OUTLINE OF ISSUE

Agenda Title: **Students' Union (SU) Discussion Paper on General Faculties Council (GFC)**

Motion: N/A

Item

Action Requested	☐Approval ☐Recommendation ☒Discussion/Advice ☐Information
Proposed by	Dustin Chelen, Vice-President (Academic), University of Alberta Students' Union (SU)
Presenter	Dustin Chelen, Vice-President (Academic), University of Alberta Students' Union (SU)
Subject	Discussion on General Faculties Council (GFC) and subcommittee [*sic*: standing committee] procedures and structures, and recommendations for revisions brought forward by undergraduate students at University of Alberta to enhance collegial governance.

Details

Responsibility	General Faculties Council
The Purpose of the Proposal is (please be specific)	To stimulate thought and discussion among members of GFC on the processes and structure underlying General Faculties Council, in advance of the presentation of President Samarasekera's audit of GFC. This discussion will allow the Students' Union to continue to seek feedback on its Discussion Paper on the State of Academic Governance at the University of Alberta, and for members of GFC to share their perspectives and ideas with both the SU and the President's Task Force. The discussion paper is not meant for approval by GFC, but instead allows for open discussion on three questions which will inform how GFC responds to the GFC Task Force report: • What are the roles of GFC at a research-intensive public university like the U of A? • What concerns or recommendations for reform are there for GFC at the U of A? • What concerns or advice is there surrounding the recommendations contained in this DRAFT discussion paper? The SU will submit a final discussion paper to the President's Office, University Governance, and GFC based on the discussion at GFC with recommendations for operational and structural changes. Any decisions on Governance operations will be made by the University Secretary, while decisions on GFC rules and structures will be made by GFC.
The Impact of the Proposal is	N/A (See 'Purpose')
Replaces/Revises (eg, policies, resolutions)	N/A
Timeline/Implementation Date	Consultation until March 31, with the final discussion paper submitted on April 30, 2014.
Estimated Cost	N/A
Sources of Funding	N/A
Notes	N/A

Alignment/Compliance

Alignment with Guiding Documents	*Dare to Discover* Values "4. A diverse, yet inclusive, dynamic collegial community that welcomes change and seizes opportunity with passion and creativity." *Dare to Discover* Cornerstones "Learning, Discovery, and Citizenship […] 7. Inspire students, faculty, and staff alike to engage in activities that develop leadership, foster social and moral responsibility, and contribute to the further development of our society and its institutions." "Transformative Organization and Support […]7. Promote administrative effectiveness and good governance by improving communication among units, enhancing collaboration, implementing transformative ideas, and revising organizational structures." *Dare to Deliver* Preamble "Collegial governance is another crucial characteristic of major universities, one that rests on the fundamental concept of academic freedom. Anchored in collaboration and consultation, it allows the University to incorporate and harness the various ways the academy pursues its teaching, learning, research, and service missions. We all benefit from collegial governance; it is at the heart of our success as an institution." *Dare to Deliver* Initiatives "Input for Improvement: Inviting everyone to reflect on and articulate ideas for making the University an even better place to live, work and study"
Compliance with Legislation, Policy and/or Procedure Relevant to the Proposal (please quote legislation and include identifying section numbers)	1. **Sections 26 (1), (2), and (3) of the *Post-Secondary Learning Act* (*PSLA*)** state: "**Powers of general faculties council** **26(1)** Subject to the authority of the board, a general faculties council is responsible for the academic affairs of the university and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, has the authority to (a) exercise any power of a faculty council that the general faculties council considers desirable to exercise; (b) consider and make decisions on the reports of the faculty councils as to the programs of study in the faculties; (c) determine all programs of study to which clause (b) does not apply that are to be offered by the university for credit toward the requirements for any degree or diploma; (d) determine the timetables for examinations and for lectures and other instruction in each faculty; (e) consider and make decisions on the reports of faculty councils as to the appointment of examiners and the conduct and results of examinations in the faculties; (f) provide for the granting and conferring of degrees other than honorary degrees;

(g) provide for the preparation and publication of the university calendar;

(h) hear and determine appeals from the decisions of faculty councils on applications, requests or petitions by students and others;

(i) consider all matters reported to it by any faculty council and communicate its opinion or action on those matters to the faculty council concerned;

(j) determine the date for the beginning and end of lectures in the university and also the beginning and end of each university term;

(k) make rules and regulations for the management and operation of libraries;

(l) recommend to the board the establishment of faculties, schools, departments, chairs and programs of study in the university in any subject that the general faculties council thinks fit;

(m) make rules and regulations respecting academic awards;

(n) determine standards and policies respecting the admission of persons to the university as students;

(o) make recommendations to the board with respect to affiliation with other institutions, academic planning, campus planning, a building program, the budget, the regulation of residences and dining halls, procedures in respect of appointments, promotions, salaries, tenure and dismissals, and any other matters considered by the general faculties council to be of interest to the university;

(p) authorize lecturing and teaching on the university premises by persons other than members of the staff of the university;

(q) authorize a school to have a school council of the same nature and with the same powers, duties and functions as a faculty council and, in its discretion, revoke any authority so given.

(2) Any recommendations from the general faculties council to the board must be transmitted to the board through the president.

(3) A general faculties council may delegate any of its powers, duties and functions under this Act, including the powers referred to in section 31, as it sees fit and may prescribe conditions governing the exercise or performance of any delegated power, duty or function, including the power of subdelegation."

2. **General Faculties Council (GFC) Terms of Reference**: "[…]

3. **Mandate of the Committee**

Powers Retained by General Faculties Council

All powers and responsibilities under Section 26 of the PSLA not expressly delegated now or in the future shall be retained by General Faculties Council. (GFC 02 DEC 1966)

The issues which remain with GFC or which would be referred by a Standing Committee to GFC would generally be in the nature of the following:

high level strategic and stewardship policy issues or matters of significant risk to the University;

alterations to the mandate, terms of reference, composition, or structure of a Standing Committee;

those things which a Standing Committee considers to be of major strategic significance to or long-term impact on the University;

those matters on which, in the opinion of a Standing Committee chair, there has been a strong division of opinion within the Standing Committee; and

issues in which there is a lack of clarity as to which Standing Committee is responsible.

[…]"

3. **GFC Executive Committee Terms of Reference/3. Mandate of the Committee**: "To act as the executive body of General Faculties Council and, in general, carry out the functions delegated to it by General Faculties Council."

4. **GFC Executive Committee Terms of Reference/3. Mandate of the Committee**: "[…]

5. **Agendas of General Faculties Council**

GFC has delegated to the Executive Committee the authority to decide which items are placed on a GFC Agenda, and the order in which those agenda items appear on each GFC agenda.

When ordering items, the GFC Executive Committee will be mindful of any matters that are of particular concern to students during March and April so that the student leaders who bring those items forward are able to address these items at GFC before their terms end. (EXEC 06 NOV 2006)

[…]

With respect to recommendations from other bodies and other GFC committees, however, the role of the Executive Committee shall be to examine and debate the substance of reports or recommendations and to decide if an item is ready to be forwarded to the full governing body. The Executive Committee may decide to refer a proposal back to the originating body, to refer the proposal to another body or individual for study or review, or to take other action in order to ready a proposal for consideration by General Faculties Council. When the GFC Executive Committee forwards a proposal to GFC, it shall make a recommendation that GFC endorse; endorse with suggested amendments; not endorse; or forward the proposal with no comment."

	5. ***Post-Secondary Learning Act* (*PSLA*):** The *Post-Secondary Learning Act* (*PSLA*) gives General Faculties Council (GFC) responsibility, subject to the authority of the Board of Governors, over "student affairs" (Section 31(1)).

Routing (Include meeting dates)

Consultative Route (parties who have seen the proposal and in what capacity)	Graduate Students' Association – December 11, 2013 Office of University Governance – December 19, 2013, January 13, 2014, January 15, 2014 Dr David Kahane, Academic Staff Member – December 19, 2013 Dr Steve Patten, GFC Member – January 7, 2014 Colin More, Vice-President (Academic), Graduate Students' Association (GSA) – January 14, 2014 Dr Martin Ferguson-Pell, Acting Provost and Vice-President Academic – January 15, 2014 Dr Catherine Swindlehurst, Director, Office of the President – January 15, 2014 Students' Union (SU) Executive Committee – January 20, 2014 SU Discover Governance Manager – January 21, 2014 Student Governance Centre Committee – January 27, 2014 Dr Carolyn Sale, AASUA (Association of Academic Staff – University of Alberta) Academic Faculty Committee Chair – January 31, 2014 Dr Heather Bruce, AASUA Vice-President – February 4, 2014 Dr Kathleen Lowrey, GFC Member – February 5, 2014 Dr Ann Revill, President, Post-Doctoral Fellows' Association – February 10, 2014 Dr Toni Samek, GFC Member – February 11, 2014 Dr Deborah Burshtyn, GFC Member – February 12, 2014 President's GFC Task Force – February 12, 2014 AASUA Council – February 13, 2014 GFC Student Caucus – February 18, 2014 Dr Kaori Kabata, GFC Member – (tentative) Dr Norma Nocente, GFC Member – (tentative) Dr Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning – (tentative) AASUA Executive (for discussion) – February 2014 (tentative) NASA (Non-Academic Staff Association) Executive (for discussion) – February 2014 (tentative) GFC Executive Committee (for discussion) – March 13, 2014 General Faculties Council (for discussion) – March 24, 2014 (to be confirmed by the GFC Executive Committee on March 13, 2014)
Approval Route (Governance) (including meeting dates)	N/A
Final Approver	N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1 (pages 1 – 11) – 'A Reflection on the State of Academic Governance at the University of Alberta'

Prepared by: Dustin Chelen, Students' Union Vice-President (Academic), dustin.chelen@su.ualberta.ca

A Reflection on the State of Academic Governance at the University of Alberta

"Collegial governance is another crucial characteristic of major universities, one that rests on the fundamental concept of academic freedom. Anchored in collaboration and consultation, it allows the University to incorporate and harness the various ways the academy pursues its teaching, learning, research, and service missions. We all benefit from collegial governance; it is at the heart of our success as an institution."

- Dare to Deliver 2011-2015

I. Guiding Principles

This paper was created with the intent to stimulate discussion within the academy, especially among members of General Faculties Council (GFC), on how academic governance[1] could be reformed to better align with the following principles:

- The University of Alberta is governed collegially, which is grounded in a belief that faculty, students, and administration should have equal opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.
- GFC should inclusive of both administrators and members irrespective of the nature of their affiliation with the academy.
- All members should have the ability to meaningfully participate in GFC
- The University should make decisions that are informed by and respectful of the diverse perspectives in the academy
- GFC should be able to make decisions and provide advice in a timely manner

What follows is meant to stimulate reflection and conversation among members of the academy. This is not an objective review of GFC, but rather an introspective reflection on academic governance.

This discussion paper has been shared with members from AASUA, the GSA, NASA, and administration, and will be shared broadly with current members of GFC. Feedback is encouraged, especially on the below three questions, and can be sent via email to vp.academic@su.ualberta.ca:

- What are the roles of GFC at a research-intensive public university like the U of A?
- What concerns or recommendations for reform are there for GFC at the U of A?

[1] Diverse definitions of governance are available in the context of higher-education governance, and these definitions may vary slightly depending on the nature of governance model practiced by the institution and / or the higher education system. For the purposes of this report, we adopt the governance definition provided in the OECD Report titled *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society Vol. 1, Special Features: Governance, Funding, Quality* by Paulo Santiago, Karine Tremblay, Ester Basri and Elena Arnal (2008). Governance "encompasses the structures, relationships and processes through which, at both national and institutional levels, policies for tertiary education are developed, implemented and reviewed. Governance comprises a complex web including the legislative framework, the characteristics of the institutions and how they relate to the whole system, how money is allocated to institutions and how they are accountable for the way it is spent, as well as less formal structures and relationships which steer and influence behavior" (OECD 2008, p.68).

- What concerns or advice is there surrounding the recommendations contained in this DRAFT discussion paper?

It cannot be overemphasized that this report is a draft – it will be revised based on feedback from the academy, and highlighted in an appendix. Furthermore, this report is not intended to provide recommendations that are a "silver bullet" to the issues discussed by students, GFC, or the President of the University, but rather this report is intended to open discussion for incremental change as part of a broader analysis of GFC. The final report will attempt to collate the feedback from the academy, and should act as a resource along with Dr. Samarasekera's GFC Audit as GFC decides how it wants to proceed with GFC reform.

We acknowledge that the views in this discussion paper ultimately reflect the values and experiences of undergraduates at the academy. Through consultation and research, we have attempted to broaden the paper to reflect other diverse perspectives from the academy. We apologize in advance if anyone or any group has been left out from our research process, and welcome your feedback.

II. Background

Over the past three decades, the post-secondary education sector in Canada has experienced many dramatic changes characterized by the increasing public divestment in post-secondary institutions, rising enrolment, fierce competition for research dollars, rapid internationalization, massive transformation in teaching and learning led by technological advancements and so forth. The combination of these rapid changes has pushed and pulled the post-secondary sector in various directions, and the University of Alberta is no different. In addition, these challenges are more often being met by the entire academy, and not just by administrators, who have increasingly specialized in the nuanced management of higher education and research institutions. Collectively the challenges that face universities and the increasing need for specialized expertise among administration have, in a sense, rendered the tradition of collegial governance ineffective. As a consequence, voices of interest and concern from among rank and file faculty as well as graduate and undergraduate students can be easily ignored during the rapid evolution of the university. Now, more than ever before, it is important to ensure that the mechanisms at place within an academy, to ensure that all members are engaged and empowered to work towards the betterment of the University, are current and relevant. It is also noteworthy that many Canadian universities, including the University of Toronto, University of Calgary, Concordia University, and University of Northern British Columbia, have engaged in review of governance, internally and /or externally.

The University of Alberta has a bicameral governance structure as mandated by the Provincial Government through the Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA). The PSLA legislates that General Faculties Council at the University of Alberta is responsible for governing the academic affairs of the university. This includes recommending to the Board the establishment of Faculties, Departments, and programs of study, creating policies respecting academic awards, admissions, and libraries, and exercising any power of Faculty Council. To this end, the PSLA mandates the inclusion of representatives from various constituencies and members-at-large from the campus community, such as students, faculty, staff and administrators in GFC to ensure that the legislative obligations of GFC are appropriately upheld. This model of collegial governance, which holds as vital the values of shared authority and interdependent responsibility, is essential to ensuring that the academy's voice is heard and that the University evolves to reflect the multitude of ways we achieve our mission of excellence in teaching, research, and service.

However, in recent years there has been a sense of discontent among students, staff and faculty, about the nature in which decisions are being made regarding issues that affect the wider university community.

On January 17, over a dozen undergraduate students wrote to the President with concerns over the process and structure of GFC. At the core of their letter was a sentiment that they didn't feel welcome or valued as members of the academy. The President responded and re-affirmed that students are essential to a collegial academic governance model, while also acknowledging that GFC's ability to engage the academy could be enhanced. The Graduate Students' Association (GSA) and the SU believed that GFC should be engaged in a discussion on its functioning, and proposed a GFC Collegial Governance Committee with broad representation to make recommendations for reform. At the same time, the Office of the President of University of Alberta submitted the *White Paper on General Faculties Council Reform,* which proposed to undertake a review of GFC and its subcommittees to ensure "effective and efficient" functioning of the GFC system. The President chose to convene her GFC Audit Task Force with a mandate to "objectively review of GFC committees' structure and activities" in reference to each committee's terms of reference and the PSLA, as well as to ensure that GFC and its subcommittee were not focused on issues that were "the responsibility of other committees or administrative offices". The committee initially consisted of faculty members from Business and Law, and later included an undergraduate and graduate student with academic expertise in public governance. The Task Force is expected to present its findings and recommendations before GFC for discussion in early 2014.

While the Students' Union sees value in an objective audit of General Faculties Council, we also believe that the academy should also introspect on the context and challenges that face GFC. Indeed, it speaks volumes about GFC's struggle to enact its legislated responsibility over academic affairs if it cannot even reflect on its own structure and procedures. Therefore, as members with vested interest in GFC, the Students' Union believes that there is a need to empower GFC to engage in a review of the state of academic governance at University of Alberta.

III. Purpose

A good governance system places equal emphasis on the structures of governance in place as well as the principles (i.e. the procedures and norms) by which such structures operate and communicate. Therefore, a review of the state of academic governance must comprise of an assessment of both. To this end, the Students' Union at University of Alberta has prepared a report titled *A Review of the State of Academic Governance at the University of Alberta*, which presents a review of academic governance from the undergraduate students' perspective. To stimulate further discussion and deliberation, each of the following sections will be accompanied by a set of recommendations for reform. The first set of recommendations reviews procedures that guide operations and communications of GFC and its committees. The purpose of the second set of recommendations is to examine the scope and nature of activities undertaken by GFC – as mandated by the PSLA - and in comparison to that of GFC equivalents at other Canadian peer institutions to explicitly identify issues within GFC mandate and recognize the extent of that mandate.

Two factors form the underlying rationale for undertaking this project; further, these factors are also important in understanding the Students' Union's research approach to this project. To begin with, academic governance at University of Alberta is under the purview of GFC as mandated by the *Post-Secondary Learning Act*. Student representation and participation in GFC is further required by the *PSLA*. Nevertheless, the *Act* does not set any expectations of periodic assessment of the performance of GFC, whether the procedures that guide the activities at GFC or the nature and structure of GFC. In other words, no guidelines or rules exist that seek to evaluate the extent of meaningful engagement and genuine

participation of GFC members. In this sense, the GFC is left to its own devices to evaluate and identify factors that may enhance or limit member engagement and participation in the decision-making processes that characterize the shared governance structure represented by GFC.

Additionally, over the years, undergraduate student members of GFC have expressed their thoughts and opinions on GFC, during informal and internal conversations within the Students' Union (and formally at GFC on different occasions) that focused on the challenges and barriers undergraduates face in being active members of GFC as well as the opportunities they try to seek utilize, as and when available at GFC, to enhance the extent of engagement they can have in decision making processes. Many of these conversations have revolved around procedural matters. Despite identifying ongoing challenges to undergraduate participation at GFC, students have at the same time maintained their faith in the platform GFC provides as a shared decision making body on issues that are especially relevant to undergraduates at the University of Alberta. In the same spirit, they have also recognized the need to examine the current status quo and identify and support ways to reinforce GFC as the focal point of academic governance mechanism, propel its dynamism as a deliberative body, and strengthen its accountability to members of the academy. However, the informal nature of these conversations and lack of systematic documentation created a need for a comprehensive research plan.

IV. Research process

[to come]

V. Recommendations

Part I: Recommendations for Reforming Governance Procedures

Following is a set of 9 recommendations that address *diverse dimensions of governance procedures practiced by GFC at the University of Alberta*. These recommendations emerge from several formal and informal discussions with past and current GFC undergraduate student representatives about their experiences of representing and serving the University of Alberta.

It is worth acknowledging that these recommendations may resonate with a wider group of campus stakeholders, especially faculty and graduate students, who by virtue of not being in administrative roles, rely heavily on governance processes and practices at GFC to increase their knowledge and understanding as well as participate in decision making processes on important academic and student affairs issues on all five campuses of the University of Alberta.

1. **Revitalize GFC as the venue for debate and discussion on topics of importance to the academy**
   The GFC at University of Alberta represents the center-stage for decision making on all academic and student affairs issues that affect the academy in its entirety. Despite having delegated some of its authority, as part of its PSLA derived mandate, to a variety of subcommittees, it must remain the venue for discussion and debate on proposals and decisions forwarded to it by its subcommittee. *To ensure that GFC members are provided with adequate opportunity to acquaint themselves with multiple massively complex, crosscutting issues occurring in parallel but addressed by GFC subcommittees individually*, it is recommended that:
   a. The frequency of GFC meeting is changed from the existing once a month schedule to be held every two weeks to maintain continuity that is often lost in the course of a month long gap, and to allow for more frequent discussions and debates on important issues.
   b. GFC meetings be held on a Tuesday or Thursday of the week for one hour and thirty minutes during a scheduled class block, instead of a two hour session on Monday that overlaps two one

hour scheduled classes. This will allow for increased participation of students and teaching faculty who otherwise have to choose between attending class and having a voice.

c. The GFC meeting be video recorded and / or live-streamed to allow absentee members to stay up to date with events and discussion at missed GFC meetings. This will also allow for members of the University community who are not members of GFC to observe the meetings and be informed of issues that affect the institution as a whole.

2. Empower newly elected members and aid in transition to foster effective engagement

In fulfilling its purpose of overseeing the academic affairs of the academy, the GFC expects each member to use good judgment, act responsibly and ethically, and participate to the fullest of their potential in governing the University. Some members of GFC are disadvantaged by the fact that they have only recently become a part of the University community, and this is most true with students. *To ensure that the GFC and its individual members are effectively undertaking the roles and responsibilities referred to in the GFC term of reference, are able to fully participate and meaningfully contribute to the dialogue at GFC*, it is recommended that:

a. With the assistance of University Governance, the Chair of GFC and its subcommittees submit a written report at the end of each academic year that highlights substantive items discussed or approved, as well as items that are likely to come forward in the future. These reports should be clearly available on the University Governance website at all times.

b. The annual reports submitted by Chairs of GFC and its subcommittee shall be discussed at the first GFC meeting of the academic year (i.e. in September) to stimulate discussion, to ensure accountability, to ensure checks and balances in authority delegation and as well, to allow new members an opportunity to fully understand past activities and ongoing issues considered by GFC and its subcommittee during the year before.

3. Create a culture of inclusivity and joint-ownership

The PSLA requires participation and representation from diverse representative groups at the University of Alberta: students, faculty, staff and administrators of the academy. In doing so, the PSLA recognizes the distinct contribution each representative group stands to make to the academy and thus, affirms its commitment to allow these groups a voice in the decision making processes that guide this institution. In recognizing the sprit of this belief, *the university has a responsibility to ensure that all stakeholder groups can effectively and equitably fulfill their legislative obligation,* and so it is recommended that:

a. The President of the University and Chair of the GFC present a welcoming commentary at the onset of the academic year which commemorates the significance and vitality of GFC to the institutional community and reminds *all* stakeholder groups and representatives of their obligation to actively participate in dialogues at GFC, irrespective of whether they arrive at the University as learners, teachers, or managers.

b. Nametags be created for display during all GFC sessions for all counselors, devoid of formal designation at the academy, which allows the Chair and members to address each other by name, acknowledging that all GFC members are first and foremost individuals.

c. Letters be issued by the University of Alberta President's Office attesting to the work of student members of GFC for the pertinent academic year, as part of a University Academic Accommodation Policy, to be used by students to excuse themselves from coursework on days and times when GFC meetings are scheduled.

4. Encourage leadership of a supportive and inclusive environment for committee dialogue

The Chairs of GFC and GFC committees play a crucial role in guiding and facilitating the Council and committees' deliberations on important issues, ensuring that *all* voting members are able to present their concerns and comments on issues in the manner suggested in GFC and its committees' terms of references. *Given that this facilitator role as Chair of GFC has both the power and the responsibility to uphold the values of collegial governance that the University espouses*, it is recommended that:

a. The Chairs of GFC and its committees regularly encourage the committee to reflect on the principles of collegiality as well as the committee terms of reference to ensure that conversations remain in-scope and constructive.
b. The Chair of GFC and its committees safeguard practices of good governance – such as creating the agenda, amending the agenda after approval of committee members, and providing supporting documentation for agenda items within the allotted timeline - that are fundamental to ensuring fair functioning of the committee. Further, in rare cases when decisions are made based on precedence, ensure that documentation of such precedence is appropriately cited and made available to all voting members of the committee prior to making a final decision.
c. University Governance provide Chairs of GFC and its committees with resources on effective and equitable meeting facilitation that acknowledges the diverse perspectives and contexts which committee members bring to the table.

5. Adopt clear, concise and useful outlines of issue

The "outline of issue" attached before documents accompanying items in the agenda forms an important and comprehensive source of information for GFC and its committee members to understand the issue, assess its scope and direct and indirect impact on them and the academy, identify the office that has authority over the issue, consultations on the issue that have occurred or are yet to occur, the governance route the issue will follow and so forth. However, very frequently, the 'purpose' and 'impact' sections of the outline of issue are unpolished, leaving readers with insufficient knowledge of the implications of the issue / proposal. Similarly, while the routing section indicates the consultative route the proposal has taken, it doesn't capture a comprehensive summary of changes the proposal may have undergone, which does not allow GFC and its committee members to fathom the full scope of alterations the proposal has witnessed. Finally, for issues that are introduced for purely discussion purposes and where members have no authority to make modifications, an overly complicated outline of issue results in redundancy. *Outlines of issue should provide members with extensive time demands to quickly grasp the content, implications, and concerns behind an item.* Hence, it is recommended that,

a. The GFC Secretary ensure that purpose and impact sections of the outlines of issue are comprehensive to ensure that all GFC members, irrespective of their familiarity with the issue, are able to accurately assess the true impact of the agenda item.
b. The approval routing section in outline of issues be more enhanced to show members of GFC any substantive changes made to issues as they make their way through the governance system.
c. GFC adopt a simplified outline of issue for items that are solely brought forward for discussion, to reduce procedural overload and members are more easily able to consult the academy on a topic.

6. Enhance minutes reporting and adopt early circulation practices

The minutes captured at GFC and its committee meetings are the official record of discussions and deliberations on a multitude of issues considered at GFC and its committees. The discussions that precede a final vote and decision on a matter are essential in understanding the growth of the University, and provide a valuable record of the diverse perspectives of the academy. Minutes are generally circulated a week before the scheduled meetings. However, the reporting of the meeting

minutes – devoid of any identifying information about the speaker – seldom captures the spirit of the debates. *Further, given the three-week gap (and longer during summer months and winter break) in circulation of minutes post the actual occurrence of meetings artificially stalls continuous thought and conversations (outside the committee) on key issues*. Thus it is recommended that:

a. GFC and its committees move back to more comprehensive meeting minutes, which not only captures the spirit of the meeting, but also includes an identification of representative designation of the speaking member, along with any action items that arise through the course of a meeting.
b. Draft minutes be circulated earlier to allow members to reflect upon them while they are still mindful of recent in-session committee discussions and to allow for conversations to continue outside committees.
c. Minutes be recorded and circulated for all standing subcommittees of GFC committees, which includes the Academic Standard Committee Subcommittee on Standards (ASC SOS) to ensure transparency and continuity of inter-committee flow of information.

7. Establish a culture of easy-to-access records

University Governance maintains the official record of all meeting materials and minutes of discussions as part of GFC and its committees' activities and these are available to be accessed publicly upon a request submitted to the GFC Secretary (except those records with implications under FOIPP regulations). The importance of these materials in helping a member to acquaint themselves with past deliberations and course of actions undertaken on important issues examined at GFC or one of its committees, in evaluating rationales for precedence based decision making, or simply as a reference material to inform a better understanding of the activities undertaken by GFC cannot be stressed sufficiently. However, as *a higher education instruction committed to both the generation and preservation of knowledge, to ensure that our governance resources are accessible and preserved for members to access*, it is recommended that

a. University Governance create an online archive for storing all meeting materials for GFC and its committee meetings, including submissions related to written questions and responses that are normally included in GFC meeting materials. Such an archive would have historical documents accessible separately and appropriately titled for greater searchability.
b. Further, University Governance investigate a system of online cataloguing and tagging that will allow for seamless issue tracking to aid in new member Orientation, future research on prior discussions and decisions, and to allow members to watch how issues may have entered, evolved, and exited the governance routes.

8. Educate GFC members on the role of the GFC Secretary

According to the terms of reference of GFC, a primary responsibility of the GFC Secretary is "to serve the General Faculties Council and its Executive Committee as Secretary by arranging all meetings, preparing agendas and ensuring that comprehensive documentation, including an outline of the issues, is distributed."[2] However, *misconceptions and lack of knowledge exist among GFC student members about the role of the GFC Secretary and the accompanying mandate to serve all members of GFC particularly in acting as a*

[2] As indicated on pg. 12 of the *GFC Terms of Reference* available on the GFC webpage hosted by University Governance, University of Alberta. See here: http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/GeneralFacultiesCouncil/~/media/Governance/Documents/GO01/TER/General-Faculties-Council.pdf

"resource person where information may be obtained on any matters, which fall within the purview of General Faculties Council"[3]. It is recommended that:

a. At the start of the academic year, the University Secretary undertake activities to *explicitly* educate those new to GFC on the Secretary's role and mandate to serve as an impartial resource person to the entire GFC, with respect to questions, concerns and comments relating to any matter under the purview of GFC.

9. Introduce systematic evaluations to improve operations and communication of GFC and its committees

In fulfilling its purpose of overseeing the academic affairs of the academy, GFC should have the tools to regularly engage in self-reflection and enhancement to adapt to rapidly changing needs and circumstances. *To provide GFC with the information that allows for continuous improvement that responds to the needs of its members*, it is recommended that:

a. The University Secretary develops a survey tool for annual governance evaluations for GFC and its committees. The survey would be to gather feedback from members on the efficiency of operations and communication of GFC and its committees, with an aim to enhance members' ability to wholly engage and participate in dialogue.
b. The findings and insights from a member survey are presented at the last meeting of GFC for the academic year along with a brief report identifying next steps.

Part II: Recommendations for Governance Structures

1. Make explicit the role of Libraries in the Committee on the Learning Environment

While the University of British Columbia, the University of Manitoba, McGill, and Queen's all have GFC standing committees specifically to address issues related to libraries, the University of Alberta GFC lacks clarity on where library-related issues might be addressed. While the *PSLA* Section 26(1)(k) indicates that GFC is responsible for making "rules and regulations for the management and operations of the libraries," it is not clear from a review of the terms of references of GFC committees as to which committee oversees library related issues. Libraries are quintessential in supporting the University's strategic and academic priorities and how libraries allocate resources to address strategic priorities has significant bearing on the scholarly environment for students and faculty. Even more so than before, the rapid changes in learning approaches and practices accompanied by advancements in technology and digitization requires that serious consideration be given to discussing the library's changing role in the life of the academy. In 2004, the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Libraries Committee merged to form the Committee on the Learning Environment, however the terms of reference of CLE don't fully reflect the role of Libraries in the learning environment. *The mandate to govern libraries, particularly in areas of strategic initiatives and resource planning for research and learning tools, closely fit within CLE mandate and intended purpose. Therefore, it is recommended that*

a. The Terms of Reference of CLE be amended to include the governance of libraries, including university-wide library policy, library strategic planning, and discussions on new developments in academic libraries including copyright and open access policies.
b. Library policy respecting users of the libraries be transitioned into UAPPOL

[3] Ibid. pg. 13.

c. CLE membership include an elected librarian

2. Enhance awareness, discussion, and governance of the University's excellent research enterprise

A number of Canadian peer institutions have standing committees of GFC to govern and deliberate on issues impacting research and scholarly activity. While a University Research and Policy Committee (URPC) exists under the mandate of the office of Vice-President (Research), the URPC does not fall within the direct purview of academic governance per se. Issues impacting the University's research mandate typically enter governance through APC before being passed to the Board Learning and Discovery Committee. *To enhance the academy's awareness of and ability to govern research policy, without adding to the burden of members of the academy, it is recommended that:*

a. The GFC Committee on the Learning Environment mandate include issues and policy respecting research, museums and collections, and centers and institutes, as delegated by APC.

3. Rethink the governance of teaching awards as policy guided by CLE instead of a committee guided by GFC

The University of Alberta is the only U13 member that governs teaching awards through a separate committee. In order to reduce the number of committees of GFC to allow for a leaner and more efficient governance body, the academy should consider transitioning UTAC's terms of reference into a policy, that the Committee on the Learning Environment would be responsible for. *To reduce the number of committees that University Governance supports without impacting the integrity of the selection process it, is recommended that:*

a. The GFC Committee on the Learning Environment be given the power to approve policy respecting major teaching awards.
b. The University Teaching Awards Committee be disbanded as a GFC subcommittee, with the principles contained in its Terms of Reference being transitioned into a UAPPOL policy on Selection of Major Teaching Awards.

4. Govern standards, quality, and enrolment through a revised Academic Programs and Standards Committee

As suggested by current Canadian research, academic governance needs to play an increased role in governing the quality of student programs at an undergraduate and graduate level[4]. The Academic Standards Committee and Subcommittee on Standards have responsibility for admission, transfer, course-change, certificates, and academic standard policies, and share responsibility for grading, enrolment, examinations, and programs of study. The Academic Standards Committee should function as the primary academic standards and program governing body, and should have a membership that is representative of the diversity of academic program stakeholders. *In order to refocus on the quality, management, and strategy of academic programs, instead of the management, it is recommended that:*

[4] Jones, Glen A. (2013). "Governing Quality: Positioning Student Learning as a Core Objective of Institutional and System-Level Governance." Keynote paper presented at the International Conference on Higher Education Student Learning and Development in a Globalizing Time, hosted by the Institute of Education, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China, October 27-28, 2013.

a. The existing administrative membership of ASC transition into Associate Dean's Council, an advisory body to the Provost's Office.
b. The Academic Standards Committee evolve into an Academic Programs and Standards Committee, with responsibility certificates, admission, transfer, and course-changes.
c. Membership of APSC reflect a diverse array of stakeholders including Deans, Chairs, the Provost's Office, the Registrar's Office, constituency associations, students, faculty, and FGSR.
d. APSC be delegated authority on academic programs, examinations, grading, and enrolment management, to allow it to consider strategic directions, program quality, and program standards, and make recommendations directly to GFC or the Board of Governors.
e. Enrolment management policies be updated and UAPPOLized to allow the APSC to engage in discussions on program size, quality, and strategy in an informed and valued manner.
f. As per the advice of the Provost's Task Force on Student Financial Aid, APSC should include in its mandate the oversight of strategic enrolment management tools like merit- and need-based aid.
g. Govern student awards through APSC, through creating and overseeing UAPPOL policy and procedures that empower the RO and University Advancement to manage student scholarships and bursaries.

5. Trans-disciplinary governance

The University of Alberta operates in a uniquely decentralized manner, which has a number of strengths. For central academic governance, however, it means that initiatives or issues may pass by GFC, thus leaving discussions without a comprehensive perspective. Section 29(1) of PSLA, which defines the powers of Faculty Councils, indicates that they have the authority to govern academic matters within a faculty, especially those related to student admission and withdrawal, program of study, conduct of examination including appointment of examiners, and authorization of granting of degree. Generally, Deans as administrative heads of the faculties and as chairs of Faculty Councils report to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic). However, multiple provisions within section 26(1)(b), (c)(h) and (i) provide GFC the ultimate governing authority over decisions made by FCs. In other words, Faculty Councils function under delegated authority from the GFC and are therefore within the purview of governing responsibilities shared by GFC members. However, annual reports provided by Deans to the Provost office are seldom discussed at GFC, which leaves GFC members with incomplete understanding of academic activities and strategic initiatives (especially academic program renewal) within the Faculty Councils that stand to potentially affect the overall quality of academic experience of students at University of Alberta. *Therefore it is recommended that,*

a. GFC, as per its PSLA mandate, require Faculty Council annual reports be included as information items to GFC akin to the mid-term assessment updates of *Dare to Discover,* and be included in the governance orientation files at the beginning of the academic year.

6. Delegate authority in responsible, clear, and flexible ways

All GFC standing committees function on delegated authority from GFC indicating that the power to evaluate the delegation of authority rests ultimately with GFC. *To ensure that GFC and its standing committees continue to serve the mandate among the many rapid changes affecting the academy on a regular basis (and given the changing times facing the higher education section), it is recommended that*

a. The University Secretary track delegated authority by PSLA-mandated activity, as well as by commonly occurring issues (eg. program approvals) and make this information available on

GFC's website and annual to members in the GFC orientation materials.

b. The terms of reference of each subcommittee be reviewed so that important, divisive, or strategic issues be forwarded to GFC, as either the final approver or before moving to the Board of Governors.
c. To combat long agendas, GFC should operate with "consent" agendas so that items forwarded from ASC, APC, FDC, and Exec are discussed or voted upon only if a GFC member requests to do so in advance of the meeting.
d. A clear process be developed by GFC that allows it to review and un-delegate authority from standing committees in situations where the matter–in-question is potentially significant beyond the narrowly defined scope of the standing GFC committee in which it is typically discussed.

7. **Where overlap exists, ensure effective communication from the Board to GFC, and vice-versa**
While academic governance is exclusively within the scope of PSLA mandated activities of GFC, many decisions and policies made by Board of Governors (BoG) stand to directly and/or indirectly impact academic affairs at the academy. *This necessitates that BoG, many of whom are not internal members of the academy, are better informed and educated on the issues addressed by GFC as well as cognizant of how may their decisions have impact beyond financial, human resource or purely administrative responsibilities at the University. It is recommended that*

a. The GFC presents highlights of key decisions on academic issues on a semester basis before the BoG as discussion items. These presentations should be accompanied by oral updates from the elected representative on the Board from GFC.
b. Decisions by the Board, including amendments made to decisions from GFC or one of its subcommittees be circulated as an information item back to GFC.
c. Joint retreats be organized between GFC and the BoG members, once a semester, to allow for informal exchange, sharing of information and learning to create an open, closer and more responsive culture of governance.

IV. Appendix and References
[To come]