

**2023-2024 Associate Vice-President Labour  
Report to GSA Council for Nov 2023**

To: GSA Council  
From: Muneeb Masood Raja  
Date: 09 Nov 2023

Dear Council Colleagues,

I have attended several meetings between 16 Oct and 15 Nov 2023 which are listed in the table below. The details of these meetings are stated below.

**Meeting with Graduate Physics Student Association President (18 Oct):**

I recently met with Elham, the President of the Graduate Physics Student Association, to address the concerns raised by some students in the physics department regarding GTA hours. In response to this concern, we have taken the initiative to schedule a meeting with representatives from the Physics Department. This meeting is set for November 8th. During this meeting, we will discuss the issue brought up by our fellow graduate students and explore potential solutions. If our discussion with the department representatives does not lead to a satisfactory resolution, I will escalate the matter to the Faculty Relations.

**Solidarity Meeting (19 Oct):**

The solidarity meeting, organized by PSAC, brought together union leaders and representatives from the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of Lethbridge. In this meeting we discussed and shared labour related challenges in our institutions. Keeping in mind the importance of this group, we have decided to restructure the group to make it a more sustainable group aimed at lobbying for potential labour related problems across the province. While the exact details are still in the works, we're in the process of finalizing the group's name, and additional responsibilities will be distributed among its members. We would also look for future collaboration with student bodies like ab-GPAC and others to make our lobbying efforts stronger with a focus on addressing labour related issues.

**Labour Chat with Public Service Alliance Canada Representative (20 Oct, 27 Oct, and 03 Nov):**

During our meetings, we engaged in discussions aiming to enhance awareness and formulating plans for potential future training sessions that could be organized in collaboration with PSAC. We have finalized the plan for November and December. Additionally, we also discussed the bargaining updates of different academic institutions.

**Solidarity Meeting - AASUA, NASA, and GSA (23 Oct):**

In order to establish a good relationship with other unions present at the university I took the initiative to contact union leaders from NASA, AASUA, and PDFA with a possibility to set up a solidarity group. NASA and AASUA were onboard with this initiative. Unfortunately, PDFA was in the middle of electing new leadership at the time when the meeting was being set up, preventing them from joining us for our first meeting. We plan on including them in our subsequent meetings after the new leadership is settled in their roles. The aim of this meeting was to discuss avenues of mutual interest. We also agreed to advertise initiatives taken by our unions on platforms available to us.

**Labour Outreach (24 Oct and 8 Nov):**

The GSA Labor Relations Committee (LRC) organized a labour outreach aimed at raising awareness among graduate students. During this event, we actively sought feedback from students regarding their employment situations, which fall under the collective agreement. The outreach session on 24th Oct was held outside in the main quad area but because of the sudden shift in the temperature we shifted the 8th Nov outreach session inside SUB. The remaining outreach sessions will be held indoors until the weather remains cold. We have the next labour outreach sessions planned in SUB on 23 November.

## **Bargaining 101 Labour Training (24 Oct):**

Bargaining 101 training session was organized in collaboration with PSAC and advertised to all academically employed graduate students (AEGSs). This was an in-person training and a lot of students showed interest in taking this training. It was organized around the same time as the call for nominations for the bargaining committee was sent out. In this training, the process of bargaining along with all the steps involved in it were discussed. The legislative requirements were reviewed, especially the deadlines that need to be followed by both parties. Participants were informed of the recent updates on the current bargaining that is undergoing in different academic institutes across Canada. The same training was also offered remotely on 02 Nov to provide opportunity to those interested in the training and couldn't attend the in-person training.

## **GSA Union Breakfast (25 Oct):**

A union breakfast was organized in collaboration with PSAC and all the academically employed graduate students (AEGSs) were invited. The purpose of this breakfast was to improve the presence of our union on campus and allow AEGSs to interact with each other and discuss their concerns around their appointments and the collective agreement. These activities also serve as a source of knowledge for the AEGSs as students are generally not aware of the resources available on campus and in this case, they are relieved to find out that we have a collective agreement with the university which provides them protection and better employment rights. I always encourage them to find out more about the collective agreement, know your rights, take the labour training, be more involved with labour activities, and increase awareness of the union.

## **Meeting with Board of Governors Chair (25 Oct):**

The GSA board had a meeting with the chair of the Board of Governors, University of Alberta. It was an interactive session which involved all the DEOs explaining their portfolios and they asked for support from the university. I expressed my concerns regarding the compliance of the collective agreement and emphasised that the university should take the necessary steps to ensure we get better compliance. Aside from that, I also stressed on the fact that lately a lot of institutes in the academic section are having trouble bargaining and the university should be aware of the changes in the landscape during the past couple of years. Finally, I also highlighted the problems of the Graduate Research Assistantship Fellowship (GRAF) appointment and how the university should work with us to improve that in future. Since GRAF is not considered to be an employment contract, deciding the pay rate, working conditions and other benefits that are usually provided in a regular paid appointment are not clear which leaves the student with very little to no protection. This causes a huge power imbalance between the supervisor and the student and could potentially result in unfair behaviour towards the student.

## **Meeting with LRC Members (31 Oct and 02 Nov):**

These meetings were scheduled with the new voting members of the Labour Relations Committee (LRC) who were elected recently. In the meeting I went over the roles and responsibilities of the LRC members and went over the collective agreement in detail as part of the labour 101 training which is mandatory for every new member of the LRC. Aside from that, we also went over the work which is being undertaken by the LRC including selection of the bargaining team, preparing surveys, strengthening our steward network, improving collaborations, and more. The new members were encouraged to be actively involved in all union activities by attending labour training and labour outreach sessions. Both members were excited to be a part of the team and showed a lot of willingness towards all the endeavours that will be taken by the committee.

I have not yet attended some of the meetings listed below, which is why I haven't included them in my report. However, I plan to cover the key highlights and main aspects of these meetings during our November council meeting. Finally, I would really appreciate any feedback from the respected council members related to any labour related matters.

Thank you,

Muneeb Masood Raja, Associate Vice-President Labour 2023-2024

Please find below a list of meetings I attended between 16 Oct and 15 Nov 2023 (not inclusive of weekly GSA Board meetings). The meetings were accurate at the time of printing.

18 Oct	Meeting with Graduate Physics Student Association President
19 Oct	Solidarity Meeting
19 Oct	Meeting with a Student (Confidential)
20 Oct	Labour check-in with PSAC representative
23 Oct	Solidarity Group Meeting - AASUA, NASA, and GSA
24 Oct	Labour Outreach
24 Oct	Bargaining 101 Labour Training
24 Oct	Meeting w/ Chancellor Garrity and GSA Execs
25 Oct	GSA Union Breakfast
25 Oct	In-Person Meeting - Board of Governors Chair
27 Oct	GSA Coffee Break
27 Oct	Islamophobia Awareness Campaign
27 Oct	UofA GSA Labour Check-in w/ K Gunn
30 Oct	BFC - Fall statements and ATB investment review
31 Oct	Introductory meeting with new LRC member
02 Nov	Introductory meeting with new LRC member
02 Nov	Forward Slash Event
03 Nov	UofA GSA Labour Check-in w/ K Gunn
06 Nov	SEAP Discussion
07 Nov	Meeting with a student (Confidential)
07 Nov	Meeting with Bargaining Team Applicant
08 Nov	Physics Department TA Contract Meeting
08 Nov	Labour Outreach
09 Nov	Meeting with Bargaining Team Applicant
09 Nov	GFC Programs Committee Meeting
10 Nov	UofA GSA Labour Check-in w/ K Gunn
16 Nov	Solidarity Meeting
17 Nov	UofA GSA Labour Check-in w/ K Gunn
17 Nov	U of A JHSC Meeting
17 Nov	GSA Executives & VPER Monthly Meeting