



Graduate Students' Association

February Council Meeting Minutes

University of Saskatchewan-Graduate Students' Association (GSA)

Wednesday, February 25th, 2026; 17:00-19:00

Meeting Location: GSA Common (In-person)

"As Council gathers, we acknowledge that we are on Treaty C Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm our relationship with one another."

Attendance: See appendix A

Vice-Council Chair: Shamsuddeen Ma'aruf

Recording Secretary: Aiminayanate Pepple

a. Call to Order

- The vice-chair, Shamsuddeen Ma'aruf, welcomed every attending member, as well as the University's President, Vice-Provost Students & Learning and the Dean of CGPS. The meeting was called to order at 5:14 PM.
- A land acknowledgment was observed, recognizing Treaty 6 territory and the Métis homeland.

b. Rules and Regulation

Shamsuddeen Ma'aruf briefed attendees of the:

- Use of Robert's Rules of Order.
- Requirement of mover and seconder for motions.
- Voting procedures (chat or a raise of hands).
- Time allocations: 3 minutes per speaker, with reminders.
- Emphasis on professionalism and respect.

c. Approval of Agenda

The vice-chair asked for approval of the meeting agenda.

- ✚ A council member moved for a motion which involved the provision of honorarium towards council members' attendance. He requested that this motion be discussed during the February council meeting.
- ✚ Due to the tension observed during the meeting, Aiminayanate Pepple moved for the adjournment of this motion to the next meeting.
- ✚ Modupeoluwa Olakunle seconded the adjournment.
- ✚ The February council meeting agenda was thereafter approved by council members in attendance.

d. Approval of GSA Council Meeting Minutes

✓ **January 28th, 2026, Council Meeting**

Mover: Laila Valila

Seconded by: Sunny Bui

Yes: All in approval

No: 0

Abstention: 0

Motion carried.

e. Introduction of Invited Guests by the Vice-Chair & Remarks from Invited Guests

The council's vice-chair introduced the guest and invited each guest to give a remark.

❖ University President - Dr. Vince Bruni-Bossio

- The President expressed concerns about the needs and success of students.
- The president informed graduate students about the university's new strategic process in the coming year.
- The ideas and involvements of graduate students would be appreciated in achieving this new process.
- The president also acknowledged the strength and values as a collective identity of the university which is revealed in terms of research and teaching by students and faculties, university commitment towards equity and inclusion as well as truth and reconciliation aimed at giving students a warm experience.

❖ Interim Vice-Provost, Students and Learning - Dr. Marjorie Delbaere

- Dr. Marjorie Delbaere was glad to attend the meeting.
- Dr. Marjorie Delbaere acknowledged the importance of graduate students and her positive experience working with graduate students.
- Dr. Marjorie Delbaere further revealed her goal toward supporting graduate students particularly in collaboration with the CGPS.

❖ Dean CGPS - Dr. Debby Burshtyn

- Dr. Debby Burshtyn recognized the Treaty 6 territory and the Métis homeland.
- Dr. Debby Burshtyn acknowledged the importance of the university's strategic planning process and the envisaged influence it is expected to have on the university community.
- Dr. Debby Burshtyn stated the involvement of graduate students in this plan through the graduate student students' association, GSA, to assist in the identification of students' needs with the launch of the paperwork to occur this year.
- A graduate student intern was recently employed to assist in developing a framework for the improvement of the competency level of master's thesis programs.

f. Questions and Answer Session

- ✚ As you know, recent federal policy changes have led to a significant decline in the acceptance of international students, and our university has felt the impact as well. What steps is the university planning to take to address this, given how much international students contribute to our diversity, equity, and the university's academic and research strength?

- Dr. Marjorie Delbaere recognizes the removal of provincial attestation letter (PAL) requirement for graduate students as a positive step towards this challenge.
- Dr. Marjorie Delbaere also highlighted the efforts being made to fairly allocate PAL slots to graduate students who need them across various departments and colleges.
- Dr. Marjorie Delbaere and her team have developed strategic plans aimed at increasing enrollment of students.
- Dr. Marjorie Delbaere and the University president stated the intentional meeting with IRCC to understand important requirements necessary for successful students' applications.

✚ Given the rising cost of living, tuition fees, healthcare, and the ever-increasing differential tuition rate, what specific policies have been put in place or are being put in place to better support lower-income students? In particular, I would like to ask if freezing tuition fee increases and the differential tuition rates have been considered. Every year, we get hundreds of applications from students for the Need-Based Bursary, and as much as it helps, there is only so much it can do.

- Dr. Debby Burshtyn shared her concern about the effect of the rising cost of things and tuition.
- Dr. Debby Burshtyn informed graduate students about the 6.81% institutional fund increase for 2026/2027 graduate research funding with subsequent 2.8% increase in later years.
- Beginning September 2026, the minimum funding for Ph.D. Students will be \$25,000 CAD per year. However, the CGPS is still working on getting a minimum funding for master's research students.
- Dr. Debby Burshtyn hopes an increase in research funding will help to alleviate the cost of tuition and inflation.

✚ Where do you see opportunities to develop deeper reciprocity between a u15 research-intensive institution's mission for research acceleration and the critical mission of teaching and learning?

- The University President highlighted the need to engage with graduate students' opinions to strengthen research and teaching.

✚ What is the university doing to support PhD students whose supervisors do not have matching funds for their graduate program? I am asking because a PhD is core research and involves a lot of work, which can be hard without funds. To create the kind of research that the world needs require funding, and it will be helpful if the university looks into supporting PhD students without funding, no matter how little.

- Dr. Debby Burshtyn stated that there is no current answer to address this issue, however, she indicated to look into the issue and hope for students to get funding to finish their studies on time.

✚ In the strategy to increase the reputation of the university in the QS ranking, are there any actions that graduate students can take?

- The University president stated his goal of producing qualified graduate over ranking system.
- The president also stated the need for the engagement of students' opinion on this issue.
- Dr. Marjorie Delbaere encouraged students' active engagement in research.
- Dr. Debby Burshtyn also urged graduate students to participate in leadership positions outside of the university.

✚ Considering that the physics department requires competency testing for new PhD students, even when they have graduated with a B.Sc. and M.Sc. from UofS. What does it say about the university when we openly doubt the credentials and competency of our own graduates, and what advice would you give to UofS graduates, where, despite putting in years of time and countless volunteer hours, we feel so incredibly discouraged by the university's assumption of incompetence despite high grades and no evidence of any failures or lack of competency? Shouldn't we be encouraging our students to paths for success, instead of discouraging them by making them go back to undergrad and waste months of research time, potentially adding extra semesters to their time here? This is diminishing student pathways to success as well as tarnishing the reputation of UofS graduates and our history of academic excellence. I firmly believe this is doing harm to students and the university, and I am calling on everyone involved to restore ethical treatment of students to the physics department. When I spoke to the physics dept, they told me this is a requirement from CGPS. How can students feel supported when the official position of the CGPS is to tell students they are incompetent until proven otherwise?

- Dr. Debby Burshtyn indicated that the CGPS will follow up on the issue by meeting with the department.

✚ A concern was raised regarding the fairness in the selection of awardees of the Tri-Council Canada Graduate Scholarship at the institutional level considering the values of the university and what can the university do to address this issue?

- Dr. Debby Burshtyn acknowledged the concerns of students regarding the issue. However, there seems to be limitations getting across reviewers as reviewers are meant to be anonymous to applicants.

✚ What are the plans of the university to improve funding to course-based students?

- Dr. Debby Burshtyn and Dr. Marjorie Delbaere highlighted the purpose of funding which was intended to grant access to students who cannot afford programs due to financial constraint.
- Dr. Marjorie Delbaere acknowledged the efforts of course-based students in paying the expensive fees and stated that the university is also making efforts to reach out to donors

for the funding of different programs despite the limitation of funds.

✚ Is the minimum funding of \$25,000 CAD for all PhD students across departments or for only students starting in September 2026?

- Dr. Debby Burshtyn stated that the CGPS hopes to include currently enrolled graduate students.

✚ Several opinions exist that the university seems to be currently tilted towards being more financial-oriented. What steps are being taken to provide an academic and cultural-oriented environment?

- The president highlighted the current funding provision from the provincial government which is aimed towards encouraging academic activities.
- Furthermore, the president suggested the development of mission driven projects as well as being strategic in solving problems to improve and sustain the strengths and values of the university community.

g. Motion to ratify the GSA Social group (Iranian Students Association)

- The Iranian Students Association was voted to be ratified.

Mover: Laila Valila

Seconded by: Palash Roy

Yes: All in approval

No: 0

Abstention: 0

h. GSA Executives Reports

➤ **President – Palash Roy**

- On the behalf of the GSA, the president expressed concerns about the Tumbler Ridge incident and the violence in Mexico. The president sympathized with University students from Tumbler Ridge and Mexico.
- The president stated his support for Iranian students which was also expressed in a meeting with the university's provost.
 - This support was extended to the suggestion of the formation of the Iranian Students Association which is expected to be ratified in the February meeting.
- The President represented the GSA in the campus planning discussions to highlight the concerns of the association such as:
 - Extended space for the GSA Childcare Centre.
 - Maintenance on GSA Building as well as possible relocation.
 - Advocated for a dedicated drop-off childcare space within the PAC and recreation

facilities.

- A business plan has been developed for the childcare initiative through the assistance of the Edwards School of Business.
 - The proposal includes a five-year plan with estimated budget of \$10 million CAD.
 - The GSA hopes to raise this fund through investment plan and fundraising option.
- The GSA is still in the process of securing a transit pass to include the spring and summer session and hopes to send a referendum to graduate students soon.

➤ **Vice-President Finance and Operations – Lindsay Carlson**

- A financial literacy session was held online on the 5th of March 2026 from 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm.
- The application for the Winter 2026 GSA-CGPS need-based bursary began on the 2nd of February 2026 and ends on the 20th of February 2026.
 - A total number of 337 applications were received.
 - There are 35 awards available with each award valued at \$1,000 CAD.
 - Recipients were notified on March 13th, 2026.

➤ **Vice-President Student and Academic Affairs - Mandela Alema**

- The winter 2026 intramural sport activity was successful. The VP Student Affairs appreciated the efforts of the coordinators and participants.
- The Diversity Committee celebrated the International Mother Language Day observed on the 21st of February 2026.
- The Diversity Committee will host a “Mini Folk Fest” on the 20th of March 2026.
- Two members of the Diversity Committee have been selected to represent the GSA in an engagement session with Leadership and Diversity Group of the Saskatoon Open Door Society.

➤ **Vice-President External Affairs – Sunny Bui**

- The VP reminded students of the deadline for nominee application for the GSA Awards and Gala
- The VP met with the Campus Planning on the 23rd of February regarding the maintenance of the GSA Commons and acquisition of a childcare facility.
- A meeting was held with the Saskatoon Transit Company regarding the review of transit fares for graduate students.
 - ❖ Saskatoon Transit Company is in the process of reviewing transit fares.
 - ❖ An update will be communicated with graduate students in due course.

➤ **Vice-President Indigenous - Laila Valila**

- The VP attended the OVPI meeting regarding future funding opportunities for indigenous

programs.

- The VP met with the Director of Gordon Oakes and was introduced to the staff of Gordon Oakes.
- A new mandatory fee called institutional fees will be included to the students' fees.
- The sustainability committee hopes to host events centered on promoting environmental awareness.

i. Any other Business of the Day (A.O.B)

➤ **Announcement of call for Nominations (GSA Executive Election Schedule)**

- The president announced that the process for the nomination and election of new GSA executives would begin in March 2026.

➤ **Opinion on the introduction of honorarium for council members**

- The President reminded council members of the voluntary will of their roles.
- The president stated that only motions and items listed in the agenda are discussed during the GSA meetings.
 - If a motion had to be included in a meeting, especially if it would involve a change in the bylaws of the GSA:
 - ✚ A request should be sent to the GSA president.
 - ✚ This is followed by a discussion with GSA board of directors.
 - ✚ If the motion is considered after the discussion, a vote will be made to approve the motion during a special general meeting or annual general.
- Lastly, the financial limitation of GSA was highlighted, noting that the association is unable to pay council members for attending meetings.

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j. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm by Shamsuddeen Ma'aruf.

Appendix A

	Academic Council	Councillor	February 2026
1	Agricultural and Resource Economics Graduate Students' Society	Councilor – Aminata Ba Alternate – Cornelius Mensah	P
2	Animal and Poultry Science Graduate Students' Association	Councilor - Megan Dubois Alternate - Beatriz Montenegro	P
3	Biology Graduate Students' Association	Councilor - Portia Mohrbutter Alternate - Laura Dyson	P
4	Chemistry Course Council	Councilor - Shreya Tiwary Alternate - Segun Liyansan	P
5	College of Medicine Graduate Student Society (CMGSS)	Councilor 1 - Griffin Lehnert Alternate 1 - Christopher Chivers	A
		Councilor 2 - Amber Jurke Alternate 2 - Hetvi Darji	A
6	College of Kinesiology Graduate Society	Councilor - Sunny Bui Alternate - Karissa Johnson	A
7	Computer Science Graduate Council (CSGC)	Councilor - Mary-fidelma Chioma Ndupu Alternate - Md Shamimur Rahman	A
8	Education Graduate Students Association (EGSA)	Councilor - Kiegan Lloyd Alternate – Rumpa Banik	P
9	Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC)	Councilor 1 - Farzana Haque Reeti Alternate 1 - Binod Sapkota	P
		Councilor 2 - Adit Raj Chalise Alternate 1 - Corwyn Shomachuk	P
10	English Graduate Students' Association	Councilor - Hamid Yari Alternate - Jasmine Redford	P
11	Geography and Planning Graduate Student Council (GEPL)	Councilor - Emily Ireland Alternate - Prakash Sapkota	P
12	History Graduate Student Association	Councilor - Jessy Lee Saas Alternate - Julia-Rose Miller	P
13	Nursing Graduate Students Association	Councilor - Kirsten Witter Councilor - Aja Tost	A
14	Physics and Engineering Physics Graduate Association of Students at University of Saskatchewan (PEGASUS)	Councilor - Jeisson Vanegas Alternate - Mona Zolghadrshojaee	P
15	Plant Science Graduate Students' Association (PSGSA)	Councilor 1 - Luke Dojack Alternate 1 - Makenna Mitchell	P

		Councilor 2 - Giri Raj Paudel Alternate 2 - Sachintha Attanayake	P
16	School of environment and Sustainability Student Association	Councilor 1 - Nelly Ataawomba Afuubi Alternate 1 - Jethro Opara	A
		Councilor 2 - Jabed Chowdhury Alternate 2 - Anas Ansari	A
17	Sociology Graduate Students Association	Councilor – Meaghan Boily Alternate - Leah Houseman	P
18	Soil Science Graduate Students Association	Councilor - Nemat Dindarloo Alternate - Levi Lundell	P
19	The School of Public Health Students' Association (SPHSA)	Councilor 1 - Motajo Modupeoluwa Olakunle	P
		Councilor 2 - Angelica Caresse Uy Alternate - Sun Thai	P
20	Toxicology Graduate Student Association	Councilor - Chantel De Lange Alternate - Catherine Roberts	A

Executive member	Name	February 2026
Executive President	Palash Roy	P
Exec. VP Finance and Operations	Lindsay Carlson	A
Exec. VP Academic and Student Affairs	Mandela Alema	P
Exec. VP External Affairs	Sunny Bui	P
Exec. VP Indigenous Engagement	Laila Valila	P

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