



University of Saskatchewan Graduate Students' Association

GSA's Report - University Council Meeting, June 2022

Dear Members of the University Council,

The current GSA Executives just completed their first month of duties and spent most of their time learning about the previous initiatives of their predecessors. Further, the Executives are also familiarizing themselves with the policies of the various university committees, which is crucial for advocating for graduate students' rights and wellbeing. We will continue our dedication and efforts in helping graduate students by engaging with our partners on campus and university leadership.

In this report, we present some initiatives that the Executives have completed or been working on, which include:

1. GSA Commons is Open for Students

After keeping the GSA Commons close since March 2020 following the University of Saskatchewan, Federal and Provincial Government's COVID-19 protocols, the GSA Commons opened its in-person operation starting on May 2, 2022. The GSA Commons is now open for student activity during office hours (9:00 am to 5:00 pm) from Monday to Friday. Graduate students can meet the GSA executives and Office Manager for different services. The GSA Commons is also available for rent, provided that potential renters follow GSA's renting guidelines.

2. GSA Need-Based Bursaries for Spring and Summer 2022

During the Spring and Summer 2022 terms, the GSA will provide 25 regular bursaries. Further, the GSA will provide ten special bursaries from the discretionary fund (\$40k for the 2022-2023 fiscal year) approved by the GSA council members at the AGM on April 19, 2022, to help graduate students passing through an unprecedented financial hardship because of rapid tuition fees hike, COVID-19 protocols, and Canada's record-breaking inflation rate.

The GSA bursary committee will follow the below schedule to distribute the Spring and Summer 2022 bursaries:

Bursary Application Open: June 8, 2022

Bursary Application Close: June 29, 2022

Bursary Results Announcement: July 4, 2022.

The GSA is grateful to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) for its current financial support for the need-based bursary. GSA sincerely requests the CGPS to match GSA's discretionary fund (\$40k) so that the GSA can provide 40 more bursaries during the 2022-2023 fiscal year. A funding match from the CGPS would enable the GSA to help the maximum number of financially struggling graduate students in the upcoming terms.

3. GSA Fall Orientation

The GSA executives are currently working to organize an in-person Fall orientation for the graduate students. The GSA hopes to share event details with the council in the July meeting.

4. Advocacy for Service Enhancement of Student Wellness Centre Services

Graduate students are concerned about the limited accessibility of various services at the Student Wellness Centre. For example, students require four to eight weeks to get a doctor's appointment; lack of Walk-In doctor facilities, limited number of Counsellors, Social Workers, Mental Health Nurse, Psychologists and Psychiatrists. After receiving confirmation for initial appointment following the four to six weeks, students receive frequent cancelations of their appointments at the last minute. GSA wants to advocate for the students to receive enhanced service for their health needs.

5. Advocacy for the minimum guaranteed funding for thesis-based graduate students

The GSA wants to re-iterate its advocacy for a minimum guaranteed scholarship for all thesis-based graduate students not less than the equivalent amount of Saskatchewan's minimum wage salary (~ \$22,500). Further, the GSA wants an introduction of a university-wide minimum of four years of guaranteed funding for Ph.D. students and for thesis-based master's students to be three years, a time of financial stability that reflects the median graduation time of the University of Saskatchewan.

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University of Saskatchewan