

GSA Annual Report 2015-16

Rajat Chakravarty

25 April 2016



Graduate Students' Association
University of Saskatchewan



The GSA Executive 2015-16

Back L-R

Vice President Operations - Ziad Ghaith

President - Rajat Chakravarty

Vice President Finance - David Bennett

Front L-R

Aboriginal Liaison - Dana Carriere

Vice President External - Natalia Terekhova

Vice President Academic - Jebunnessa Chapola

Vice President Student Affairs - Hardi Shahadu (absent)



President's Message

It is my pleasure to bring this annual report to you on behalf of the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) to its board of directors, members and our stakeholders at the University of Saskatchewan and beyond.

This has been one of the busiest and the most productive years for the association in recent memory. The GSA has involved itself in many projects and new initiatives that have expanded the services we provide to our members, made us more inclusive to the needs of graduate students as well as made the student experience more fun and relaxed. All of this was achieved with a vision of complete transparency, fiscal responsibility, accountability to our governing bodies and actively collaborating with other relevant organizations within the university as well as nationally.

Early in our tenures, the GSA in its special general meeting passed a new set of governing documents and a budget that compelled more transparency and accountability from the GSA executive with the operations of the GSA. This set the tone for more inclusive governance within the organization including the setup of a new

legal subcommittee to deal with a pending legal invoice; as well as an advocacy steering subcommittee to find ways for obtaining legal supports for its members.

Since then, the GSA has provided strong and effective advocacy this past year including encouraging the university senior administration for financial compensation, for the parking lot vandalism in May 2015; effective inclusion of graduate student parents in the university's new childcare facilities as well as to provide supports and form policies around sexual assault and mental health. A big focus this year has been on student wellness. The GSA for the first time funded graduate student sports teams in Campus Rec leagues as the 'GSA Guppies'. For better mental health, the GSA began a series of GSA Health Chats that fostered discussions between graduate students on issues pertaining to stress, nutrition and making better health choices.

The GSA has taken its student services to a new level that will hold our association well in the future. The GSA has provided more bursaries this year to graduate students in need including two new Aboriginal student bursaries and an emergency funding budget line to help members in contingencies. The improved GSA Commons now serves host to a variety of GSA events, university programming and bookings from around the city almost every day! In a landmark collaboration, the GSA will walk hand in hand with the USSU to provide a new Campus Legal Services office for students to look for legal assistance and advice on non-criminal issues at university or beyond.

The GSA has made a strong mark in the national student movement this year with strong presence at various conferences, including the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) meetings, Student Union Development Summit 2015, Canadian Association of Graduate Studies 2015, Racialized and Indigenous Student Experience Summit 2016 and the GU15 meeting. This has directly translated to creating university-wide campaigns on mental health, anti-racist workshops and the federal and provincial elections campaigns. In a first, the GSA also hosted its first National Graduate Caucus 2016 that provided a platform for GSA executives across Canada to collaborate on issues surrounding union solidarity on campus, international student inclusion and better use of student infrastructure.

The Graduate Student Achievement Week on campus was spearheaded by the GSA this year with a lineup of big events that showcased the research prowess and achievements of our members. The 3-Minute Thesis and the GSA Conference were well-attended, and the GSA Gala was a memorable night for everyone in attendance as

we appreciated the award winners, photographed ourselves and danced the night away.

To keep student engagement ongoing, the GSA regularly organized socials to create opportunities for graduate student friendships and networking. The GSA had a large fall orientation at the Bowl, a board games night, a movie night, a Winter Welcome social and several Industry talks. All these were well-attended with special attention paid to make these spaces inclusive through food options and music.

It is clear that the GSA has set new standards in graduate student governance and advocacy in Canada. The GSA is now well-respected as a graduate student voice at the university, evidenced by being actively sought to represent graduate students at various governance and selection committees. The GSA has been instrumental in the formation of the dormant Saskatchewan chapter of the CFS for stronger advocacy and campaigns at the provincial level. The GSA has also argued for national-level discussion forums for racialized, indigenous and international student issues as well as been party to resolutions for better education, supports and policies at the national level.

This report is only going to be a glimpse of the various activities the GSA was involved in this past year and by no means exhaustive. Needless to say, none of this would have been possible without the cooperation, motivation and dedication of the GSA executive, council, staff, coordinators and volunteers who tirelessly worked to support graduate students, GSA events, the GSA Commons and our various services.

As I leave this position, I am left with a huge void in my heart (and my schedule!). The GSA has been at the pinnacle of my non-research engagements and professional development on campus, and I feel honoured to have served our members and improving their student experience. I am confident that the GSA has a bright future and its best days are ahead.

Signing off,

Rajat Chakravarty



Office Manager's Message

It is hard to believe that the 2015-2016 academic year is winding down once again. The GSA had a very successful year, with the GSA commons hosting a number of terrific well attended events, along with several very stimulating workshops. It is always rewarding to see the GSA commons being utilized to bring graduate students together to learn to network and to socialize.

It was a pleasure to observe an energetic team of executives merge together with unique ideas, goals and visions for the GSA. This was clearly indicated by the success of our orientation, gala, conference, 3MT and various other events. Thank you for all of your dedication this year!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the GSA coordinators for their hard work, friendly attitudes and most of all for their flexibility, often rearranging their schedules to fit in after hour bookings and last minute requests. Thank you to the graduate students who dedicated precious time to sit on a variety of committees and to the many volunteers who helped ensure our events ran smoothly. Your time is very appreciated and valued.

I look forward to another great year!

Warmest regards,

Sherri Rohovich

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1 GSA Governance

The GSA has improved in leaps and bounds this year on its mandate of transparent and inclusive governance. The GSA executive this year was elected on a decisive mandate to give stronger strategic direction to its governance goals. With the wonderful efforts of the GSA executive, with cooperation and feedback from GSA Council, the GSA has reformed itself as an internally strong organization that has made adequate room for consultation, reporting financial information and encourage more participation in decision making.

1.1 Governing documents

Pursuant to a special general meeting held on May 19, 2015 – the GSA adopted a radical new set of governing documents. The GSA governing documents now have three sections in increasing order of jurisdiction – GSA Policies, GSA Bylaws and the GSA Constitution. This was done under the guidance of months of efforts by GSA’s erstwhile Policy Review Committee as well as some consultation with governance experts on and off campus. These new documents are available on the GSA website.

1.2 Meetings

Meetings at the GSA have ensured its smooth functioning and progress on its various internal processes. This year, the GSA accepted minutes of all GSA subcommittees at the GSA Council meeting to keep records for the future as well as give council members an opportunity to discuss the progress at these meetings. For GSA executive meetings, all minutes have been posted online in a timely manner. All substantive agreements have been documented in the minutes including but not limited to representation at various committees, approval for funding for all GSA events, conferences and initiatives for social clubs and items for information. You may find these minutes on the GSA website.

1.3 GSA By-elections

At the beginning of the tenures of the GSA executive, the position of Vice President Operations remained vacant. It was unanimously decided by the GSA executive to reject a past practice of having a nomination from the GSA executive for consideration at GSA Council to having a more transparent process of a by-election. This was well-received by the GSA members, who eventually voted on having a new bylaw to have by-elections for every vacant GSA executive position in the future. The GSA By-elections saw four candidates running for the position.

1.4 Budget approval

At the beginning of the year, the GSA had no budget approved for its operations. This made operations difficult at the beginning as the GSA executive were incurring personal expenses before reimbursements could be issued at a later time. At the Special General Meeting on May 19, 2015 the GSA passed a budget for the operations of the GSA. The budget for the GSA this year has been one of the most detailed and comprehensive – and the GSA would like to recognize the expertise of the Budget Committee and the VP Finance for being so meticulous with bookkeeping and financial reportage. The budget for 2016-17 was passed well in advance in March 2016 and is available on the GSA website.

1.5 Finances

The GSA has done wonders this year in its financial reporting and accountability. With an ambitious vision from our GSA VP Finance as well as controversies on inadequate financial transparency the previous year, the GSA was committed to being a strong organization financially. This was achieved through a variety of accomplishments within the finance portfolio. A new standard in transparency was set with monthly reporting of finances to GSA Council with accounts available on the GSA website. We registered GSA executives with the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) in the event of a workplace accident. The GSA also ratified with ISC and applied for the much-needed director's liability insurance. Enhanced safety procedures for counting money and deposits was enforced and carbon copies of all signed financial instruments like cheques were maintained. The GSA also obtained

a new bookkeeping solution for better maintenance of financial records to avoid delays with our audits who need formatted presentations of financial records.

1.6 GSA Fees

Thanks to the efforts of the GSA VP Finance and the cooperation of the rest of the executive, the GSA Executive has transparently operated the GSA finances and looked for every opportunity to incur savings with student dollars in the operations of the GSA. This includes austerity measures in executive expenses, covering shifts at the GSA Commons and taking more ownership at GSA events for discounted food items and logistics. The GSA is proud to announce as a result that the GSA fee shall not be increasing in the coming year. The fees currently will be as follows:

Description	Fall Term	Winter Term
GSA Membership Fee	\$33.65	\$33.65
GSA Part-time Membership Fee	\$18.35	\$18.35
GSA Saskatoon Transit Fee	\$105.66	\$105.66
GSA CFS Fee	\$5.73	\$5.73
GSA Health Plan Fee	\$225.56	N/A
GSA Dental Plan Fee	\$185.61	N/A

1.7 GSA Council

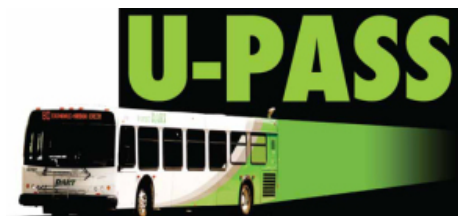
This year, the GSA actively engaged several academic units on campus for representation on GSA Council for a more representative opinion on graduate student issues on campus. A workshop on Robert’s Rules of Order was also organized at the beginning of the year to familiarize new councillors with meeting procedures. The GSA would like to thank the efforts and commitment shown by the councillors in working towards a stronger GSA. The GSA would like to thank the following:

Councillor	Academic Unit
Adeola Olubamiji	Biomedical Engineering
Shaoda Li	Biomedical Engineering
William Judge	Chemical Engineering
Mostafa Aghbolaghy	Chemical Engineering
Shaliza Singh Sapal	Civil and Geological Engineering
Seun Daniel Oluwajana	Civil and Geological Engineering
Varun Gaur	Computer Science
Rob Liggett	Education
Michelle Rose Whitstone	Education
Nripesh Ayer	Electrical and Computer Engineering
Kiefer Waite-Newhouse	English
Casey McMahon	Kinesiology
Colin McLaren	Kinesiology
Mohammad Rafatinasr	Mechanical Engineering
Isaac Pratt	Medicine
Emiliana de Omena Bomfim	Medicine
Jason Ho	Physics
Lindsay Goodwin	Physics
Kirby Nilsen	Plant Sciences
Surendra Bhattarai	Plant Sciences
Prabin Rokaya	Environment & Sustainability
Aimee Schmidt	Environment & Sustainability
Abigail Seshie	Sociology
Joseph Y. Asomah	Sociology
David Hilger	Soil Science
Garrett Morandi	Toxicology
Jason Byron Perez	Veterinary Medicine

2 GSA Services

2.1 U-Pass

In its pilot year, the U-Pass implementation was contracted to the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) as a way to have a more centralized location for dispensing the U-Pass. This has proved beneficial to the GSA Office as it otherwise was logistically difficult to arrange this at the GSA Commons with permanent staff looking into issues around the U-Pass year round. The GSA has received no negative feedback on the move and we hope this move serves well for the membership in the future. It was felt that such an arrangement with the expertise of the USSU Information Centre in dealing with opt-outs etc. would make the process smoother for our members.



2.2 International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

The GSA in collaboration with the Canadian Federation of Students provided the ISIC (International Student Identity Card) activation service at the GSA Commons. This was earlier done at the Travel Cuts office at Upper Place Riel but was discontinued in August when the office closed. The GSA is happy to say that the implementation of this service has worked well so far. This service was provided

once a week at a convenient time after office hours to allow our members to come and activate their cards easily. Our special thanks goes to the Canadian Federation of Students for their support in arranging for the logistics for this service at the GSA Commons. Close to 100 ISIC cards were issued this year at the GSA Commons, and we hope that this number grows in the coming years.

2.3 Health & Dental Plan

The GSA has worked collaboratively with Studentcare.net, our health and dental insurance broker to convey feedback on our memberships needs for the plan. They have been very supportive of our concerns and have regularly made efforts to come to the GSA and meet relevant executives and discuss the plan, its outcomes and report on claims made periodically. The GSA is in a good place with our partnership and is proud to provide a very competitive health and dental plan for our members.



2.4 GSA Commons

The GSA takes pride in providing a welcoming space on campus for students to come and relax, study, attend and organize events. The GSA Commons has hosted a multitude of events this year including workshops, the GSA Conference, the 3-Minute Thesis, GSA Committee and Council meetings, the GSA health chats, the

GSA Provincial Elections forum, the National Graduate Caucus 2016, career talks, departmental events and a plethora of social and networking events. The GSA is also happy to announce that we will be hosting the 2016 GU15 Summit at the GSA Commons as well. This year, the GSA Commons hosted 188 different events from the period of May 2015 to May 2016. This represents a 15 percent increase in the number of hosted events compared to the previous year. With the commitment of our office staff and the GSA executive, the GSA Commons has been rigorously maintained as one of the most sought-after venues to host events in the university and the city.

2.5 Social Clubs

The GSA has sheltered several social clubs this year including:

- American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists University of Saskatchewan Student Chapter
- Bangladesh Students Association
- FOCUS Club
- India Students' Association
- Nepalese Students' Association
- Shinerama
- Women in Physics Canada Conference 2016

The GSA would like to thank all students who actively participated and volunteered to lead GSA social clubs. They do important work to keep our members engaged in both academic and non-academic pursuits. The GSA was invited to several events of these social clubs. The GSA has sponsored several initiatives and events of these student clubs that have greatly benefited our members and hopes that such engagement of social clubs continues in the coming years.



GSA members invited to India Students' Association's cultural event - Parichay 2015

2.6 Bursaries

The GSA successfully coordinated giving 50 bursaries to graduate students in financial need spread throughout the year. The GSA would like to thank the contributions of the College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR) for their generous donations as well as the long hours invested by the Bursary Committee members to meticulously over 600 long applications throughout the year. The GSA would also like to congratulate all the bursary winners for their efforts in winning this recognition and would hope that more students apply for this service in the future.

2.7 GSA Handbook

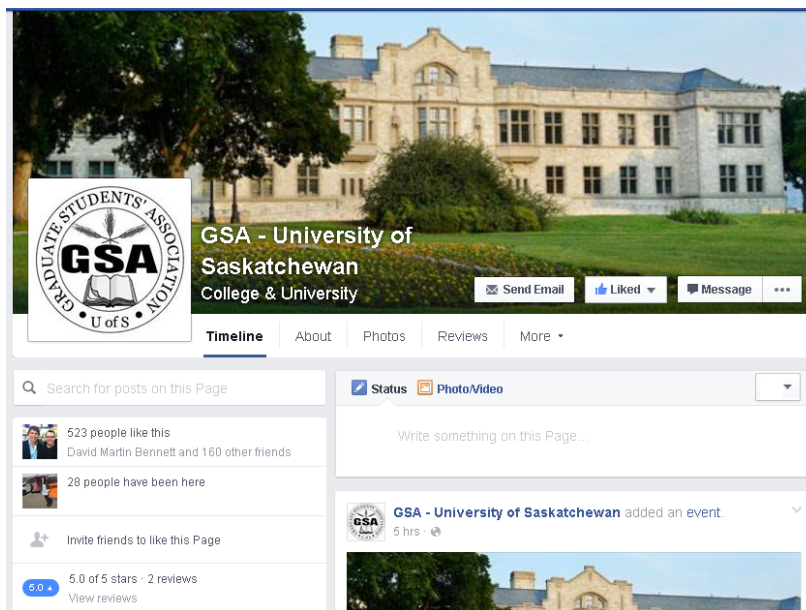
The GSA approached the Canadian Federation of Students once again this year to publish the graduate student handbook given their convenience and cost. This year, the GSA also managed to sneak in some coupons that would be helpful for students to claim discounts at various business in Saskatoon. The GSA contacted over 40 organizations for advertisements and were successful in bringing 9 advertisements with total profit of \$985. The handbook has proved very useful to our members and is a popular giveaway at our annual GSA Fall orientation.

3 Initiatives

3.1 Communications

The GSA has improved manifold in its communication strategies both internally and externally..

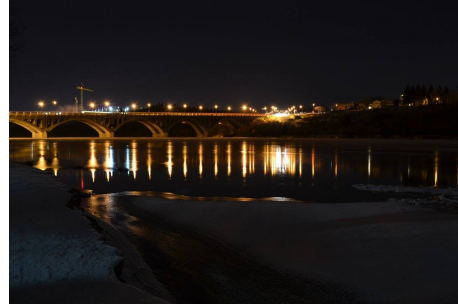
3.1.1 Social Media



The GSA Facebook page (as of April 25, 2016)

The GSA worked hard on its social media presence by starting a new Facebook page, which over the year has grown to over 500 members. This has been an excellent platform for the GSA to publicize its events and initiatives to its members, evidenced by a dramatic increase in participation at various GSA events. To motivate more

participation and interaction, the GSA announced a photography competition in winter to keep graduate students engaged during the winter holidays, which was well received by our members. Some amazing pictures were uploaded, and the viewers' choice award was appropriately given to the top three most liked pictures. In addition, videos and pictures of various GSA social events were uploaded on this page as well. For all GSA updates, feel free to join the Facebook group (fb.me/gsa.uofs) to participate.



Winning entries to the GSA Winter Photography Contest 2015

3.1.2 Newsletters

Dormant for several years, the GSA restarted its monthly newsletters this year. This helped our members get regular updates about the various activities of the GSA. It also provided a platform to publicize events in advance to encourage more participation. The template used was also very pictorial to make it easier and more

3.2 Graduate Student Wellness

attractive to peruse. The GSA hopes the newsletter will continue to benefit our members and involve more students in the activities of the GSA.



Sample GSA Newsletter - October 2015

3.1.3 New GSA Website

The GSA website solution is provided free of cost to the GSA by the University of Saskatchewan. The university web environment template was updated this past year, and it was suggested to the GSA to upgrade to the new template as the previous version was losing technical support. The GSA has been working hard to make the new website under the template and is now planning to integrate the existing content with the new environment. The GSA has moved towards a more minimalist design for the website that has more focus on quality and streamlined information and referrals to other websites.

3.2 Graduate Student Wellness

In a new initiative, the GSA thought it was important to engage members in health and personal wellness initiatives. The GSA appointed its own sports coordinator in its Aboriginal Liaison who successfully coordinated all the Campus Rec teams

sponsored by the GSA execs. Furthermore, the GSA VP External through sponsorship from studentcare.net organized Health Chats monthly at the GSA Commons to foster peer-led discussions on issues surrounding graduate student wellness.

3.2.1 GSA Guppies

The GSA floated four teams in each semester as part of its sports wellness strategy under the title of GSA Guppies. The sports included curling, basketball, dodgeball, volleyball and soccer. In its first year, the GSA Guppies have already been runner-up in the basketball league as well as got close to qualifying for the playoffs. More importantly, close to 50 graduate students came forward, participated and resolved for a physically healthier lifestyle.



The GSA Guppies competing in a variety of sports

3.2.2 GSA Health Chats

Every month, the GSA invited members to destress at the GSA Commons and discuss issues surrounding graduate student stress, mental health, New Year resolutions etc. These sessions were well-attended by a lot of students and saw involvement and collaboration from academic units on campus like the School of Public Health as well.

4 Events

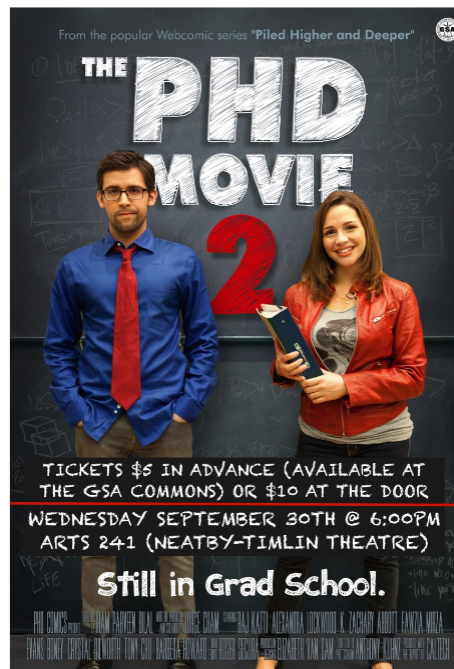
4.1 GSA Orientation (Fall 2015 and Winter 2016)

The GSA Fall Orientation BBQ is one of the flagship events of the GSA – catering to over 1500 in attendance. Continuing the legacy from the Fall Orientation 2014, the event saw inclusion of several cultural performances from around the world while students mingled on BBQ burgers at the Bowl. A special thanks to the USSU and Facilities Management Division (FMD) for their logistic support throughout the event. The week after saw the GSA Wine and Cheese social – a more subdued and relaxed event with an opportunity to mingle after the first two weeks of grinding orientations. Conversations were had over some snacks and wine, followed by an open dance floor. An open dance floor with multicultural tunes has become synonymous with GSA socials, which has allowed such events to more inclusive or our international student members.



The GSA Winter Orientation 2016 was conducted in conjunction with the International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) where the GSA delivered an information session on its various services. The GSA at the end of January 2016 organized a Winter welcome social for both incoming and returning students for an opportunity to make new friends and network after the holiday season.

4.2 GSA Movie Night - Ph.D. Movie 2



PhDComics (www.phdcomics.com) is very popular among graduate students world over as a comical blog on life as a graduate student. Its second installment of the PhD Movie series was telecast just a week after its international release at the Neatby-Timlin Theatre (Arts 241) at the University of Saskatchewan. This event was well-attended, though the GSA could always look for ways to increase participation for such initiatives in the future.

4.3 Graduate Student Achievement Week

Though this initiative is not new to the GSA, it was felt this year to push for this event and its publicity in advance to attract more engagement from graduate students. This year, this week ran from February 29 to March 5, 2016 – with a multitude of events that catered to a variety of student interests.

4.3.1 GSA Conference



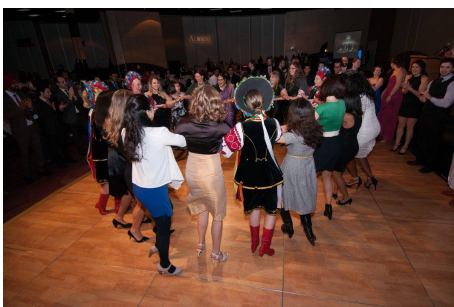
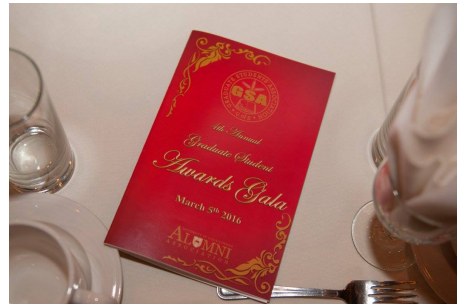
The GSA conference was a 3-day event that was held simultaneously at the GSA Commons and the Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre. The theme ‘*Non Satis Scire*’ (to know is not enough) appropriately described the experience for all participants who looked forward to learning from each other and appreciating the research that happens at our university.

4.3.2 3-Minute Thesis

Graduate students from various departments and colleges showcased the innovative research work being done on our campus in a 3-minute showdown of straightforward yet sophisticated speeches at the 3-Minute Thesis competition. With an engaged audience of close to 40-50 in attendance throughout the day, both faculty and students learned a lot about interesting studies happening outside their fields.

4.3.3 4th Annual GSA Awards Gala

This event is the celebration of graduate student's accomplishment for their research, scholarly and artistic pursuits, and was open to all graduate students, faculty, staff and their friends and family. The evening included cocktails, dinner, award presentations accompanied by cultural performances and dance and the very popular photo booth. GSA Awards were presented in the following categories:



- Advising excellence award: Louise Humbert (College of Kinesiology) – Humbert is a community-based researcher with over 20 years of experience working in community settings.
- Excellence in community service award: Kayla Madder (MSc candidate in Animal Science) – Madder’s family, and specifically her grandmothers, set an example early in her childhood that has led to a passion for community service, including getting involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Saskatoon, volunteering for the Student Wellness Initiative Toward Community Health and sitting on the planning committee for the inaugural AIDS Saskatoon Gala in 2015.
- Excellence in aboriginal research award: Ranjan Datta (PhD candidate in the School of Environment and Sustainability) – Datta is widely known as an international graduate student expert on Indigenous research and making positive impacts on the community. He has received numerous accolades for research excellence.
- Interdisciplinary research excellence award: Farhad Fathieh (PhD student in Mechanical Engineering) – Farhad has been conducting comprehensive research on an energy recovery technology, which substantially reduces the energy consumption in ventilation systems.
- Mark Kroeker Memorial Award for leadership excellence: Isaac Pratt (PhD student in Anatomy and Cell Biology) – Isaac has been involved in GSA Council and subcommittees for several years as well as in the capacity of the President of the College of Medicine Graduate Student Society.

4.4 GSA Socials

GSA socials were a great opportunity to students to meet colleagues and network in a relaxed environment of food and fun. These nights throughout the year have seen unprecedented participation at the GSA Commons that have included events like board games and ice breakers.



4.5 Industry Talks

The Student Employment and Career Centre (SECC) and the GSA hosted a panel of employers to speak about careers in the various industrial sectors. Student learnt more about various job opportunities in other sectors in our Industry Talks Series that was strewn across 6 different sessions in the fall and winter semester. The sessions involved jobs in the mining, health, agriculture, government and liberal arts fields.

INDUSTRY talks

Ever considered which career paths are available to you?

Come to Industry Talks to get an insider's view on the realities of working in a variety of industries.

- Mining and oil and gas | Oct. 2
- Energy and environment | Oct. 30
- Science and technology | Nov. 6
- Government | Jan. 29
- Healthcare and research | Feb. 26
- Arts, culture and community | March 4

For more information and to register visit
CAREERLINK.USASK.CA

Sessions are held from 11:15 am–1 pm in the GSA Commons (Emmanuel and St. Chad Building).
All students welcome!

Brought to you by:
STUDENT EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER CENTRE
and
GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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5 Advocacy and Campaigns

The GSA played a huge role in advocating for student issues, and social change on campus and beyond.

5.1 Within the GSA

5.1.1 National Enquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

In honour of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Awareness Week the Graduate Students' Association Council passed a unanimous motion supporting a National Inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. In an official letter sent to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, Dr. Carolyn Bennett penned by GSA VP Finance and Aboriginal Liason on behalf of the Association noted that *“As mothers and sisters, fathers and brothers, sons and daughters, friends and colleagues the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is one that deeply affects us all. We believe that the renewal of the relationship between Canada and Indigenous peoples as called for by Prime Minister Trudeau and numerous academics and activists can only truly begin with a full and open inquiry process.”*

5.1.2 Crisis Aid Grant

The GSA contributed an amount of CAD 10,000 toward the University Crisis Aid Program. This aid will be available for our members beginning on May 1. This service is meant to give emergency loans and grants to graduate students who experience some crisis or emergency which are unanticipated in nature. The loan will also be considered interest-free should there be unforeseeable delays.

5.1.3 Social Justice Workshops

Thanks to the outstanding commitment of GSA VP Academic who arranged for several workshops at the GSA on issues of social justice. This included workshops on nonviolent communication, anti-racist and anti-oppressive education. Several GSA executives also undertook Positive Space training at the university to learn strategies on how to make GSA more inclusive to queer communities.

5.1.4 GSA Legal Subcommittee

The GSA received a legal invoice to the amount over CAD 8500 with no budget provision or approval from GSA Council to commit to such a payment. The GSA Council under the direction of GSA President struck a GSA Legal Subcommittee that would deal with this legal invoice and consider options including settling, or considering options for legal dispute. This legal subcommittee consisted of Ashton Reimer (Physics), Will Judge (Chemical Engineering), Rob Perry (Education), Sherri Rohovich (Office Manager) and Rajat Chakravarty (GSA President). After a couple of meetings, we met the lawyer office Scharfstein, Wallen and Gibbins to settle this invoice. Thanks to the efforts of this committee, the GSA was able to save close to CAD 3500. Stronger bylaws have also been effected to avoid executives to unilaterally approaching lawyers in the future.

5.1.5 Campus Legal Services

The GSA Council this year set up an advocacy steering subcommittee to look into the possibility of legal advocacy services for students in domains of academic hearing, tenancy rights, parking tickets and other such non-criminal matters. After consultation, it was determined to fund an office in collaboration with the USSU under the guidance of the College of Law called Campus Legal Services. The GSA has donated CAD 5000 to provide this service for graduate students on campus at the Memorial Union Building year-round. The office is currently being set up.

5.2 On campus

5.2.1 Parking vandalism



In May 2015, an unfortunate incident of over 50 cars vandalized by unknown individuals came to light at the U-Lot parking space at the McEown Park residences. This created great discontent among the students who were affected by this, a majority being graduate students. With media coverage on the issue as well, the GSA resolved to present a report on the administration to document the incident and create records of the students affected by this issue. This was presented to the University President who committed to helping victims of this sabotage. It was with GSA's advocacy that the university agreed to financially help those affected with pledges to provide additional security at the parking lot to avoid such incidents in the future.

5.2.2 Federal and Provincial Elections Forum

The GSA in collaboration with the USSU conducted candidates' forums for both the federal and provincial elections. Both events were well-attended and we thank all election candidates who came forward to participate in some heated debates.

5.2.3 Tuition Consultation

The GSA has started on an ambitious project of consulting students on their perceptions of tuition – including determining what the criteria that is used to set tuition

at our university means to them – and what constitutes affordability, accessibility and quality of their student experience. In addition to collecting data by means of a survey and personal consultations, the interim Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research Adam Baxter-Jones came to the GSA Commons on February 17 to discuss the recent graduate tuition hike at the University of Saskatchewan. An engaged group of 50 students sought clarifications and asked questions about the tuition policy. Dean Baxter-Jones assured that such concerns will be shared with senior administration. He has also committed to involve the GSA in the distribution of an additional 1.5 million dollars to graduate students by summer 2016.

5.3 Provincially and Nationally

5.3.1 National Graduate Caucus



From February 19 to 21, 2016, the National Graduate Caucus gathered at the University of Saskatchewan for its annual general meeting. The meeting was hosted by Local 101, the University of Saskatchewan Graduate Student Association, and took place at the GSA Commons on campus. Delegates from the GSA including VP External Natalia Terekhova and President Rajat Chakravarty were in attendance. The meeting focused on working together to challenge the corporatization of universities including the development of a new anti-corporatization campaign to be launched

this spring. Access to mental health services on campuses also continued to be a focus, as plans for a campaign addressing challenges faced by graduate students across the country were developed. The Caucus also began to discuss the development of a national campaign on the importance of student-worker solidarity and how to build student-worker coalitions on our campuses. The GSA was also proud in hosting a workshop on the best practices surrounding the management and development of graduate student space.

5.3.2 National advocacy conferences



- *Studentcare.net* conference – Montreal (June 2015) - In its first offering, the GSA attended the studentcare.net conference to discuss issues around student health on campus in hopes of strategizing on a more relevant health and dental plan for students. The meeting informed them about coverage for mental health supports.
- Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) Annual and Semi-annual meetings – Ottawa (June 2015 and November 2015) - In its annual and semi-annual meeting, the GSA advocated for a national-level summit on issues surrounding racialized students and to start processes on education and policy initiatives for such students.
- Student Union Development Summit 2015 – Vancouver (August 2015) - This meeting was important in training the GSA for important initiatives in the

year – including the upcoming federal and provincial elections – as well as strategies to conduct student surveys and consultation.

- Canadian Association of Graduate Studies meeting – Calgary (October 2015)
- GU15 Meeting – Winnipeg (October 2015)
- CFS Saskatchewan – Regina (February 2016) This meeting was to restart the CFS-Saskatchewan component after years of dormancy. This meeting set out to approve fresh bylaws and a budget for the year. The GSA were successful in arranging a sponsorship for CAD 6500 at this meeting towards the Graduate Student Achievement Week.
- Racialized and Indigenous Student Experience – Toronto (March 2016) This meeting was to discuss conversations and policies on racialized and indigenous students. A national forum and CFS national representative were sought as recommendations at this meeting for consideration at the CFS Annual General meeting.
- GU15 meeting – Vancouver (April 2016) This meeting was useful to discuss what student advocacy services are provided in other universities to get insight on improvements to advocacy services on our campus through the Campus Legal Services and beyond.
- National Aboriginal Caucus – Gatineau (June 2016) It was determined to send a representative at this important meeting for the first time from the GSA.



6 Representation

The GSA this year focused closely on ensuring the GSA is well-represented in all university-level and national-level decision making bodies and working groups. The university is in a state of transition and lots of administrative searches are underway. Rest assured, graduate student voices will be heard at this meeting.

6.1 University Search and Consultation Committees

- President's Transition Advisory Committee – Rajat Chakravarty
- Dean, Arts and Science Advisory Committee – Rajat Chakravarty
- Provost Search Committee – Dana Carriere
- Vice Provost Faculty Relations – David Bennett
- Dean, University Library Search Committee – Ziad Ghaith
- Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research Search Committee – Hardi Shahadu
- Dean, Arts & Science Search Committee – Natalia Terekhova
- Dean, Edwards School of Business Search Committee – Dana Carriere
- Associate Vice President Research Search Committee – Ziad Ghaith
- Student Forum – Rajat Chakravarty, Hardi Shahadu, Dana Carriere, Michelle Whitstone and Seth Dueck
- Student Forum Executive – Rajat Chakravarty and Hardi Shahadu
- President's Executive Committee Breakfast – all GSA executives
- On Campus News Editorial Advisory Board – Rajat Chakravarty
- Global Connections Student Committee – Natalia Terekhova & Jebunnessa Chapola
- Images of Research Judging Panel – Rajat Chakravarty

6.2 College of Graduate Studies and Research Subcommittees

- Interdisciplinary – Jebunnessa Chapola
- Equity and International – Natalia Terekhova
- GSA Graduate Council – All GSA executives
- Executive – Rajat Chakravarty
- Graduate Academic Affairs – Jebunnessa Chapola
- Graduate Programs – Hardi Shahadu
- Earned D.Sc / D. Litt. – David Bennett
- Awards & Scholarships – David Bennett

6.3 University Council Subcommittees and Senate

- International Activities – Natalia Terekhova
- Scholarship – David Bennett
- Planning and Priorities – Hardi Shahadu
- Academic Programs – Jebunnessa Chapola
- Research, Scholarly and Artistic Works – Jebunnessa Chapola
- Teaching, Learning & Academic Resources – Jebunnessa Chapola
- University Council – Rajat Chakravarty
- University Senate (including student misconduct hearings)– Rajat Chakravarty

6.4 Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)

- National Representative from Saskatchewan – Natalia Terekhova
- National Representative from GSA (Local 101) – Hardi Shahadu
- Provincial Representative from GSA (Local 101) – Rajat Chakravarty

7 Acknowledgments

7.1 University President - Peter Stoicheff



7.2 Vice Provost Teaching and Learning - Patti McDougall



Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning
E248-105 Administration Place
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A2

April 22, 2016

Dear GSA colleagues,

I write today to take the opportunity to express my sincere thanks for a wonderful year of collaboration. As I look back and reflect on our many adventures, I am struck by the feeling that our progress as an institution on key student issues and initiatives would not have progressed in the same clear way without the high level of engagement from the GSA. I would particularly like to point to the important work undertaken by the GSA executive over this past year. It was my quiet hope at the beginning of 2015-16 that my GSA colleagues would focus their time and energy on stabilizing the roles and responsibilities of the executive members and rebuilding strong ties to senior administrative leaders and units across campus in order to serve the GSA membership in the best way possible. In my view, this year's GSA executive has done an exemplary job of achieving those milestones.

Over this past year, I had the distinct pleasure of working closely with the GSA executive in varying and different ways, both on formal committees and in informal working groups. As examples, members of the GSA executive have had meaningful impact on such topics as sexual assault, mental health, and student safety. I am also aware that members of the GSA executive have had on-going connections with units within the VPTL. On behalf of myself and those in my portfolio, I offer my sincere thanks to Vice Presidents – Ziad Ghaith, Natalia Terekhova, David Bennett, Jebunnessa Chapola, Hardi Shahadu; the Aboriginal Liaison Dana Carriere; and the President Rajat Chakravarty. This team has worked extremely hard and has accomplished much to invest in the future of the GSA. I wish them the very best for their future endeavours.

I had the good fortune this past week of meeting the in-coming GSA executive members and it was clear to see that 2016-17 is looking like another great year. I congratulate the new team and I thank them for taking on these important leadership roles.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia McDougall".

Patricia McDougall

 www.usask.ca

7.3 Dean, College of Graduate Studies - Adam Baxter-Jones



UNIVERSITY OF
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College of Graduate
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Web: www.usask.ca/cgsr

April 22, 2016

To GSA Executive,

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank the GSA Executive for the wonderful work done by the GSA this year in providing services and advocating for the needs for graduate students on campus. On behalf of the College of Graduate Studies and Research I have been impressed by the professionalism shown by yourselves on the various CGSR subcommittees and in particular your organization of various events for the benefit of your members. The College is also pleased with the collaborative outcomes in organizing the Graduate Student Achievement Week and would hope such initiatives continue in the future.

This would not have been possible without the diligence and hard work of the executive – Ziad Ghaith, Natalia Terekhova, Dana Carriere, David Bennett, Jebunnessa Chapola, Hardi Shahadu and Rajat Chakravarty. I wish you all the very best for your future endeavours. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the incoming GSA executive Ziad Ghaith, Shailza Sapal, Nafisa Absher, Carolyn Gaspar, Ali Kiani and Kusum Sharma and look forward to working with you all during the 2016/17 academic year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Baxter-Jones'.

Dr Adam Baxter-Jones, PhD

Interim Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research

