Dear GSA Council Colleagues,

18 January 2019

This report includes my updates from the internal task list for the 2018-2019 GSA Board Strategic Work Plan (SWP). The following are projects that I have initiated in the past few months since the most recent updates on the SWP to GSA Council in October, in addition to attending the regularly scheduled meetings of the many governance committees on which I represent the GSA.

- I continue to raise the importance of monitoring the frequency of supervisory committee meetings to ensure that graduate students benefit from the required amount of contact with their supervisory committees. Following conversations with the Interim Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR), I worked to help develop a survey that was circulated to graduate students through the GSA newsletter, asking about their experiences with the frequency of their supervisory committee meetings. Data from this survey has now been shared with the Interim Dean of the FGSR, and at the December meeting of the FGSR Policy Review Committee (FGSR PRC), these survey results, and next steps, were discussed. I also discussed this matter with Associate Dean Krogman, I continue to emphasize the importance of including annual supervisory committee meetings as one of the milestones that can be recorded in the online tracking platform that the FGSR will be implementing in the next few years.

- Other recent and important conversations within the FGSR PRC have included the creation of a support document for students pursuing research or courses at partner institutions, which do not have appropriate student support services. Additionally, the FGSR is currently reviewing its appeals policy, including how to best educate graduate students about the policy and discussing the creation of a supportive document to assist students in navigating it.

- Following discussions with the Interim Dean of the FGSR, the topic of graduate student exam deferrals was further discussed during recent FGSR Policy Review Committee meetings. During these discussions, I encouraged the FGSR to make it clear in their policies or communications that graduate students are covered by the University’s exam deferral policies and processes in cases of unexpected emergencies for written exams, and the FGSR has agreed to incorporate language in the University calendar outlining that this is the case.

- In response to some graduate students bringing to my attention concerns about the scheduling of graduate courses during evenings and weekends or last-minute changes in scheduling, I met with my delegate on the General Faculties Council Academic Standards Committee (GFC ASC) to discuss bringing these concerns forward to the University. We then raised this issue to the General Faculties Council Committee on the Learning Environment and the matter has now been given to the FGSR PRC, who will be working on developing language to add to University policy.

- Finally, I have tackled a few individual issues, including working with a graduate student concerned about their ability to apply for various scholarships as a result of department specific regulations, and meeting with a representative of the Undergraduate Research Initiative to both learn more how their programming impacts graduate students and about how it intersects with a academic employment of graduate students under the GSA/Board of Governors Collective Agreement.

Sincerely,

Masoud Aliramezani, 2018-2019 GSA Vice-President Academic