Dear GSA Council Colleagues,

4 October 2018

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 presentation of the SWP to GSA Council in July. In addition to the below, I have also been prepared for the beginning of the regularly scheduled meetings of the many governance committees on which I represent the GSA (learning relevant background, etc) and have worked individually over the summer with several graduate students who have brought forward academic issues to me.

- In efforts to collaborate with professional development providers, and to continue our support of the Graduate Student Internship Program (GSIP), I arranged for representatives from the GSIP to attend the September meeting of GSA Council. In the past few months, I also met with representatives from the Career Centre, and from the Undergraduate Research Initiative. During these meetings, I continued to discuss the possibility of expanding networking and mentorship opportunities for graduate students, in order to improve mentorship skills and to allow graduate students to develop broader networks within the University and with external partners (in-progress).

- I have been focused on communicating 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. I have discussed with the Interim Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) the idea of incorporating a way to record supervisory committee meetings as important milestones in the new online platform that the FGSR is working to create. This online platform will also be used to track awards, candidacy exam information, information from students’ transcripts, etc. (in-progress).

- Following discussions with the Interim Dean of the FGSR, the topic of graduate student exam deferrals will be discussed this fall during upcoming FGSR Council Policy Review Committee meetings. While I have learned that graduate students are covered by the University’s exam deferral policies and processes in cases of unexpected emergencies, I will be encouraging the FGSR to make it clear in their policies or communications that these regulations also apply to graduate students (in-progress).

- 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 will be meeting with my delegate on the General Faculties Council Academic Standards Committee (GFC ASC) to discuss bringing these concerns forward to the University (in-progress).

- I have been attending University of Alberta International (UAI) workshops regarding permanent residency (PR) to continue to learn about recent changes, criteria, and pathways for graduate students applying for PR, and to bring forward questions or concerns from graduate students, including the potential impact of leaves on eligibility for Post-Graduate Work Permits, and how the length of programs can also impact eligibility for these permits (in-progress).

Additionally, in the upcoming months, I will be brainstorming ways to gather data on graduate students’ experiences with supervisory committee meetings, and discussing with the Interim Dean of the FGSR the perceived lack of course offerings during the Spring/Summer, which was a concern I heard from some graduate students during the General Election.

Sincerely,

Masoud Aliramezani, 2018-2019 GSA Vice-President Academic