

# **VP Student Affairs Annual Report**

## **May 2019- April 2020**



Graduate Students' Association  
University of Saskatchewan

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

## **1. Introduction**

According to the GSA bylaws the duties of the Vice-President Student Affairs shall include, but are not limited to:

2.4.1.1. Shall sit on University Council;

2.4.1.2. Act as a liaison within the University community relating to graduate student issues;

2.4.1.3. Organize a program of social events for the enhancement of the graduate student experience;

2.4.1.4. Organize the Three Minute Thesis Competition and the Graduate Student Research Conference;

2.4.1.5. Organize academic workshops of interest to graduate students;

2.4.1.6. Coordinate with the University in its efforts to orient incoming graduate students;

2.4.1.7. Advocate for resources that would improve the academic experience of graduate students at the University; and,

2.4.1.8. Advocate for graduate students in all matters relating to their University experience, as applicable.

Thus, this document intent to review briefly all the activities carried out during the year and the events organized by the VP Students Affairs (Alejandra Fonseca) from May 2019 to April 2020.

My time in office was divided equitably between advocacy for all graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan and the planning of events for graduate students. Advocacy for students were divided in mostly two types, individual cases and group cases.

Additionally, advocacy and representation of graduate students was expressed at University Committees and University Council.

Events for all the GSA members were also organized including orientations in winter and fall, social events, workshops, Graduate Research Conference, and the 3MT competition. The main objective of these events had various objectives including introducing new graduate students to the different services that are available to them at university; provide opportunities to students to network and support the mental health of students.

## **2. Advocacy**

This year, I was able to implement knowledge from the conflict resolution workshop into both personal student advocacy cases and group cases related to a student life academically or non-academically such as student-supervisor disagreements and life on residence.

### **2.1 Personal Cases**

Like previous years, it is very unfortunate to witness several students experiencing bad relationships with their supervisors/professors. Most of the cases that I was involved with were in regard to academic misconduct and misunderstandings between students and supervisors. It is encouraged for both students and professors to fill out the student/supervisor agreement at the beginning of the graduate students' programs.

### **2.2 Student/Supervisor Agreement**

It is with joy that I can report that the student/supervisor agreement was approved to be

mandatory at the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee; however, this motion needs to be approved in other committees before being implemented at the university level. I hope that this can be a reality during the next academic year.

### **3. University Committees**

I was the GSA representative in several committees where I had the opportunity to bring forward graduate students' concerns and perspectives. Some of these committees include University Council and the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee.

### **4. Events**

Several events were organized during the year (from September 2019 – April 2020) including orientations, social events, the Graduate Research Conference, workshops and the 3MT competition.

#### **4.1 Fall and Winter Orientations**

The Fall Orientation was hosted on September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019. It is GSA's biggest event of the year and this year, it attracted around 800 people including graduate students and families. The Fall Orientation serves as a key opportunity to get to know the different services and resources that are available for new and returning graduate students on campus. It also serves as a crucial networking opportunity to meet other students, staff and faculty.

As previous years, this year the orientation included a BBQ event hosted at The Bowl, food was provided for all of those who attended. This year the Orientation was divided into two parts, the first part was conducted in one the classrooms BIOL106, where speakers could have

a good audio system. To promote attendance of graduate students, 4 raffles gift cards were done. During the second part, the BBQ at The Bowl was hosted; time for student groups representatives to deliver a welcoming speech was provided.

The objectives for the GSA Fall Orientation 2019 were as follows:

1. To welcome and provide helpful information to incoming graduate students.
2. To provide incoming students with a meaningful opportunity to meet their peers and faculty members.
3. To introduce incoming graduate students to a wide range of important services and resources that are provided to students by the GSA, the university, and its partners.

The winter orientation took place on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at the GSA Commons and it was organized to welcome graduate students that start their programs in January or students that missed the Fall Orientation in 2019. At the orientation, food was provided for all the graduate students, incoming and returning, that attended the event. Faculty was invited to deliver a welcoming and informative speech to all the guests. As the number of graduate students that start their programs in January is smaller, compared to the Fall Orientation. Around 50 people attended the event and it was very successful as many graduate students participated. Food and GSA swag was available for all the participants.

#### **4.2 Graduate Students Research Conference**

On February 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Graduate Research Conference titled "Behaviour, Society & Technology: A glimpse of current research approaches" was hosted. This event

had the objective of sharing knowledge on different research projects that graduate students were developing. It was a multidisciplinary event to promote the participation of students with different backgrounds. The GRC offers an opportunity to present their academic work and refine their knowledge sharing skills. The conference was divided into four themes: Behaviour, Health, Environment/Technology and Society. For each theme, there was a keynote speaker to open each of the sections. Fourteen students participated in the conference

### **4.3 3MT Competition**

The 3 Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition is an internationally recognized research communication competition developed by the University of Queensland in 2008.

The 3MT® competition challenges graduate students to present research in language that is engaging and accessible to all types of audiences, using a single static slide in under 3 minutes.

The 3MT® is designed to share the outstanding research of our dedicated students and to provide students the opportunity to present the importance of their work. The 3MT represents an invaluable opportunity for students to refine their knowledge sharing skills engaging the academic community. Due to the current pandemic and in accordance to the University guidelines and recommendations; the 3MT was hosted online on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Recordings of each participant's presentation was sent to the judges. Winners will be announced on Wednesday April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

All 3MT participants were competing for 1st, 2nd, 3rd place prizes at the local level

valued at \$1000, \$500, \$250 The people's choice award was cancelled due to the decision to host the 3MT online without an audience. The winner will secure a spot at the Western Regionals. The date for this competition is to be decided.

Twenty-Three students registered in this year's competition; however, many students chose not to participate once they were registered. The judging panel is composed by: Mr. Bill Lewis (Tomorrow Today Society Inc.), Mr. Eric Olauson (MLA Saskatoon University), Ms. Bev Dubois (City of Saskatoon), Mr. Matt Wolsfeld (Office of Sustainability, University of Saskatchewan) and Mr. Omar Farag (University of Saskatchewan Alumni).

The event was very successful despite the current situation, but we realize that it is necessary to plan beforehand different approaches to host the events in case that it needs to be conducted online.

#### **4.4 Wine and Cheese and Holliday Social Event**

The Wine and Cheese Social is the most popular social event of the GSA, which attracts many graduate students on campus. It serves as a key opportunity to provide students a non-academic space to relax and take care of their mental health. This year only one Wine and Cheese Social was hosted due to the second one being cancelled by the emergency situation.

The Wine and Cheese Social was held at the GSA Commons, and alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages were offered. It is recommended that for future events, volunteers

would be recruited, and a higher amount of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks should be purchased.

#### **4.5 Social Events**

Other two minor social events were hosted this year. A movie night was hosted on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 to celebrate Halloween and a Holiday Party to celebrate Christmas was hosted on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The Halloween event was a movie night with 2 movies, one of them family friendly and the second one was a terror one. The Holiday Party was centred around building ginger Christmas houses. In both of them light snacks and non-alcoholic were available for all the attendees.