

GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

The GSA Annual Report is designed to give GSA members—graduate students at the University of Alberta—a snapshot of what we work to achieve. Some aspects of our work remain constant year to year: the services we work to offer, for example, are perennial features. But other aspects—advocacy work or outreach—shift in response to the changing landscape of University, community, and global affairs.

This year saw a continuation of virtual programming and hybrid operations at the GSA. We offered virtual Fall and Winter Orientations, alongside our New Student Survival Guide. We partnered with local favourite Rapid Fire Theatre to bring graduate students two improv comedy nights. We hosted a number of Peer Panel events where “veteran” graduate students shared insider tips and tricks with new graduate students.

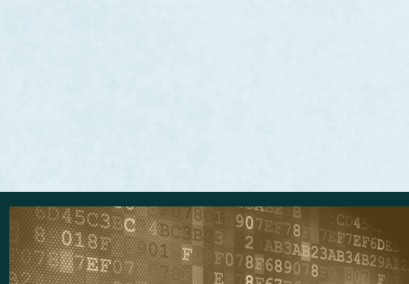
Student leaders led several consultation surveys to ensure advocacy efforts aligned with the unique needs of the graduate student body. They also met individually with dozens of graduate students and graduate student groups to advise and assist them, and to hear their feedback.

GSA members received over \$300,000 in grants and bursaries, while an additional \$400,500 was directed to the University to be disbursed through their supplementary bursary program. GSA Recognition Awards distributed \$17,000 to exceptional graduate students. Partnerships with the Career Centre and the Academic Success Centre included \$12,000 in subsidies and yielded special programming for graduate students. Lastly, we gave recognition of the work of the Campus Food Bank via a \$23,000 subsidy and plans to increase this contribution for the coming year.

At the same time, student leaders continued to work on the most essential, but also longer-term, priorities of addressing budget cuts that continue to impact the graduate student experience, rising tuition costs that represent a growing barrier to accessing post-secondary education, and funding opportunities that are crucial to the health, wellness, and ultimately success of graduate students and their families.

Our goal is that this document will shed some light on what GSA executives—your elected graduate student leaders—and the staff team charged with supporting their work achieved this year. We encourage you to direct any questions that arise during your reading of this document to us at gsa.frontdesk@ualberta.ca.

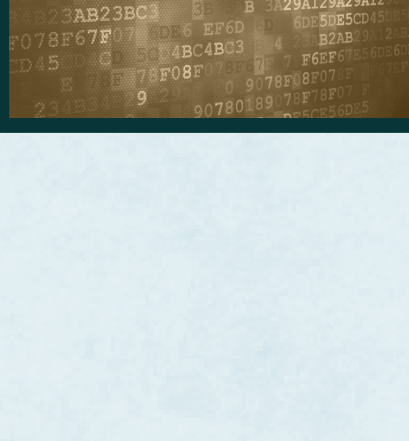
CREATING SOLUTIONS



This year's elected student leaders dedicated significant time to advocating for and collaborating with University administration on (among others) the following projects:

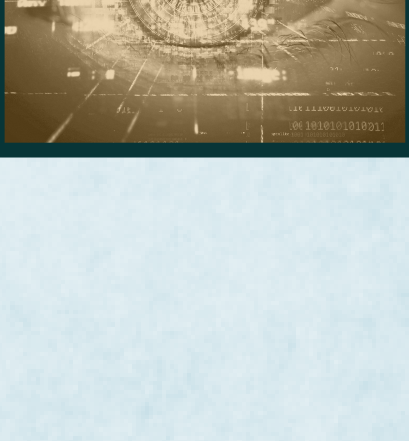
Strengthening the Union

To bolster bargaining power and fortify overall union operations, this year saw efforts that culminated in a service agreement with the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), a slate of 15 new union steward positions designated by faculty, and significant efforts to connect and engage with graduate students within the diverse range of academic units at both the mass scale and in-person. This work was made possible through the collection of a 1% union due, a decision that was ratified by the Academically-Employed Graduate Students.



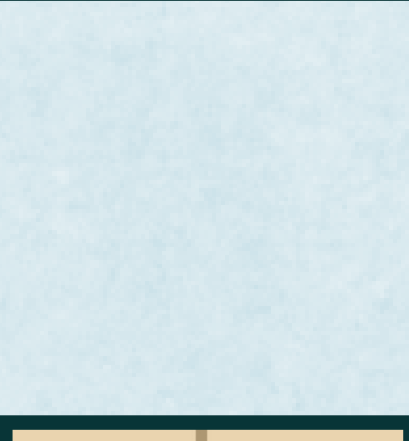
Sustaining & Cultivating Partnerships

The shifting conditions resulting from changes within and beyond the University landscape—such as the University restructuring and provincial budget cuts to post-secondary—demanded that the elected student leaders dedicate significant attention to sustaining and strengthening the GSA's diverse network of contacts, partners, and colleagues. In addition to the continued partnership with the Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC), student leaders are involved with the soon to be formalized Graduate Students' of Canada Alliance. Simultaneously, efforts are made to maintain constructive dialogue with senior University administrators, the Board of Governors, valued service providers, as well as colleagues at other University-associated unions such as the Students' Union (SU), Non-Academic Staff Association (NASA), and the Association of Academic Staff of the University of Alberta (AASUA).



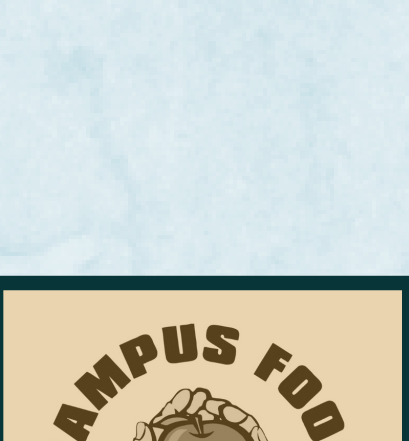
Improving Access to Technology

The cost of technology that is necessitated by graduate level research can pose an insurmountable barrier for accessing advanced education. In response to this need and a lack of capacity from existing University offerings, the GSA student leaders have pursued a number of avenues. With support from the Office of the Registrar and the Office of Advancement, student leaders are continuing to work to develop a dedicated funding opportunity in this vein.



Health and Dental Plan Subsidy

The cost of the GSA Health and Dental Plan, which is administered by Studentcare, is set to increase effective Fall 2022 in response to inflating costs and a significant increase in usage. With consideration for the financial circumstances of graduate students, the GSA has opted to utilize the GSA Health and Dental Plan Reserve Fund in the amount of \$39.03 per graduate student. This reduces the planned increase as experienced by graduate students to 5%, bringing the per-person cost of the Plan to \$525.38 in 2022-2023.



U-Pass Affordability

With consideration for the unusual circumstances of the Winter 2022 term which necessitated a shift to online learning as directed by provincial public health measures, the GSA joined other Edmonton-area student associations to negotiate with Edmonton Transit Services (ETS) for a partial refund of the Winter 2022 U-Pass fee. This advocacy has secured, for the benefit of graduate students, a \$45 refund.

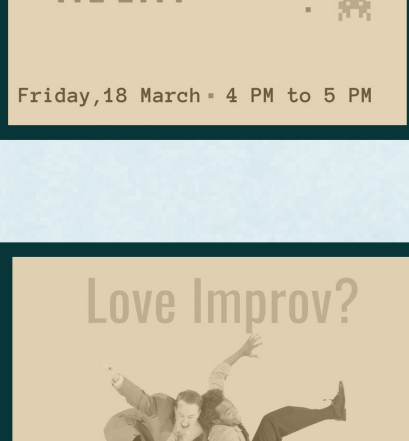


Support for the Campus Food Bank

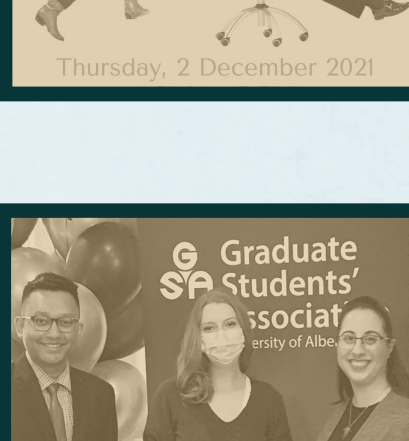
The GSA has been a long-time supporter of the Campus Food Bank (CFB), and each year dedicates a subsidy to support its mandate and growing variety of program offerings. The proportion of graduate students who access CFB offerings grows every year, and has grown significantly in the last two years in particular. Along with increasing the subsidy planned for 2022-2023 to \$25,000, the GSA is committing 30%* of its projected budget surplus for 2021-2022 to the CFB as a one-time grant.

* Final figures are forthcoming in Summer 2022

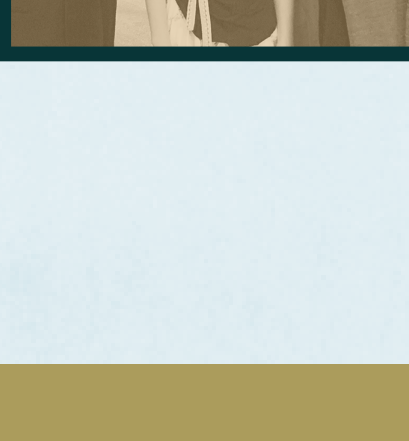
THE NEW LANDSCAPE



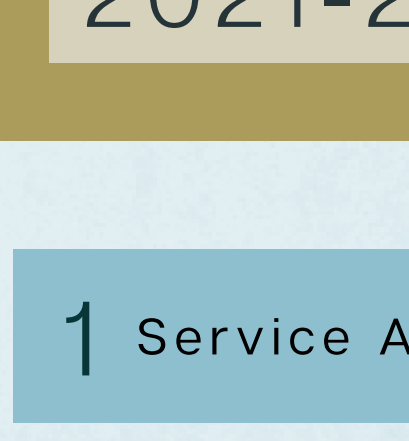
The GSA is proud to be run by and for graduate students. Whether it is through one-on-one meetings, specific service offerings, or in a broader setting, our work is defined by interacting with students. Below are just some of the ways we engaged with the graduate student body during 2021-2022.



Graduate Student Orientation: Delivered virtually, these orientations introduced new and returning graduate students to GSA work, services, and funding. It also provided information on the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, and University services available to graduate students.



New Student Survival Guide: Designed for a remote-learning academic year, this tool aimed to provide new and returning graduate students with a quick guide on GSA offerings, in addition to handy (printable) agenda pages.



Surviving and Thriving Graduate School Peer Panels: These hour-long graduate student panel sessions shared responses to, "what I wish I'd known when I started grad school." These informal conversational events shared information and answered graduate students questions.



Elected Student Executive Videos: In order to provide graduate students a glance into the president's and each vice-president's portfolio, each executive spoke about their duties and key initiatives.



Virtual Front Desk: Our Virtual Front Desk offered graduate students the opportunity to directly communicate with a member of the GSA staff. This Front Desk helped graduate students get answers to questions about services, funding, the collective agreement, and other matters all year long.



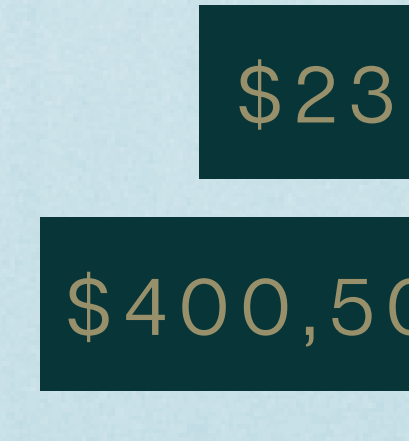
Virtual Game Chill-Out: Online game extravaganza, planned to break the monotony of the week and of COVID-19. We offered door prizes and fun games.



Rapid Fire Theatre Events: To mark and celebrate the end-of-term period, we were thrilled to host Edmonton's own Rapid Fire Theatre at virtual improvisational comedy nights in November and again in April 2022. Many thanks to our friends at RTF!



Kids & Company: The GSA has partnered with the Students' Union for a membership with Kids & Company to facilitate limited child care services for students who parent. In addition, access the Kids & Company Family Resource Centre for healthy recipes and helpful on-demand webinars.



Awards Ceremony: The GSA was pleased to host an abbreviated Awards Ceremony event this year to celebrate the winners of the GSA Recognition Awards in person. You can see the winners here.

2021-2022 AT A GLANCE

1 Service Agreement with the PSAC

6 Events

10 Consultation Surveys and Town Halls

15 New Union Steward Positions

50 GSA Newsletters Circulated

1084 Virtual Graduate Student Orientation Participants

2000 GSA Planners Printed

\$12,000 Subsidies to UofA Service Partners

\$13,821 Graduate Student Group Grants Disbursed

\$17,000 Recognition Awards Disbursed

\$23,000 Campus Food Bank Annual Subsidy

\$35,352 Academic Travel Grants Disbursed

\$49,600 Emergency Bursaries Disbursed (approx.)

\$236,000 Child Care Grants Disbursed

\$400,500 Contributed to UofA Supplementary Bursary

Read more about the GSA's [Governance](#), [Services](#), [Funding](#), and [Collective Agreement](#).

Read more updates about Strategic Work Plan goals [here](#).

The GSA and the University of Alberta reside on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis. This territory is a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway, Saulteaux, Anishnaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community. In acknowledging this traditional territory and its significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived and continue to live upon it, we recognize its longer history that reaches beyond colonization and the establishment of European colonies and recognize the GSA's ongoing collective responsibility in working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) peoples and what that means for the work of the GSA as it aims to practice the principles of being Good Relations with FNMI peoples, Nations, communities, and lands.

CONTACT US

Phone: 780-492-2175

Email: gsa.frontdesk@ualberta.ca