



THE U OF A GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

GSA Bargaining Begins

The GSA Negotiating Team met with the University of Alberta team to exchange its non-monetary bargaining package on the 6th of January. This initial exchange was the culmination of several months of hard work by the GSA's Negotiating Team and Labour Relations Committee (LRC).

The GSA began preparing for bargaining in fall of 2021 when it solicited input from the members through outreach, town halls, and a web survey. The Negotiating Team truly appreciates the level of engagement from the membership during the consultation process, particularly given how busy we know all of you are.

The GSA Team, consisting of Jessica Grenke, Josephine Bolaji, and Dayton Chen (supported by GSA Associate Director Erika Heiberg, PSAC Representatives Mathew Ashworth and Rachel Stark, PSAC Researcher Silja Freitag, and PSAC Negotiator John Eustace), held several caucus meetings with members of the LRC to review member input, to audit the collective agreement, and to develop a bargaining mandate and a package of bargaining demands. The mandate was then put to a vote by the membership, where it received overwhelming support.

The full non-monetary package is attached to this update for your review, and we encourage all members to read it. Some of the highlights follow:

- There is a strong equity theme throughout the proposals, whether it is through the insertion of management rights language to ensure that the Employer accepts its positive obligation to ensure fair, reasonable, and equitable treatment of members; through new leave provisions for Traditional Indigenous Practices and for victims of Domestic Violence; or through a proposal to create a committee to survey the members and report on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
- Several proposals address member concerns about inconsistent application of the collective agreement across campus, requiring training for those who administer the agreement, making sure that the Union is involved in all departmental orientations where GA duties will be discussed, and ensuring that duties and responsibilities are more clearly articulated in the initial meeting between Gas and the GA Supervisors.
- The GSA has also proposed improvements to the appointment process, ensuring that members get an opportunity to indicate a preference for TA assignments and requiring the University to provide a rationale when preferred courses are not assigned. We have also proposed to expand eligibility for combined GTA/GRA appointments from 12 to 20 hours/week so that members can make ends meet.

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- Time off has been an issue for members, so the GSA has tabled new proposals on vacation time and holidays.
- Members report that they are being required to work more hours than those prescribed by their employment contracts, so the GSA has tabled language requiring payment for hours worked in excess of the employment contract. And the GSA has replaced the old GA Time Use Guidelines form with a more robust Assignment of Duties and Allocation of Hours form so that members have a clear idea of how many hours are allocated to specific duties.
- We have tabled many proposals for new provisions to bring the collective agreement into line with what is in other collective agreements in the sector and to put the GSA in a better position to support its members.

The tenor of the initial exchange was respectful. The GSA Team went first, introducing its package to provide context to its proposals. And the University followed with a much shorter statement of interests, rather than actual proposals. Notably, the University's initial package contained a significant concession: 0% increases to salary over the life of the agreement.

Future dates for bargaining have yet to be established, but the parties have committed to a virtual meeting at some point in February to continue the process. The GSA will inform members once dates have been established, and you can look forward to another bargaining update after the next meeting. The GSA Team would like to thank you again for engaging in the pre-bargaining process. You are our strength at the table.

In solidarity,

Jessica Grenke (GSA VP-Labour)
Josephine Bolaji (GSA Team Member)
Dayton Chen (GSA Team Member)
Erika Heiberg (GSA Associate Director)
Mathew Ashworth (PSAC Rep)
Rachel Stark (PSAC Rep)
Silja Freitag (PSAC Researcher)
John Eustace (PSAC Negotiator)

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