To: GSA Council
From: Courtney Thomas
Date: 13 September 2019

Dear GSA Council Members,

Below is a snapshot of the GSA office staff that we regularly share with GSA Council so that members can learn more about our backgrounds, who we are, and what our jobs entail.

GSA Administrative/Professional Staff

Courtney Thomas: Executive Director, BA Honours and MA History (U of A), PhD History and Renaissance Studies (Yale) (FT)
I came to the GSA in 2012 with three years’ experience working in U of A governance. After serving at the Director of Services and Governance for several years, I now serve as the Executive Director (ED) and now oversee the GSA staff (we have a dynamic staff team that regularly dissolves into problem-solving teams under my direction), the GSA office, and the GSA’s corporate infrastructure. My other direct responsibilities include the administration of governance and fair process protocols, managing the GSA’s finances (I head the Financial Team), supporting elections and the nominating process, and overseeing the Early Call and the annual transition of elected officials. I am also the Coordinator of GSA Council and the GSA Board and oversee initiatives related to the GSA Board Strategic Work Plan. As a historian, I have experience teaching at both Yale and MacEwan University and have published work in several scholarly journals, as well as in the form of a monograph (a social history of honour and reputation among the early modern English elite) with the U of T press. When I’m not doing GSA things, I’m chasing my two-year old daughter Eleanor around, listening to podcasts, and watching literally every single show ever aired on Bravo.

Julie Tanguay: Associate Director, BA Psychology (Laval), LLB and JD (Université de Montreal) (FT)
Julie assists with the coordination of the GSA Board and some GSA standing committees, including GSA Budget and Finance Committee and the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee. She also serves as the GSA’s privacy officer and the labour professional, assisting the Vice-President Labour with their portfolio and working with graduate students experiencing complex issues and in need of support. Julie is involved with the processing of GSA grants and bursaries and assist with the management of the GSA’s corporate documents, contracts, and agreements. She also works on the management of the GSA’s website and is the point person for GSA services, such as the Health and Dental Plan and the Graduate Student Assistance Program. In her downtime, Julie likes to go for a run or hitting the climbing gym. Additionally, she is the inspiration for the main character of the J.T. Tonkers mystery series.

Lisa Hareuther: Assistant Director, BA in Anthropology (U of A), MA Anthropology (SFU) (FT)
Lisa previously worked for the GSA for 3.5 years and came back in 2017 after a two-year period of working for ASET. Lisa assists with the coordination of GSA Council, as well as other GSA standing committees. She supports GFC Caucus, FGSR Caucus, and works with Julie on nominating and elections processes. Lisa also supports internal and external advocacy, assists with the development of the GSA Board Strategic Work Plan, represents the GSA on internal and external U-Pass committees along with the GSA Vice-President Student Services, and provides assistance on issues related to GSA services. Lisa works closely with other members of the GSA staff team to provide assistance and research as required for the GSA Directly-Elected Officers. You can normally find her listening to podcasts, thrift shopping, spending time in the river valley, or trying out local restaurants and coffee shops.

Shirley Ball: Accountant, CPA (CA), Bachelor of Business Administration (PT) and Dorte Sheikh: Financial Manager, BA Anthropology (U of A) (PT)
Shirley has extensive experience with not-for-profits and is a key member of the Financial Team. Dorte has 33 years’ prior experience in the Registrar’s Office. She handles invoicing, payments, and banking and payroll matters. Shirley and Dorte work on the GSA’s finances and budgets, financial reporting to GSA Council, and our annual external audit.

GSA Support Staff (represented by NASA with their own Collective Agreement)

Laura Taras: Executive Coordinator and Communications Specialist, BFA (U of A), Bachelor of Applied Communications (MacEwan) (FT)
aura has extensive experience in not-for-profit office administration, design, and marketing. At the GSA, Laura schedules GSA Directly-Elected Officers. In addition, she prepares minutes for the GSA Board; organizes the annual transition of elected officials; handles communications, Facebook and Twitter, and prepares the weekly newsletter. She also deals with Front Desk enquiries. In her spare time, Laura is finishing basement renovations, does yoga, and enjoys spending time with her exotic birds.

**Fiona Robertson: Outreach Coordinator, BA Anthropology (U of S), MA Anthropology (U of A) (FT)**

Fiona gained administrative experience working in both a tax firm and a law firm before coming to the University of Alberta to begin a Masters degree in Anthropology. After completing her degree, Fiona worked for four years in the Faculty of Extension on a grant-funded community-based research project with Metis settlements. At the GSA, Fiona deals with awards, grants, and bursaries; plans and manages all GSA events; works with departmental GSAs; acts as a GSA Council Secretary; and deals with Front Desk enquiries. Fiona enjoys swimming, baking, spending time with her nieces and nephews, and consuming all forms of the fantasy/sci-fi genre.

**Mahsa Toghrai: Nominating and Elections Specialist, BA Psychology (U of A) (FT)**

Mahsa worked for the Edmonton Eskimo Football Club before coming to the GSA. Mahsa supports the GSA Nominating Committee, the Early Call for Talent, and the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee. She drafts materials related to elections and nominating processes and manages requests from Administration for graduate representatives on committees, task forces, etc. Mahsa also deals with Front Desk enquiries and the GSA’s Instagram profile. Outside of work, Mahsa enjoys jazzercise, writing best-selling novels, and covertly dismantling foreign governments.

As always, the detailed management reports submitted weekly to the GSA Board are attached and we are happy to respond to any questions members may have.

Best,
Courtney Thomas, Executive Director
Management Report to the GSA Board, 21 August 2019

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on 7 August 2019:

**Strategic**

- Moving forward with Habit marketing to create videos (three videos (one on member benefits, one on member engagement, and one on voter engagement) will be produced) to boost GSA member engagement (draft scripts for voice over components have been reviewed and a list of participants is close to being finalized and Habit will be filming at the fall orientation on 27 August).

- Forward thinking about the 2020-2021 GSA operating budget.

- Researching the potential impacts of e-scooters on campus at the request of the University Architect.

- Planning for the first update to GSA Council on progress related to the Board Strategic Work Plan and drafting presentations on the Board Strategic Work Plan for various bodies.

- Work associated with the Collective Agreement, including supporting negotiations processes (discussing the process for a ratification vote and associated communications plan), reviewing previous GSA attempts to establish a steward program, and contacting a consultant concerning best practices with respect to strike fund establishment, maintenance, growth, and utilization.

- Providing support for a meeting of the GSA Labour Relations Committee and reviewing the GSA’s labour-related communications plan.

**Grants and Office Operations**

- Planning for GSA Fall Orientation, departmental orientations (43 booked so far, which is down from last year), and the fall social event.

- Preparing for the September meeting of GSA Council.

- Developing an onboarding/welcome package for new GSA Graduate Student Groups.

- Supporting the work of the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee and the GSA Nominating Committee (vacancies on FGSR Council and various FGSR Council standing committees, and vacancies on the GSA Governance Committee (1), GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (2), GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (3), GSA Budget and Finance Committee (1), and GSA Nominating Committee (2), and vacancy for the GSA Deputy Speaker).

- Facebook = 1,339 likes (up 12 from 7 Aug) and 1,404 followers (up 15 from 7 Aug); Facebook posts reached 1,122 users this week and our “post engagement” count was 170. Twitter = 959 followers (up 2 from 7 Aug); our tweets earned 1,500 “impressions” over the last week.

- GSA Academic Travel Grants = new funding period started 1 July; GSA Child Care Grants = new funding period started 1 July and closed within four and a half hours (51 applications funded and $101,000 disbursed); GSA Emergency Bursaries = no funding periods for GSA EBs; GSA Graduate Student Group Grants = new funding period started 1 July. New granting periods open 1 October 2019.
Management Report to the GSA Board, 28 August 2019

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on 21 August 2019:

**Strategic**

- Moving forward with Habit marketing to create videos (three videos (one on member benefits, one on member engagement, and one on voter engagement) will be produced) to boost GSA member engagement (draft scripts for voice over components have been reviewed and a list of participants has been finalized and sent to Habit; filming in Triffo Hall between 4 and 6 pm is scheduled for 9-13 September).

- Drafting an RFP in association with the GSA Health and Dental Plan broker.

- Drafting external reports to various governing bodies.

- Discussing recommended changes to GSA Bylaw and Policy on Officer Portfolios (aligning them with practice over the past few years).

- Discussing funding delays for graduate students associated with the distribution of QEII scholarships.

- Planning for the first update to GSA Council on progress related to the Board Strategic Work Plan and drafting presentations on the Board Strategic Work Plan for GFC and GFC EXEC.

- Work associated with the Collective Agreement, including supporting negotiations processes (discussing the process for a ratification vote and associated communications plan), reviewing previous GSA attempts to establish a steward program, and contacting a consultant concerning best practices with respect to strike fund establishment, maintenance, growth, and utilization.

**Grants and Office Operations**

- Planning for GSA Fall Orientation, departmental orientations (43 booked so far, which is down from last year), and the fall social event.

- Preparing for the September meeting of GSA Council.

- Developing an onboarding/welcome package for new GSA Graduate Student Groups and welcome messages for new and returning graduate students.

- Supporting the work of the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee and the GSA Nominating Committee (vacancies on FGSR Council and various FGSR Council standing committees, and vacancies on the GSA Governance Committee (2), GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (2), GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (3), GSA Budget and Finance Committee (1), and GSA Nominating Committee (2), and a vacancy for the GSA Deputy Speaker).

- Facebook = 1,349 likes (up 10 from 21 August) and 1,414 followers (up 10 from 21 August); Facebook posts reached 1,418 users this week and our “post engagement” count was 262. Twitter = 965 followers (up 6 from 21 August); our tweets earned 2,400 “impressions” over the last week.

- GSA Academic Travel Grants = new funding period started 1 July; GSA Child Care Grants = new funding period started 1 July and closed within four and a half hours (51 applications funded and $101,000 disbursed); GSA Emergency Bursaries = no funding periods for GSA EBs; GSA Graduate Student Group Grants = new funding period started 1 July. New granting periods open 1 October 2019.
Management Report to the GSA Board, 4 September 2019

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on 28 August 2019:

Strategic

- Moving forward with Habit marketing to create videos to boost GSA member engagement (three videos [one on member benefits, one on member engagement, and one on voter engagement]; filming in Triffo Hall between 4 and 6 pm is scheduled for 9-13 September.

- Drafting an RFP in association with the GSA Health and Dental Plan broker.

- Early stage discussions of the GSA 2020-2021 operating budget and associated development.

- Drafting external reports to various governing bodies.

- Discussing recommended changes to GSA Bylaw and Policy on Officer Portfolios (aligning them with practice over the past few years).

- Planning for the first update to GSA Council on progress related to the Board Strategic Work Plan.

- Work associated with the Collective Agreement, including supporting negotiations processes (discussing the process for a ratification vote and associated communications plan), reviewing previous GSA attempts to establish a steward program, and contacting a consultant concerning best practices with respect to strike fund establishment, maintenance, growth, and utilization.

Grants and Office Operations

- Departmental orientations and early planning for the fall social event.

- Preparing for the first meeting of the new academic year of the GSA FGSR Council Caucus.

- Preparing for the September meeting of GSA Council (first mailing will be circulated on Friday, the agenda for the October meeting is also filling up rapidly).

- Developing an onboarding/welcome package for new GSA Graduate Student Groups.

- Circulating welcome messages for new and returning graduate students.

- Supporting the work of the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee and the GSA Nominating Committee (vacancies on FGSR Council standing committees, and vacancies on the GSA Governance Committee (2), GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (2), GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (3), GSA Budget and Finance Committee (1), and GSA Nominating Committee (2), and a vacancy for the GSA Deputy Speaker).

- Facebook = 1,366 likes (up 17 from 28 August) and 1,436 followers (up 22 from 28 August); Facebook posts reached 365 users this week and our “post engagement” count was 24. Twitter = 966 followers (up 1 from 28 August); our tweets earned 1,300 “impressions” over the last week.

- GSA Academic Travel Grants = new funding period started 1 July; GSA Child Care Grants = new funding period started 1 July and closed within four and a half hours (51 applications funded and $101,000 disbursed); GSA Emergency Bursaries = no funding periods for GSA EBs; GSA Graduate Student Group Grants = new funding period started 1 July. New granting periods open 1 October 2019.
Management Report to the GSA Board, 11 September 2019

Management has been engaged with the following issues since the last GSA Board meeting on 4 September 2019:

**Strategic**

- Moving forward with Habit marketing to create videos to boost GSA member engagement (three videos (one on member benefits, one on member engagement, and one on voter engagement); filming has begun.

- Reviewing an RFP in association with the GSA Health and Dental Plan broker with the President and Vice-President Student Services and then circulating the RFP to four companies that specialize in the provision of student health and dental plans (Studentcare, Gallivan, Campus Trust, and We Speak Student).

- Early stage discussions of the GSA 2020-2021 operating budget and associated development.

- Discussing recommended changes to GSA Bylaw and Policy on Officer Portfolios (aligning them with practice over the past few years) and the GSA Nominating Committee.

- Drafting the first update to GSA Council on progress related to the Board Strategic Work Plan.

- Work associated with the Collective Agreement, including supporting negotiations processes (discussing the process for a ratification vote and associated communications plan), reviewing previous GSA attempts to establish a steward program, and contacting a consultant concerning best practices with respect to strike fund establishment, maintenance, growth, and utilization.

**Grants and Office Operations**

- Planning for the fall social event and a Funding 101 session in advance of the new period for grants opening on 1 October.

- Preparing for the September meeting of GSA Council.

- Developing an onboarding/welcome package for new GSA Graduate Student Groups.

- Supporting the work of the GSA Elections and Referenda Committee and the GSA Nominating Committee (vacancies for alternates on FGSR Council, vacancy for the Deputy Speaker, and vacancies on the GSA Governance Committee (2), GSA Elections and Referenda Committee (2), GSA Appeals and Complaints Board (3), GSA Budget and Finance Committee (1), and GSA Nominating Committee (2).

- Facebook = 1,371 likes (up 5 from 4 September) and 1,442 followers (up 6 from 4 September); Facebook posts reached 1,330 users this week and our “post engagement” count was 490. Twitter = 972 followers (up 6 from 4 September); our tweets earned 939 “impressions” over the last week.

- GSA Academic Travel Grants = new funding period started 1 July; GSA Child Care Grants = new funding period started 1 July and closed within four and a half hours (51 applications funded and $101,000 disbursed); GSA Emergency Bursaries = no funding periods for GSA EBs; GSA Graduate Student Group Grants = new funding period started 1 July. New granting periods open 1 October 2019.