asked, that if the University objective was to receive more PhD applications, whether this part of the survey was of concern. S Dew replied that the University did not wish to shift the distribution of applicants at this point. He also noted that the blue curve represented the number of applications at the PhD level and that it was declining, which was, not desirable. He added that applications for Thesis-Based Masters were declining a little bit and that applications for course-based Masters were flat.

K Joseph asked if there was mechanism that would isolate the effects of the 'sticker price' proposal to provide specific insight. S Dew noted that the University could not predict future events that could influence that trend. He added that if the University Administration observed an overall positive trend in applications Administration would be less concerned with the who of that increase but would be if the measure failed to increase applications. K Lafreniere offered that the Department of Marketing in the School of Business could do an experiment for the Board of Governors. S Dew noted that Board of Governors had members from the School of Business.

A Cappello noted that one of the immediate effects that she could envision with the 'sticker price' proposal would be that it would shift the applications received to higher level socio economic country as students from lower socio-economic would not consider the University since it would be too expensive. A Cappello added that this proposal could disadvantage very bright students and asked if the University had any concerns about this. S Dew noted that was a worthwhile concern but that data did not show this. He added that most research regarding this topic was done at the undergraduate level. He summarized the three different conclusions of this research: higher tuition would turn off debt adverse socio-economic group, mostly Aboriginal students and that is a concern to us but this effect has been offset with targeted student aid; one showed that applications from both ends of the spectrum increase and the middle decreases; the last study was not grounded in Canadian data and these effects were not seen in Canada but it showed that prospective students from lower economic background were turned off and it probably could be explained by the level of education of their parents. He added that it was a valid question and that it was hard to predict what would happen but he hoped that the level of sophistication of prospective graduate students would prevent the University from a certain degradation. A Cappello followed up by asking who was the University really targeting by this proposal noting that the word sophisticated had been used multiple times. S Dew replied that the University's objective was to make the short list of institutions that would be considered valuable to look at more closely. A Cappello asked if it would be possible to determine if following the introduction of the 'sticker price' there might be a decrease in applications from students coming from developing countries. S. Dew responded that they do not track those socio-economic factors. P Verma noted that one approach would be to develop more collaboration with institutions internationally.

R Stoddart-Morrison expressed that we must think about the human side of these issues and we must not equate quality with one's ability to pay. She noted that if the University only admitted those with the ability to pay a certain amount we would lose out on quality graduate students. She urged University Administration to be mindful of this.

D Parent asked the presenters' thoughts on how this would affect access for international Indigenous students, particularly as the U of A has the only Native Studies Faculty in North America and had become a magnet for Indigenous scholarship. S Dew was unsure if there would be a different impact for international Indigenous scholars but he expressed that this was something that University Administration would monitor and respond to.

C Reynolds asked if the presenters could provide information about differences in numbers of applications for different faculties. He noted that, in the School of Public Health, a decrease in applications was noticed one year simply due to a new digital application process that did not function well. S Dew stated that he had that data but not to-hand nor memorized. He added that he would need to verify but recalled that it was fairly even across the board. C Reynolds requested that that data be shared.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 pm.

GSA President
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting

To: GSA Council
 From: Sarah Ficko
 Date: December 16, 2016



Happy Holidays Filled with Peace, Hope, Laughter and Love from Firouz, Sasha, Sarah, Masoud, and Ali & the Graduate Students' Association

Dear Councillor Friends and Colleagues,

I hope everyone is looking forward to the holidays, and taking time to eat, exercise, and sleep during this busy time of year. I wish everyone a peaceful break filled with friends and family and some time for fun and to relax! If you are alone (or know someone who is), there are several campus groups offering programs for students who would like to be hosted for a holiday/Christmas meal over the break. Please let us know if you'd like some assistance. As holidays can also be hard on some people's mental health and wellness, please reach out to those around you and check in with them regularly, especially if you or they are far away from home.

Sorry for the brevity of this report, but I've spent a fair amount of time addressing issues around international tuition on campus, as well as helping to review the response of our provincial lobby group, ab-GPAC, to the government's tuition and funding review.

International Student Tuition Fee Updates

Following the vote at the Board Property and Finance Committee on November 21, where the tuition proposals were passed, I have met with senior administration to discuss our concerns and issues with the proposals. Over the past few weeks we also conducted a survey to hear directly from grad students, and used the information to submit a report to the Board with several requests to consider. After the December 12 special meeting of GSA Council, the University's proposal on increases to international graduate student tuition went to the Board of Governors. My team and I continued to actively speak with Board members about the GSA's many concerns with the proposal and I also spoke strongly against them in the meetings themselves. Unfortunately, the Board voted to approve the proposals this morning and did not vote in favour of a Motion that I advanced to at least delay them until more meaningful consultation, research, and dialogue could happen. While I know this is not the news many of us hoped for, I want to thank all of you for how engaged you have been with respect to this issue. In the aftermath of this decision, the GSA will continue its efforts to improve funding for graduate students and keep a close watch of the implementation of these international tuition increases and their effects.

Provincial Tuition and Funding Review Update

With respect to the issue of graduate student tuition and funding, I have worked closely with the members of ab-GPAC over the past few weeks on our submission to government related to their review of this issue. I again want to thank all of you (we had over 1,200 students who replied from across the province!) who took the time to provide your feedback via the survey that was circulated - our work on this issue will continue into the new year with the implementation of several working groups.

Health and Dental Plan Update

Finally, and Ali also reports on this, the GSA Board recently concluded its review of the GSA Health and Dental Plan. As you will be aware from our many discussions at GSA Council, this review has been ongoing since June. The GSA Board put a lot of time and effort into seeking information about the possible implementation of a tiered plan. However, given the low number of graduate students who came forward to offer feedback, and the numerous risks in terms of cost increases associated with implementing a tiered plan, the GSA Board did not feel it had a sufficient mandate to move forward with such a comprehensive redesign of the Plan. That said, this is certainly an issue that we will continue to closely monitor and which can be revisited in the future should the risk landscape be altered or should we hear more from our constituents about this important GSA service. Please feel free to send me any questions, and if not, I look forward to discussing this with you further in January.

Other Highlights

When I started with the GSA last year, I noticed that we did not offer any formal training opportunities for elected officials to support them in their roles as advocates for graduate students (aside from the GSA Nominating Committee's Early Call for Talent and Training and the more general transition and job shadowing opportunities that exist right at the start of a new team's term). After several months of planning, we were very pleased to host Terry Daniels on December 3, a Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Business, to lead a one-day negotiation course based on his full semester MBA course. While this workshop just presented a taste of the many factors and skills required for good negotiations, we all learned a lot about ourselves and each other, and will put this new knowledge to good use on behalf of graduate students in the coming months!

For those who have not heard previously, December 6 was the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. On December 6, 1989, a man went into a university in Montreal, separated the men and women in several classrooms and hallways, and deliberately massacred the women in front of their peers. This day is now officially the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women - <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/commemoration/vaw-vff/remembrance-commemoration-en.html>. The University has not had a formal ceremony for a few years, but this year the Non-Academic Staff Association decided to put together a ceremony that pulled together representatives from all of the different associations on campus (Students' Union, GSA, Non-Academic Staff, and the Academic Staff Association), as well as an Indigenous woman who spoke about missing and murdered indigenous women, and representatives from University administration and departments such as Women's and Gender Studies. The ceremony started with 14 women dressed in black who walked across campus carrying a rose, wearing a placard with the name, age, and program of one of the murdered women, and with an assistant who rang a bell every few feet. I was honoured to take part in the day of action and to speak up on this important topic, as gender-based violence continues to be an issue in Canada and around the world.

Happy holidays, and I look forward to seeing everyone again in 2017!

Warmest regards,

Sarah, GSA President

2.2

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between November 22, 2016 and December 19, 2016. The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

November 23	Student Leaders' Meeting with the Government of Alberta
November 23	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Council
November 24	Meeting with the Deputy Provost
November 24	Meeting Regarding Graduate Students
November 24	Meeting with Graduate Students
November 25	Board University Relations Committee (BURC)
November 25	Board Learning and Discovery Committee (BLDC)
November 25	Meeting with the Dean of Students
November 28	Phone Meeting with Advanced Education
November 29	Meeting with the Vice-President (Finance and Administration)
November 29	Student Experience Policy Discussion
November 29	Resident Life Task Force Meeting
November 29	Meeting with K Foster and C Yamagishi, Studentcare
November 30	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Dean Selection Committee
November 30	Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) Board of Directors Meeting
December 1	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Dean Selection Committee Town Hall
December 3	Negotiation Course
December 5	Conflict Resolution Workshop
December 5	General Faculties Council Executive Committee (GFC EXEC)
December 6	Meeting with Alumni Relations
December 6	National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women
December 7	Meeting with Finance Minister, Joe Ceci, and Minister of Advanced Education, Marlin Schmidt
December 9	Meeting with the Campus Food Bank Board Chair
December 10	Lunch with the Board of Governors Chair M Phair
December 12	Early Call External Advocacy
December 13	GSA Budget and Finance Committee (GSA BFC)
December 13	Meeting with the Graduate Ombudsperson
December 13	Special Board Finance and Property Meeting (BFPC)
December 14	Mandatory Non-Instructional Fee (MNIF) Oversight Committee
December 14	Meeting with President David Turpin
December 14	President's Holiday Party
December 15	Meeting with Chancellor D Stollery
December 15	Meeting with Alumni Association President
December 15	Board of Governors Holiday Dinner
December 16	Board of Governors Meeting

GSA Board (GSAB)
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting

To: GSA Council
 From: Courtney Thomas, Executive Director and Coordinator of the GSA Board; Heather Hogg, Director of Operations; and Julie Tanguay, Associate Director
 Date: December 16, 2016

The GSA Board (GSAB) reports regularly to GSA 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. Open session Minutes are available upon request. The President, Vice-Presidents, Director of Operations, Director of Services and Governance, and I will be happy to answer any questions or provide more information at the GSA Council meeting. Also see the weekly Management Reports to the GSAB in Item 20 (Executive Director's Report to GSA Council) on pages 12.1-12.4.

23 November 2016 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

GSA Health and Dental Plan; International Graduate Student Tuition 2017-2018

Motions and Agreements:

No Motions at this time.

30 November 2016 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

GSA Health and Dental Plan; International Graduate Student Tuition 2017-2018

Motions and Agreements:

No Motions at this time.

7 December 2016 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

International Graduate Student Tuition 2017-2018; GSA Winter Term Event; GSA Board Strategic Work Plan Update to GSA Council

Motions and Agreements:

Members **AGREED** to approve the Agenda of November 30, 2016, which had been previously distributed, after adding discussion items concerning a recent FGSR Survey and a proposed Unwind Your Mind Grant. SF **MOVED**. SvK Seconded. **CARRIED**.

14 December 2016 GSA Board Meeting

Main Agenda Items:

Campus Food Bank: Third and Fourth Quarterly Support Payments from the GSA; GSA Winter Term Events (February Engagement Event and Possible Unwind Your Mind Event in April); GSA Board Strategic Work Plan Updates; International Graduate Student Tuition

Motions and Agreements:

Members **AGREED** to approve the Agenda of November 30, 2016, which had been previously distributed, after adding discussion items about international student tuition. SF **MOVED**. SvK Seconded. **CARRIED**.

That the GSA Board **GRANT** the third and fourth quarterly payments (a total amount of \$4,500) to the Campus Food Bank. SF **MOVED**. AT Seconded. **CARRIED**.

**GSA Budget and Finance Committee (GSA BFC)
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Sarah Ficko
Date: December 16, 2016

Dear Council Colleagues,

On December 13, the GSA Budget and Finance Committee (GSA BFC) met to discuss the 2017-2018 GSA operating budget and engaged in a high level discussion of the anticipated features of the budget. The GSA BFC will meet again in January to review the budget, in advance of making a recommendation to GSA Council. The proposed budget will then be presented to GSA Council in February.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,
Sarah Ficko, GSA President and Chair of the GSA Budget and Finance Committee

**GSA Nominating Committee (GSA NoC)
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Radim Barta
Date: December 16, 2016

Dear Council Colleagues,

The report from the GSA Nominating Committee (GSA NoC) this month is a summary of discussions/decisions the GSA NoC has made since its last report, together with a list of all vacancies filled and those which will be filled shortly.

GSA Policy governing the GSA NoC is located in Section E: Nominating. As provided for in its Terms of Reference, the GSA NoC has been conducting business via e-mail.

Sincerely,

Radim Barta, Chair of the GSA Nominating Committee

GSA Standing Committees

1) GSA Nominating Committee (GSA NoC)

Following the approval of the changes to the GSA NoC, GSA NoC members voted to elect a Chair and a Vice-Chair. **Radim Barta (Oncology)** and **Antonio Bruni (Surgery)** were elected to serve in the position of GSA NoC Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively.

Bodies External to the GSA

GSA Council has delegated to the GSA NoC the responsibility of filling positions on all committees external to the GSA. Normally, all vacancies are advertised. According to GSA Policy, "advertising may be waived in instances where, in the GSA NoC's view, it is urgent to fill a vacancy" (Section E: Nominating, GSA Policy, Nominating, Section E.POL.5.2).

1) Teaching and Learning Fund (TLEF) Selection Committee (1 Graduate Student)

This position was advertised in the GSA Newsletter on November 25, 2016. The deadline for nominations was December 2, 2016. Two (2) nominations were received. **Kriti Khare (Educational Psychology)** was elected to serve on the TLEF Selection Committee.

2) Student Group Services (SGS) Granting Committee (2 Graduate Students)

This position was advertised in the GSA Newsletter on November 25 and December 2, 2016. The deadline for nominations was December 9, 2016. Three (3) nominations were received. **Dominika Juhaszova (Civil and Environmental Engineering)** and **Olivia Wall (Educational Psychology)** were elected to serve on the SGS Granting Committee.

3) Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Council (1 Alternate)

This position was advertised in the GSA Newsletter on December 2, 2016 and again on December 9, 2016. The deadline for nominations was December 12, 2016 at 12:00 PM (noon). No nominations were received. This vacancy will be advertised again in January 2017.

Current Vacancies

As noted in November, there are currently a number of remaining vacancies on the GSA ERC, GSA ASC, and GSA ACB. In addition, changes to the GSA NoC composition approved by GSA Council in November created two new voting positions for graduate students on the GSA NoC. All these vacancies will be advertised in January 2017.

GSA Vice-President Academic
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting

To: GSA Council
From: Firouz Khodayari
Date: December 16, 2016

Dear Council Colleagues,

I wish you all a wonderful holiday full of joy and relaxing moments. I hope everybody gets the chance to recover and come back with full energy for the next semester. I have attended several meetings since my last report but will focus here on one major issue, which Sarah also reports to you on.

International Tuition Increase

As you already know, we have been busy, for the last two months, with research, discussions, meetings, and designing a feedback survey about the University's proposal for increases to international tuition. While the University claims an equation between cost and quality, we have argued that international graduate students consider different criteria in choosing their study destination. This is based on research we have done and the feedback we received directly from graduate students and it contradicts the marketing logic of the University. We also used the results of the survey to give feedback from graduate students to the Administration and many of you will have seen the report that we submitted to the Board of Governors. Many of you attended the special GSA Council meeting and could see that their logic is not questionable and many times they contradicted themselves when trying to answer students' questions and concerns. The GSA remains concerned that appropriate consultation has not taken place with this proposal. The proposal went to the Board of Governors for final approval today and Sarah reports more on this (we were all hopeful it would not pass).

I am happy to answer any questions or comments that you might have regarding this report. Also I would be more than happy if you would like to share your suggestions or concerns of any academic related issue of the University.

Thanks,

Firouz Khodayari, GSA Vice-President Academic

4.1

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between November 22, 2016 and December 19, 2016. The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

November 22	Undergraduate Research Initiative (USRI) Committee
November 24	GSA Coffee Break
November 24	Co-Curricular Record Committee
November 25	University Research Policy Committee (URPC)
December 1	General Faculties Council Committee on the Learning Environment (GFC CLE)
December 2	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Open House
December 2	GSA Coffee Break
December 3	Negotiation Workshop
December 5	Conflict Resolution Workshop
December 13	Mandatory Non-Instructional Fee (MNIF) Working Group
December 14	Mandatory Non-Instructional Fee (MNIF) Oversight Committee
December 15	Board of Governors Holiday Dinner

**GSA Vice-President External
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Masoud Khademi
Date: December 16, 2016

Dear Council Colleagues,

Hope you are doing well and enjoying these cold and snowy days. As we are in final exam season, I just wanted to thank you all for your hard work throughout the semester, especially these past few exam days. I wish you all the luck (for those of you who still have a couple more exams to go, or those waiting for their test results).

In the past month, I have attended several meetings. One of these meetings was about student group representation. The Students' Union (SU) has come up with a proposal regarding rethinking student group governance, in terms of recognition and discipline process. The SU team discussed their ideas and concerns with the Dean of Students and the GSA. The meeting was very informative with respect to the current situation for the student group registration and discipline procedures. It is worth mentioning that the Dean of Students is currently working on updating the current student group procedure and it is hoped that this will address most of the concerns raised by the SU.

I also attended the Council of Residence Associations (CORA) and the Residence Advisory Council (RAC) meetings. In the former meeting, representatives from all student residences along with representatives from both the SU and the GSA discussed the ongoing issues within residences. The main issue discussed at CORA was related to recent updates on the residence associations' fees and collection mechanisms. The same issue was brought up at the RAC meeting and it was decided that a meeting between the SU, the GSA, and Residence Services should be set in the near future not only to clarify the current situation but also to come up with more robust mechanisms for fee assessment and fee collection.

Another meeting I attended was the Resident Life Task Force (RLTF), the most important update on that meeting is that the Task Force hired Academica Group as the research company to run a survey on residence experiences within the U of A. The survey started on December 5. Results and analysis will be presented to the Task Force in mid-January.

Last month was a pretty busy month for the ab-GPAC; we dealt with some internal governance issues and finalized a couple of submissions to the government. Probably the two top updates would be the job posting for a part-time Executive Director and, as reported by Sarah, ab-GPAC's submission to the provincial government related to their tuition and funding review.

In the Edmonton Student Alliance meeting, we discussed our strategy for our January meeting with City Councillor, Andrew Knack. We also planned an all-executive networking event for the current and incoming executive teams of the post-secondary students' associations within the city.

On December 8, Sarah and I had a meeting with Sean Price and Mary Pat Barry about current and future collaboration between the GSA and the Alumni Association. The meeting was good in terms of the areas of interest on both sides, for example the Alumni Association showed interest in taking an active role in helping with student homelessness.

5.1

The last meeting I attended in December was the Council on Student Affairs (COSA). In that meeting, the future of COSA and its effectiveness as an advisory council was discussed. Considering the ongoing review of General Faculties Council (GFC) subcommittees, it was proposed that it might a good time to reconsider the role of COSA in relation to GFC.

Finally, as always, if you need more information or have any questions regarding the meetings I attended this past month, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Masoud Khademi, GSA Vice-President External

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between November 22, 2016 and December 19, 2016. The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

November 22	Student Groups Presentation
November 24	GSA Coffee Break
November 24	Council of Residence Association (CORA) Meeting
November 28	Residence Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting
November 29	Resident Life Task Force (RLTF) Meeting
November 30	Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) Board of Directors Meeting
December 1	Edmonton Student Alliance (ESA) Meeting
December 3	Negotiation Course
December 6	Meeting with Alumni Relations
December 7	Council on Student Affairs (COSA) Meeting
December 8	Meeting with a University Senator
December 8	Alumni Christmas Social
December 12	Early Call External Advocacy

GSA Vice-President Labour
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting

To: GSA Council
From: Sasha van der Klein
Date: December 16, 2016

Dear Council Colleagues,

Happy holidays! Or, for quite some grad students, happy ‘the-University-is-closed-but-you-still-have-to-be-in-the-lab-like-any-other-week’ days! However, I can assure you, it will be worth it. Last year that is exactly what happened to me, and the results were that 1) I got a decent paper out of the data of my Christmas/New Years’ work and 2) it is extra special that I can be with my family this year!

This month we have finally been able to resolve an ongoing **discrimination and harassment** case against students. The outcome was good, but there are still many issues in the department that need to be tackled. Unfortunately, these systematic problems cannot be fixed overnight. I am also working on several cases to do with **compliance with the Collective Agreement**. In many of these, the issue arises from the fact that graduate students are entitled to receive a 5% salary increase in the year following an assistantship appointment (ie, after they have done one appointment and have now secured a second (or third, fourth, etc)) provided there was satisfactory performance is not always completely or correctly understood by departments.

Also, and a little bit out of scope of my role as VP Labour, I helped a Dutch speaking visiting grad student from Belgium with supervisory issues. There had been communication issues with the home faculty across the ocean, and it came in handy that I speak Dutch, so I could assist and support her during a Skype meeting with her supervisor and follow up to resolve the issues. This made clear to me, again, that discussing your problems with someone that speaks your first language can be essential to feel supported and understood.

Regarding the **Mental Health Portfolio**, we have been thinking within the GSA Board about new ideas to apply for the “Unwind Your Mind” grant in a different way next year. I have also been attending two full-day courses that support my work in helping graduate students. The first one, as Sarah reports, was a **negotiation course**, and although the focus of the course was more towards price negotiations, it was really valuable to get some understanding of the background of negotiating. It was good practice, as often I have to negotiate for students. The second course was more directly related to **resolving conflicts between students and supervisors**, organized by FGSR and the Office of the Student Ombuds. During this course the concept of restorative practices was explained (a kind of combination between mediation, where parties are meant to be equal) and restorative justice (where one party is the harmed party). Obviously, often in student-supervisory conflicts, parties are not equal due to the clear power imbalance, and sometimes, there are cases in which both parties are harmed, so a combination of the two might be a fruitful idea for the future. It is great to see that FGSR is recognizing the need for better conflict resolution, and is setting up courses like this. I also met with the Students’ Union and other stakeholders to set up an Anti-Harassment Campaign in the fitness and sports facilities on our campuses. Robyn Paches (SU VP Operations and Finance) started this initiative. As a frequent user of these facilities and as a grad student, I’m eager to see this initiative move forward.

We hosted the final GSA Coffee Break for the term in December and I had a great time decorating gingerbread cookies with the graduate students who attended! We will continue to host coffee breaks in Triffo Hall in the new year and I encourage all of you to watch the GSA newsletter for details and to attend.

6.1

That was December, hope you will enjoy a bit of time off in the upcoming weeks! Let me know if you have questions, and feel free to contact me any time.

Thanks,
Sasha van der Klein, GSA Vice-President Labour

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between November 22, 2016 and December 19, 2016. The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

November 22	Meeting about the Student Rights Document
November 22	Meeting with a Graduate Student
November 23	Sexual Assault Education and Outreach Working Group
November 23	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Council
November 24	General Faculties Council Campus Law Review Committee (GFC CLRC)
November 24	Meeting Regarding Graduate Students
November 24	Meeting with Graduate Students
December 1	Meeting with a Graduate Student
December 2	GSA Coffee Break
December 2	Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Open House
December 3	Negotiation Course
December 5	Conflict Resolution Workshop
December 7	Meeting with a Graduate Student
December 8	Meeting Regarding Graduate Students
December 8	Alumni Christmas Social
December 13	GSA Budget and Finance Committee (GSA BFC)
December 15	GSA Coffee Break

**GSA Vice-President Student Services
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Ali Talaei
Date: December 16, 2016

Dear Council Colleagues,

Happy holidays!!!! Thankfully exam time is over and there are some opportunities for us grad students to have some relaxing time with friends and family. Also, it is great that finally we have some snow on the ground so we can celebrate Christmas in its real sense. Below is the summary of what I have been involved in my VPSS capacity:

In contrast to the shocking news regarding the proposal to increase international graduate students' tuition (which all the DEOs, student volunteers, and the GSA office were heavily involved with), there is some good news on the services side.

After a long negotiation, the advocacy of the GSA, other student groups, and the University Administration, and the kind collaboration of the Edmonton Transit System, on November 24 there was an official announcement for the expansion of the U-Pass program to Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, and Spruce Grove. That is great news as the students will be able to use unlimitedly the transit services in the above jurisdictions without extra costs. The changes will take effect on January 1, 2017. The negotiation for the 2017-2021 agreement has not concluded and we have reviewed the final draft agreement (I have reported on the details (including a very modest cost increase) to GSA Council in past meetings). The next step is to hold a referendum, which will occur when the GSA General Election happens in early 2017. You will hear more about this at the January meeting. On the same topic, please do not forget to pick up your Upass as they are available in different locations on campus now.

I had several meetings with the Campus Food Bank (CFB) representatives and Board members. Unfortunately, the number of individuals and families using the CFB services has increased dramatically in recent months. Fortunately, the organization has been able to serve the University community fully. The new Chair is now appointed and the organization is on the right track to expand their services, raise funds and also celebrate their 25th anniversary. As it is the giving season, please do consider the CFB if you are planning to make any charitable donations this season.

I have also joined the U of A United Way Steering Committee. Chancellor Douglas R. Stollery and other committee members have united views on the importance of the campaign for the University community and the role that students could play in the campaign. Greater student involvement is being discussed extensively and we are working on developing a short- to long-term strategy for increasing involvement. As reported by Sarah, there has also been some progress on the GSA Health and Dental Plan review for which, I will report further at the January GSA Council when we will be able to discuss with you in person.

Sincerely,

Ali Talaei, Vice-President Student Services

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between November 22 and December 19, 2016. The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

November 24	U-Pass Announcement Event
November 25	Meeting with the Dean of Students
November 29	Meeting with K Foster and C Yamagishi, Studentcare
December 2	GSA Coffee Break
December 3	Negotiation Course
December 8	U-Pass Advisory Group Meeting
December 9	Meeting with the Chair of the Campus Food Bank
December 9	Meeting with S Flower, Graduate Students Assistance Program
December 12	United Way Documents Discussion with the SU
December 13	United Way Committee Meeting
December 14	Mandatory Non-Instructional Fee (MNIF) Oversight Committee Meeting
December 14	General Faculties Council Academic Planning Committee (GFC APC)
December 14	Campus Food Bank Board Meeting
December 15	U-Pass Administration Committee Meeting

**GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (GSA ERC)
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Leigh Spanner
Date: December 16, 2016

Dear Council Colleagues,

On December 9, the GSA ERC met to discuss the GSA General Elections and the U-Pass Referendum. Members discussed timelines, the agenda for the 2017 All-Candidate's meeting and the Meeting of the Campaign Representatives, the nomination and 'Yes' or 'No' campaign registration forms, and the GSA General Election Forum.

The GSA ERC will meet next on January 5 to continue discussion of these and other matters.

Sincerely,
Leigh Spanner, Chair of the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee

GSA Executive Director
Report to GSA Council for the Cancelled December 19, 2016 Meeting

To: GSA Council
From: Courtney Thomas
Date: December 16, 2016

Dear GSA Council Members,

The GSA office has been engaged with several issues since my last report to you and the major ones are highlighted below:

Opening of the Nomination Period for GSA Recognition Awards – the nomination period opened on December 1 and will close on January 13. Please consider nominating yourself or a colleague for an award, and encourage graduate students in your departments to do the same. Information is available on the GSA website.

2017-2018 GSA Budget – as noted in the report to GSA Council from the GSA Budget and Finance Committee (GSA BFC), the financial team, with input from the GSA BFC, is currently working on the draft 2017-2018 GSA budget and associated three-year budget projections.

Service Agreement with IST – as reported earlier to GSA Council, following on our recent IT upgrades, we have been exploring the creation of a service agreement with IST that would provide on-site support for our IT. We have had a few meetings with representatives from IST and I am happy to report that the agreement will soon be in place.

2017 GSA General Election and U-Pass Referendum – we have been offering support to the Chief Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officer, and GSA Elections and Referenda Committee as they prepare for the 2017 GSA General Election and the upcoming referendum related to the renegotiated U-Pass agreement (on which the Vice-President Student Services can offer additional information); this work will continue into January and February.

Early Call for Talent and Training – as reported earlier, 21 interested graduate students participated in the initial get-to-know dinner that kicked off this year's Early Call. Since then, the office team has supported the Directly-Elected Officers as they host a series of information sessions, including Governance/GSA 101; Services 101; External Advocacy; GSA Board Strategic Work Plan/Hot Topics; and Elections and Procedural Fairness.

Support for the Work of the GSA Board on the GSA Health and Dental Plan and Proposed Increases to International Graduate Student Tuition – as GSA Council members are aware, the GSA Board has been busy with the aforementioned strategic matters over the past month (and stretching back to the summer with respect to the GSA Health and Dental Plan). The office team has supported this work by collecting relevant data, drafting briefing documents, and supporting the work of the Directly-Elected Officers to hear directly from graduate students on these important issues.

As always, the detailed weekly reports to the GSA Board are attached and I am happy to answer any questions.

Courtney Thomas
GSA Executive Director

Management Report to the GSA Board, November 23, 2016

The following issues have dominated management's attention in the week since the last GSA Board meeting on November 16, 2016:

Strategic

- **Main Issues Dealt With in the Past Two Weeks:** Election in the Faculty of Native Studies for a second representative on the decanal selection committee; discussions and research surrounding tuition for international graduate students (working on a survey/petition for possible inclusion in the GSA Newsletter); Early Call 101 sessions; budget building for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and forecasting for three years; Budget 101 session; preparing for the GSA Council meeting on November 21 and doing associated post-meeting action; ongoing delivery of the Unwind Your Mind GSA Coffee Breaks (getting additional coffee for the remaining events); review of the draft PaMS space booking policy; planning for the next PD event in February and for GSA Awards Night in March; planning for the GSA General Election and U-Pass referendum; developing a timeline for the opening and adjudication of GSA Recognition Awards; troubleshooting issues with grants processing related to Peoplesoft (working with HRS).
- **Bylaw and Policy Review:** Review of Board Policies on succession for the Chair of the GSA Board and for President (amendments pending); ongoing review of several other GSA Bylaws and Policies (Officer Portfolios, etc).
- **Graduate Student Groups:** Ongoing strategizing related to student groups and residence associations (including observing SU presentations to the Dean of Students on practices at other Canadian universities); relationship building with Student Group Services; discussions concerning SU initiatives on student groups; follow up on the GSA Council remuneration process.

Grants and Operations

- Transfer of content to **Sitecore 3** (will carry forward to January due to office workloads) and preparing to meet with IST to discuss a service agreement with them after receipt of a cost estimate.
- Troubleshooting some issues with Peoplesoft (which we use to process ATAs and CCGs).
- Facebook = 904 likes (up 3 from November 16); Facebook posts reached 1424 users this week and our "post engagement" count was 170. Twitter = 686 followers (up 3 from November 16); our tweets earned 422 "impressions" over the last week.

	Total Amount Available This Period	Total Amount Remaining This Period (Post-Processing)	Number of New Applications Since Last GSAB	Total Number of Applications This Period
ATAs	\$91,636.14	\$39,678.59	3	107 (35 pending processing)
CCGs	\$94,989.85	\$25,989.85 CLOSED	0	47 (2 pending processing)
ASGAs	\$3,562.50	\$2,090.19	0	1 (0 pending processing)
EBs	\$100,625 (no periods)	\$87,504.00 (no periods)	0	8 (0 pending processing) (no periods)

Week in Review – Office Operations:

- Supporting the **work of the GSA Nominating Committee** (Early Call for Talent sessions, election in the Faculty of Native Studies for a second representative on the decanal selection committee and filling vacancies on the GSA Appeals and Complaints Board and other GSA standing committees).
- Delivery of the **Unwind Your Mind GSA Coffee Breaks** and planning for the **Winter Orientation** and **GSA/Alumni Winter PD Mixer**.
- Notifications to applicants for the **Alberta Graduate Citizenship Award** (names forwarded to the Government of Alberta) and preparations for December 1 opening of the nomination period for GSA Recognition Awards.
- Troubleshooting issues associated with processing GSA grants and awards in Peoplesoft. **Grants processing.**

Management Report to the GSA Board, November 30, 2016

The following issues have dominated management’s attention in the week since the last GSA Board meeting on November 23, 2016:

Strategic

- **Main Issues Dealt With in the Past Two Weeks:** Discussions surrounding tuition for international graduate students; Early Call 101 sessions; budget building for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and forecasting for three years (preparing for an upcoming meeting of the GSA Budget and Finance Committee); HR work; meeting with SU senior staff to share information; ongoing delivery of the Unwind Your Mind GSA Coffee Breaks (getting additional coffee for the remaining events); planning for the next PD event in February and for GSA Awards Night in March; planning for the GSA General Election and U-Pass referendum (developing a timelines and scheduling meetings of the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee; developing a timeline for the opening and adjudication of GSA Recognition Awards; working on a graduate student issue with the Office of the Provost.
- **Bylaw and Policy Review:** Review of Board Policies on succession for the Chair of the GSA Board and for President (amendments pending); ongoing review of several other GSA Bylaws and Policies (Officer Portfolios, Standing Committees, etc).
- **Graduate Student Groups:** Ongoing strategizing related to student groups and residence associations; relationship building and maintenance with Student Group Services; discussions concerning SU initiatives on student group.

Grants and Operations

- Transfer of content to **Sitecore 3** (will carry forward to January due to office workloads) and finalizing a service agreement with IST to begin in 2017.
- Troubleshooting some issues with Peoplesoft (which we use to process ATAs and CCGs – have worked with HRS to find a solution) and staff cross-training on grants processes.
- Facebook = 911 likes (up 7 from November 23); Facebook posts reached 1105 users this week and our “post engagement” count was 89. Twitter = 689 followers (up 3 from November 23); our tweets earned 1800 “impressions” over the last week.
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	Total Amount Available This Period	Total Amount Remaining This Period (Post-Processing)	Number of New Applications Since Last GSAB	Total Number of Applications This Period
ATAs	\$91,636.14	\$34,980.82	10	117 (10 pending processing)
CCGs	\$136,202.50	\$24,202.5	32	79 (32 pending processing)
ASGAs	\$3,562.50	\$1,840.19	1	2 (1 pending processing)
EBs	\$70,625 (no periods)	\$57,504.00	0	8 (0 pending processing)

Week in Review – Office Operations:

- Supporting the **work of the GSA Nominating Committee** (Early Call for Talent sessions, filling vacancies on the GSA Appeals and Complaints Board and other GSA standing committees and the SGS Granting Committee and the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund).
- Delivery of the **Unwind Your Mind GSA Coffee Breaks** and planning **Winter Orientation** and the **GSA/Alumni Winter PD Mixer**.
- Preparations for the December 1 opening of the nomination period for **GSA Recognition Awards**.
- Staff cross-training on **processing GSA grants and awards** in Peoplesoft.

Management Report to the GSA Board, December 7, 2016

The following issues have dominated management's attention in the week since the last GSA Board meeting on November 30, 2016:

Strategic

- **Main Issues Dealt With in the Past Two Weeks:** Tuition for international graduate students (designing and circulating a request for feedback to graduate students, collecting/monitoring results, etc); budget building for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and forecasting for the next three years (preparing for a December 13 meeting of the GSA Budget and Finance Committee); HR work; planning for the final Unwind Your Mind GSA Coffee Break of the term and discussing a 2017 application to host a wellness event; planning for the next PD/engagement event in February and for GSA Awards Night in March; planning for the GSA General Election and U-Pass referendum (developing timelines, working on a draft question, reviewing the U-Pass agreement, and scheduling meetings of the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee); opening of the nomination period for GSA Recognition Awards; working on a graduate student issue with the Office of the Provost.
- **Bylaw and Policy Review:** Review of Board Policies on succession for the Chair of the GSA Board and for President (amendments pending); ongoing review of several other GSA Bylaws and Policies (Officer Portfolios, Standing Committees, etc).
- **Graduate Student Groups:** Ongoing strategizing related to student groups and residence associations following discussions by the GSA Board; relationship building and maintenance with Student Group Services; discussions concerning SU initiatives on student group.

Grants and Operations

- Transfer of content to **Sitecore 3** (will carry forward to January due to office workloads) and finalizing a service agreement with IST to begin in 2017.
- Meeting with our insurance broker to explore acquiring additional forms of insurance related to employment matters
- Facebook = 911 likes (up 0 from November 30); Facebook posts reached 632 users this week and our "post engagement" count was 68. Twitter = 662 followers (up 3 from November 30); our tweets earned 2,724 "impressions" over the last week.

	Total Amount Available This Period	Total Amount Remaining This Period (Post-Processing)	Number of New Applications Since Last GSAB	Total Number of Applications This Period
ATAs	\$91,636.14	\$30,480.82	9	126 (10 pending processing)
CCGs	\$136,202.50	\$ -1,797.50* CLOSED	18	50 (26 pending processing)
ASGAs	\$3,562.50	\$1,840.19	0	2 (1 pending processing)
EBs	\$70,625 (no periods)	\$54,543.00	1	9 (0 pending processing)

*Child Care Grant Contingency will be used to fully fund all applications received prior to closing; \$10,652.50 will remain in CCG Contingency.

Week in Review – Office Operations:

- Supporting the **work of the GSA Nominating Committee** (Early Call for Talent sessions; filling a vacancy on the FGSR Council).
- Planning for the final **Unwind Your Mind GSA Coffee Break** and for **Winter Orientation** and the **GSA/Alumni Winter PD Mixer**.
- Opening of the nomination period for **GSA Recognition Awards**.
- Assisting with the **development of a database to track graduate student issues** worked on by the GSA.

Management Report to the GSA Board, December 14, 2016

The following issues have dominated management’s attention in the week since the last GSA Board meeting on December 7, 2016:

Strategic

- **Main Issues Dealt With in the Past Two Weeks:** Meeting with Student Financial Services to discuss the administration of GSA Emergency Bursaries; last Early Call sessions; communications discussions pursuant to the Board’s SWP; tuition for international graduate students (planning for the special meeting of GSA Council); providing feedback on the ab-GPAC submission to government for the tuition and funding review; budget building for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and forecasting for the next three years (the GSA Budget and Finance Committee met on December 13 and will meet again in January); GSA Elections and Referenda Committee and preparing for the 2017 General Election and U-Pass referendum; planning for the final Unwind Your Mind GSA Coffee Break of the term and discussing a 2017 application to host a wellness event (awaiting further feedback from the GSA Board); planning for an engagement event in February and for GSA Awards Night in March; receipt of applications for GSA Recognition Awards and planning a review of related Board Policy.
- **Bylaw and Policy Review:** Review of Board Policies on succession for the Chair of the GSA Board and for President (amendments pending); ongoing review of several other GSA Bylaws and Policies (Officer Portfolios, GSA Standing Committees, etc).
- **Graduate Student Groups:** Ongoing strategizing related to student groups and residence associations following discussions by the GSA Board; relationship building and maintenance with Student Group Services; discussions concerning SU initiatives on student group.

Grants and Operations

- Transfer of content to **Sitecore 3** (will carry forward to January due to office workloads) and meeting with IST to finalize a service agreement to begin in 2017.
- Meeting with our insurance broker to explore acquiring additional forms of insurance related to employment matters – in his estimation we are fully covered and do not need to purchase additional coverage at this juncture.
- Facebook = 911 likes (up 0 from December 7); Facebook posts reached 573 users this week and our “post engagement” count was 121. Twitter = 698 followers (up 76 from December 7); our tweets earned 4,103 “impressions” over the last week.

	Total Amount Available This Period	Total Amount Remaining This Period (Post-Processing)	Number of New Applications Since Last GSAB	Total Number of Applications This Period
ATAs	\$91,636.14	\$28,980.82	4	130 (4 pending processing)
CCGs	\$136,202.50	\$0 CLOSED	0	50 (1 pending processing)
ASGAs	\$3,562.50	\$1,840.19	0	2 (0 pending processing)
EBs	\$70,625 (no periods)	\$54,543.00	0	9 (0 pending processing)

Week in Review – Office Operations:

- Supporting the **work of the GSA Nominating Committee** (Early Call for Talent sessions; filling several vacancies).
- Support for the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee’s planning for the 2017 General Election (planning the All-Candidates’ Meeting, forum, etc).
- Planning for the final **Unwind Your Mind GSA Coffee Break** and for **Winter Orientation** and the **GSA winter engagement event**; opening of the nomination period for **GSA Recognition Awards**.
- Assisting with the **development of a database to track graduate student issues** worked on by the GSA.