Dear GSA Council Colleagues,

5 April 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 January.

- In weighing opportunities to improve GSA services, and following GSA Council’s approval of the GSA Health and Dental Plan Fee for 2019-2020 in March, for the April 2019 GSA Council meeting we have developed a proposal to increase dental coverage for the GSA Health and Dental Plan (without increasing the cost paid by graduate students).

- I have been participating since January in the newly formed Campus Clean Air Strategy Working Group, which is working to develop strategies to make the University of Alberta a smoke free campus. The group is focusing on cigarettes, vaping, shisha, and cannabis smoke, and contains representatives from various stakeholders, including student groups, faculties, Environment, Health & Safety (EHS), and Protective Services.

- These past months, I have continued collaborating with the Office of the Dean of Students, along with the Students’ Union, regarding the consultation process that will take place for the development of mental health standards for our institution. These efforts are part of a larger project to develop a Post-Secondary Student Standard for Mental Health, as overseen by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. As reported to GSA Council previously, the consultation process is expected to conclude by May 2019. I also worked to connect the Dean of Students Office with the Indigenous Graduate Students’ Association (IGSA), as another key stakeholder for this project.

- Following the 18 March 2018 meeting of GSA Council, I am pleased to report that GSA Council approved the recommended changes to GSA Policy on grants and bursaries. Some key changes included removing the provision that only dependent children up to age twelve (12) are eligible for the GSA Child Care Grant in favour of dependent children up to the age of eighteen (18) being eligible for this funding, and increasing the amount provided for GSA Emergency Bursaries from $2,000 to $4,000.

- Since January the U-Pass Advisory Committee and the U-Pass Administration Committee have been discussing at-length the anticipated 2020 integration of Smart Fare with the U-Pass program. As a reminder, the City of Edmonton is implementing a “tap and go” fare payment system that will be implemented for all users utilizing the Edmonton Transit System (ETS), as well as transit systems within St. Alberta and Strathcona County. The U-Pass Administration Committee struck a smaller work group to further discuss the details of implementing Smart Fare for the U-Pass program with various University of Alberta stakeholders. The GSA will remain engaged with these conversations.

- In consultation with the GSA office team, we developed a 101 session on the topic of GSA funding opportunities, and six graduate students attended the second session on 11 March 2019.

- Through my work with the Days of Action Committee, members of this committee coordinated a photo series on the topic of gender-based violence, and graduate students were encouraged to share their personal stories. This committee, along with University of Alberta International, also coordinated various programming to highlight the International Day of Happiness on 20 March.

Sincerely,

Fahed Elian, Vice-President Student Services