GSA101
What is the GSA?

- *Post-Secondary Learning Act* establishes GSA as a separate corporate entity from the University; seat on the Board of Governors; negotiates a Collective Agreement (represents all graduate students but also acts as a union for academically-employed graduate students)

- Represents graduate students to the University and government; different from FGSR
What is the GSA?

- Is student-led and professionally managed with its own lawyers, auditor, chartered accountant, management, and staff.

- Established in 1959, and incorporated in 1972, formerly housed in the North Power Plant and moved to Triffo Hall in February 2008, contributing $188K to renovations.

- Administers an operating budget of over $1 million and negotiates for over $900,000 in funding from the U of A, which is disbursed annually in grants, awards, and bursaries.
2019-2020 GSA Directly-Elected Officers

President
Fahed Elian, PhD Student, Medical Genetics

VP Academic
Dylan Ashley, Masters Student, Computing Science

VP Student Services
Chantal Labonté, PhD Student, Educational Psychology

VP External
Marc Waddingham, Masters Student, Biological Sciences

VP Labour
Shanawaz Mohammad, Masters Student, Electrical and Computer Engineering
GSA Directly-Elected Officers

- Each position is elected independently and Directly-Elected Officers are directly accountable to the graduate student body that elected them.

- The President serves as the leader of the team but does not possess absolute authority to direct that team (see above).
2019-2020 GSA Council-Elected Officers

Speaker
Pranidhi Baddam, Medical Sciences

Deputy Speaker
Priyanka Maripuri, Medical Genetics

Chief Returning Officer
Amritha Prasad, Agriculture, Food, and Nutritional Science

Deputy Chief Returning Officer
Reza Azadi, Mechanical Engineering

Senator
Alesha Reed, Rehabilitation Science
All graduate students are members of the GSA and, ultimately, all of the groups below are accountable to them.

Legend:

- = accountable to

--- = works in concert with

Diagram:

- GSA Council
- GSA Committees (including GSA Board)
- GSA Directly Elected Officers
- Departmental GSAs
GSA Standing Committees

The work of the GSA is supported by the efforts of a number of committees. There are two types of GSA committees:

Standing Committees – Standing Committees advise GSA Council and the GSA Board on policy relevant to their mandates, and have full authority to take actions set out within those mandates. Power is delegated to them by GSA Council (and they report back to GSA Council) and GSA Council elects their members.

Ad Hoc Committees and Subcommittees – GSA Council may from time to time create ad hoc committees to address issues that are outside of the purview of the standing committees of the GSA. Likewise, the GSA Board and Standing Committees may, at their discretion, form sub-committees deemed relevant to the execution of their mandates.
The GSA has the following Standing Committees:

- GSA Board
- GSA Appeals and Complaints Board
- GSA Awards Selection Committee
- GSA Budget & Finance Committee
- GSA Elections & Referenda Committee
- GSA Governance Committee
- GSA Labour Relations Committee
- GSA Nominating Committee
GSA Staff and Administrative Professionals

- Executive Director, Courtney Thomas (BA, MA, PhD)
- Associate Director, Erika Heiberg (BA, MA)

- The GSA also has three full-time staff members and a chartered accountant and Financial Manager who work part-time
The GSA staff are represented by NASA and deal with aspects of the following:

- Support for graduate student groups
- Scheduling some 1,300 meetings a year for the Directly-Elected Officers
- Electing graduate students to over a cumulative 170+ GSA and University committees through the GSA Nominating Committee
- Processing some 1,000 grants, bursaries, and awards annually
- Addressing about phone, email, and in-person inquiries and advising requests at the GSA front desk each year
- Drafting and distributing 50-plus newsletters and bulletins each year
- Planning events and orientations
- Maintaining over 2,000 paper and electronic files
GSA Advocacy to the University

- Seat on the Board of Governors and most Board of Governors standing committees

- Representation on General Faculties Council and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research Council and their standing committees

- Representation on the Senate and Alumni Council

- Regular meetings with the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, and the Dean of Students

- Strategic meetings with the President and various Vice-Presidents
The GSA is a non-partisan organization

- What does that mean?

- The GSA does not involve itself, whether directly or indirectly, in supporting or opposing a political party or candidate for public office.

- The GSA needs to represent the broad spectrum of views held by its members and needs to work in as cooperative a fashion as possible with government, regardless of party affiliation.
The GSA is a non-partisan organization

What does that look like in practice?

- The GSA has a mandate to focus on issues within the post-secondary sector that affect graduate students and it advocates on these issues regardless of the party affiliation of the government in power.

- The GSA occasionally opposes government actions related to post-secondary education, but it focuses on issues, not parties and ideologies.
GSA External Advocacy

National Student Groups
- Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)
- ThinkGrad (formed after GU15 dissolved)
- Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)

Provincial Student Groups
- Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) (graduate)
- Alberta Students’ Executive Council (ASEC) (undergrad)
- Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) (undergrad)

Other Groups
- Edmonton Student Alliance (ESA)
- Public Interest Alberta (PIA)
- Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (CAGS)
GSA Services

- TDIMM Home and Auto Insurance
- GSA Health and Dental Plan
- U-PASS
- Graduate Student Assistance Program (GSAP)
- Grants, Bursaries, and Awards
- Collective Agreement and Advice
- Graduate Student Ombudsperson
- Subsidies to the Academic Success Centre, the Career Centre, and the Campus Food Bank (founded by the GSA)
TDIMM Home and Auto Insurance

- As a member of the GSA, you can benefit from special privileges, including preferred group rates.
- Home and car insurance may also be available for international students while in Canada.
- For more details, visit melochemonnex.com/ualbertagsa or call (toll-free) 1-866-258-3036.
GSA Health and Dental Plan

- Including health, dental, and vision, travel insurance, diagnostic services, ambulance services, registered dietician services, and more
- Visit [www.studentcare.ca](http://www.studentcare.ca) for a complete list of benefits and details
- All full-time registered graduate students are automatically enrolled and part-time students can choose to opt-in only during a specific change-of-coverage period (partners and dependents can also enroll)
- Visit the office in SUB 6-14 (6th floor) or call (toll-free) 1-866-795-4430
The Universal Pass for public transit during Fall Term, Winter Term, and Spring/Summer

A sticker that is applied to your ONEcard available from the ONEcard office (HUB) or Infolink centres (0-26 SUB, CAB, HUB)

Unlimited access to regular Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, Spruce Grove, St. Albert & Strathcona County, Transit Systems
Automatically included in your non-instructional fees

For each of 2019-2020 Fall, Winter, and Spring/Summer Terms, the cost is $153

www.upass.ualberta.ca
Graduate Student Assistance Program

- First in Canada for grad students; same plan as faculty; supported financially in part by U of A

- Lifestyle and Specialty Counselling Services: legal advisory services, family mediation, etc

- Workplace Services: workplace advice line, cultural transition support, etc

- Career Counselling Services: career development, shift worker support services, etc

- Health Smart Coaching Services: nutrition, smoking cessation, 12 weeks to wellness, etc

- Many other additional services, visit www.homewoodhealth.com
GSA Grants and Bursaries

GSA Academic Travel Grants Summary

- Up to $500 for Masters students during the degree program
- Up to $1000 for Doctoral students during the degree program (max. $500 per fiscal year (1 April to 31 March))

GSA Child Care Grants Summary

- For children under 18 years of age
- Max. $1000 per child per fiscal year (1 April to 31 March)

www.gsa.ualberta.ca
GSA Grants and Bursaries

GSA Emergency Bursaries Summary

- A non-repayable bursary of up to $4000
- Complete the online application and then make an appointment with the Student Financial Services Office

GSA Graduate Student Group Grants Summary

- Funding for seminars, guest lectures, colloquia, start-up funds, and more

www.gsa.ualberta.ca
Collective Agreement Governing Graduate Assistantships

Teaching Assistants, Principal Instructors, Research Assistants, and Research Assistantship Fellowships

- Minimum stipend rates
- Letters of Appointment
- Graduate student leave (eg parental leave)
- Assistantship Time Use Guideline template
- Health and safety
- Dispute resolution

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GSA Associate Director, Erik Heiberg
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Graduate Student Ombudsperson

- Negotiated by the GSA in 2010 from part-time to full-time
- For academic, discipline, supervisor concerns, or other University issues
- Contact gradomb@ualberta.ca or visit www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca
Get Involved

- Vote in our General Election, run for office, get involved with your departmental graduate students’ association, or serve on one of 170+ GSA or University committees
- Contact gsa.nomcomm@ualberta.ca for information on committee vacancies
- Visit us at www.gsa.ualberta.ca or 1-49 Triffo Hall
- Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram