

**University of Saskatchewan-Graduate Students' Association (GSA)**

Wednesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024; 17:00-19:00

Meeting Location: Hybrid

*“As Council gathers, we acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 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*

**Chair: Devopriya Tirtho**

**Recording Secretary: Arman Heydari**

- **Call to Order**

The Chair, Devopriya Tirtho, welcomed everyone to the Graduate Students Association meeting for December 2024. He emphasized the importance of collaboration and thanked all attendees for their dedication to improving the graduate student experience.

He acknowledged that the meeting was being held on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis, paying respects to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirming relationships with one another.

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 PM after the quorum was met. The GSA recording secretary was unable to attend due to urgent work commitments, and the meeting minutes were written by the next recording secretary.

- **Rules and Regulation**

Before proceeding with the agenda, the Chair explained the rules and regulations governing the meeting:

The GSA follows Robert's Rules of Order.

For a motion to be passed, a mover and a seconder are required.

Only voting members will vote by raising their voting cards; online participants will vote in the chat box.

Each agenda item is addressed within a specified time frame. Extended discussions are postponed to the next meeting.

Each council member has three minutes to speak, with notifications at one minute and 30 seconds remaining. Speakers will be muted after their time expires.

Respect and decorum are mandatory, with the Chair and Secretary authorized to intervene if necessary.

While members are encouraged to have their video on while speaking, flexibility is allowed.

- **Introduction of Council Members**

The Chair invited all council members to introduce themselves by stating their names and the councils they represent. Some members introduced themselves verbally, while others used the chat function.

The Chair acknowledged all introductions and moved forward with the agenda.

- **Agenda: Approval of Agenda**

The chair stated that today's agenda was emailed to all council members and posted on the GSA website as well. The chair then asked if there were any amendments to the agenda package.

Hearing none, he called for a mover and a seconder to approve the agenda.

As the majority of the council voted in favor, the motion was approved.

- **Agenda: Welcoming the Dean of CGPS**

Dr. Debby Burshtyn, Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS), expressed gratitude for the opportunity to address the council, acknowledging the leadership of graduate student representatives in fostering a strong sense of community. She emphasized the importance of collaboration between CGPS and the GSA to enhance the student experience and provided an overview of key initiatives and priorities for the year.

Key points from Dr. Burshtyn's lecture included:

**Recruitment and Student Funding:** Ongoing efforts to increase graduate student funding, including engagement with university leadership and government to secure additional financial support.

**International Students & Immigration Changes:** Updates on new federal immigration policies requiring provincial attestation letters and potential impacts on graduate student enrollment. She reassured council members of the university's commitment to maintaining a diverse student body.

**Post-Graduation Work Permits:** Recent changes do not affect graduate students in degree programs.

**Decolonization and Reconciliation Efforts:** Introduction of Aurora Wolf as the Indigenous Initiatives Coordinator and initiatives to support Indigenous students and incorporate decolonization perspectives in curricula.

**Interdisciplinary Programs:** Development of new programs aligned with the university's research signature areas to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration.

**Competency Framework & Professional Skills Development:** Efforts to integrate skill-building opportunities, such as leadership and project management training, into graduate programs.

Following her presentation, Dr. Burshtyn invited questions from council members.

**Daycare Support for Graduate Student Parents:** She confirmed that CGPS supports the GSA's initiative to expand daycare services and is exploring potential funding sources, including philanthropic contributions. She also advocated for including postdoctoral scholars in these plans.

**International Student Representation:** While a designated representative has not been established, she noted that many GSA executives have been international students, ensuring their concerns are heard. She emphasized ongoing efforts to enhance intercultural competency training and student support services.

**International Student Enrollment Trends:** In response to a question from Danyil Dmytriiev (Biomedical College Representative), Dr. Burshtyn stated that international graduate student numbers have remained stable, though new student enrollment fluctuates due to faculty capacity and external factors. She expressed concern over declining study permit approval rates and the potential impact on future admissions.

The Chair thanked Dr. Burshtyn for her insights and ongoing collaboration with the GSA. The meeting proceeded with the next agenda items.

- **Agenda: CFS Membership Benefits Presentation**

The meeting commenced with an invitation to Mr. Jawad Chowdhury, Deputy Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), to present on the services and supports CFS provides to graduate students.

**CFS Presentation by Jawad Chowdhury:**

**Introduction:**

Jawad Chowdhury (he/him) introduced himself as the National Deputy Chairperson of CFS.

He highlighted CFS's status as the oldest and largest student organization in Canada, representing over 530,000 students across 64 member locals.

CFS operates on a bottom-up structure, with members setting the directives at the National General Meeting (NGM).

**Federation Structure:**

Explained the structure including local student unions, provincial general meetings (e.g., SKSGM), and the national NGM.

Introduced key figures like Holly Star Tate (Chairperson) and Lena Comey Gigi (Executive).

CFS has staff that support research, government relations, services, and campaigns.

### **CFS Pillars and Services:**

CFS functions on three pillars: campaigns, services, research, and government relations.

Services include government relations support, campaign assistance, event support, member benefits (e.g., free sexual health products, ISIC discount card), ethically sourced products, digital services, tax filing assistance (UFile), and training.

The ISIC card provides discounts in 130 countries.

CFS provides student associations support with campaign development, anti-harassment training, and access to exclusive events and conferences.

Events include policy forums, the NGM, caucus standalones, and the Racialized and Indigenous Students Experience (RISE) Summit.

### **Campaigns:**

Highlighted key campaigns: "Fight the Fees," "Education for All," "Fairness for International Students," and "No Means No."

Emphasized advocacy for affordable education, regulation of international student tuition, and combating sexual and gender-based violence.

### **Government Relations:**

CFS engages with federal and provincial governments, advocating for student interests.

Recent advocacy included pre-budget submissions for housing and mental health funding, and advocating for international student work permit extensions.

Wins include reinvestment in post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### **Research and Community Engagement:**

CFS conducts research on relevant issues, including the next federal election.

Constituency groups and caucuses include international students, francophone students, mature and part-time students, 2SLGBTQ+ students, racialized students, students with disabilities, women students, Indigenous students, graduate students, and Black students.

The national graduate caucus lobbied for graduate student funding.

### **Engagement Rationale:**

CFS is the largest student organization, providing a national platform for student voices.

It offers support, expertise, and opportunities for student engagement.

### **Q&A Session:**

Jennifer Amarualik-Yaremko questioned the lack of published governing documents and budgets.

Mary Ojewole (CFS Director of Membership) responded that 2023 documents were recently passed and will be published, and that internal meeting minutes would be addressed.

VP Finance and VP Student Affairs (Nixon) inquired about CFS's support for international graduate students, particularly regarding visa regulations.

Jawad Chowdhury and Mary Ojewole discussed CFS's advocacy for grandfathering existing international student regulations, pathways to PR, dedicated fellowships, and amplifying international student needs through the national graduate caucus.

Luke Dojack questioned the effectiveness of CFS's advocacy in combating funding cuts and the financial exploitation of international students.

Jawad Chowdhury, Rukky Erifeta, and Mary Ojewole then continued to discuss the difficulties of lobbying the provincial government, and the importance of a united student voice. Rukky mentioned the fund the fees rally at the University of Regina, that included support from other Saskatchewan institutions. Mary Ojewole discussed the blame game that the universities and governments play with funding, and also the need to rebuild the Saskatchewan CFS component. Mary also stated that the CFS would like to spend more time at the local level to better understand the needs of the students.

Dev then thanked the CFS members for the presentation.

- **Agenda: GSA Executive Reports**

- **President**

David Ohene-Amoako provided a report highlighting his recent activities and reflections on the past month. Despite December being a busy time with exams and other commitments, David shared that the success of the warm clothing drive led to the continuation of a toy and kids' clothing drive, which will run through January 2025. Some of the collected items are also being set aside for a future daycare initiative.

Additionally, David announced an upcoming year-end hangout event at GSA Commons, scheduled for December 27th, 28th, and 30th, from 2:00 PM to 9:00 PM. An Eventbrite link will be sent out for registration, though students are welcome to attend even if they do not register in advance. A major announcement about the event will also be posted on Pulse.

In closing, David reflected on the engagement and initiatives of the past year, emphasizing the importance of unity among students in shaping a strong future for the GSA. He encouraged members to take an active role in creating the future they envision.

When someone asked about promotional materials for the toy and clothing drive, David confirmed that posters had already been shared on Pulse and would also be included in an upcoming newsletter.

➤ **VP Finance and Operations**

Lindsay provided a brief update on her recent activities. She informed the Council that the Bursary Selection Committee met earlier today, and the bursary announcements are scheduled to be released by tomorrow or Friday.

➤ **VP Academic and Student Affairs**

Over the past month, Nickson has been actively involved in planning the GSA Winter Orientation 2025, which is scheduled to take place on January 17, 2025, at GSA Commons. The event aims to welcome incoming students and provide them with valuable information sessions. Nickson shared that Dean Dr. Debbie Burstyn will be the chief guest, and attendees will receive lunch and GSA T-shirts. To ensure proper planning, a Google Form has been circulated to estimate the number of participants.

Additionally, efforts have been initiated to revise the Student-Supervisor Agreement at the CGPS level. In coordination with other executives, Nickson has started discussions with Dr. Jaswan Singh, Associate Dean, and has also brought the matter to the university's Vice President. To gather feedback from students, a survey link will be shared through a newsletter and other communication channels in the coming month.

Nickson concluded by inviting members to reach out via email with any questions or suggestions regarding these initiatives.

➤ **VP External Affairs**

Reza Golpayegani announced that the Gala 2025 awards application will open in a week. The venue for the event, Marquis Hall, has been reserved for April 12th. Due to space limitations, Reza has included only one representative from each council on the guest list, as some councils have multiple GSA representatives. He invited members to review the list and inform him via email if any councils were missing.

Reza also noted that he could not find the Pegasus GSA representative in their records. He requested that any representative from that council send their information to his email or share it in the meeting chat.

Additionally, he confirmed that souvenirs for Gala Night have been ordered, including 500 pens, identical to last year's design. Half of these will be used for the gala, while the rest will be distributed at other GSA events.

To improve communication, Reza has created a Discord server for council members and executives. He encouraged those interested to scan the QR code displayed on the screen and join.

Reza concluded by welcoming any questions or concerns and thanking the Council for their time. After his report, Jason identified himself as the Pegasus GSA representative, and Reza confirmed he would follow up with him.

➤ **VP Indigenous Engagement**

Jennifer Amarualik-Yaremko provided a report on her recent activities as VP Indigenous Engagement. She reflected on the key initiatives she was elected to focus on—establishing a daycare and advancing anti-racism and anti-oppression efforts. She noted that these issues are deeply connected to larger provincial-level challenges, making progress difficult without broader support. Jennifer encouraged Council members to continue sharing their thoughts and feedback via email, emphasizing that collective support strengthens her advocacy efforts.

She acknowledged that progress has been slow but assured members that further details are outlined in the report included in the agenda. Anyone who needs a copy can email [gsa.indigenous@usask.ca](mailto:gsa.indigenous@usask.ca).

Currently, Jennifer is working with Reza to ensure respectful Indigenous representation at the Gala, addressing concerns from previous years where it was not handled well. Additionally, she is focused on rebuilding lost connections, mentioning that she has re-established contact with the Jewish student community on campus.

She briefly noted ongoing discussions with the Provost, but stated that now was not the time to discuss those matters.

• **Agenda: Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 p.m.

The motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by the majority of the council members.

## Appendix A

<b>Academic Council</b>	<b>Name of Councilors and (alternates)</b>	<b>Oct 2024</b>	<b>Nov 2024</b>	<b>Dec 2024</b>	<b>Jan 2025</b>	<b>Feb 2025</b>	<b>Mar 2025</b>	<b>Apr 2025</b>	<b>May 2025</b>
Biology Graduate Student Association	Portia Mohrbutter Ayicia Nabigon (Alternate)	P	P	P					
Chemistry Course Council	Marco Justino Loza Taghavi (Alternate) Ozra	P	A	P					
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Biochemistry, microbiology & Immunology	Andy Kim - Councilor Shirley Yu - Councilor Samiul Chowdhury - Councilor Sara Dalkilic - Councilor Rylan Bahrey (Alternate) Adrielle Souza (Alternate)	P	P	P					
Computer Science Graduate Council (CSGC)	Thulani Hewavithana Norah Ridley Mumtahina Ahmed (Alternate)	P	A	A					
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Biological	Sumana Majumder Emmanuel Ezechinyelu (Alternate)	A	P	P					
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Biomedical	Danyil Dmytriiev Bashu Gautam (Alternate)	A	P	P					



Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Chemical	Parvaneh Koranian Sara Nath (Alternate)	A	A	A					
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Civil, Geological & Environmental	Anukul Basnet Bashu Gautam (Alternate)	A	A	P					
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Electrical & Computer	Deepa Upadhyaya Subedi Bashu Gautam (Alternate)	A	A	P					
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Mechanical	Kiranbir Kaur Faizan Ansari (Alternate)	A	A	P					
English Course Council	Lydie Hua Gwen Rose (Alternate)	P	A	A					
Geography & Planning Graduate Council	Emily Ireland Prakash Sapkota (Alternate)	A	A	A					
Kinesiology Graduate Student Council	Matthew Chapelski Karissa Johnson (Alternate)	P	P	P					
Nursing Graduate Student Association (NGSA)	Jordan Sherstobitoff Ewurabena Sacky-Forson Hayen Chei Luri (Alternate) Stella Aluko (Alternate) Kristen Witter (Alternate)	P	P	A					
Plant Science	Luke Dojack	P	P	P					

Physical Therapy Student Society (PTSS)	Patrick Janzen-Brown Taya Stang (Alternate)	P	A	A					
SENSSA	Jethro Opara Chelsea Ohenewaa Nyarko (Alternate)	P	P	P					
School of Public Health (SPHSA)	Wasim Al-Khanati Omar Bardouh Theresa Agbeyei Isfar Chowdhry (Alternate)	A	P	P					
Sociology GSA	Meaghan Boily Leah Houseman (Alternate)	P	P	A					
Soil Science Graduate Student Association	Andrea Cline Chloe Canning (Alternate) Levi Lundell	P	P	P					
Animal and Poultry Science GSA	Megan Dubois Gus Halibert (Alternate)	P	A	P					
Toxicology Graduate Student Association (TGSA) Academic Councilor	Chantel De Lange Summer Selinger (Alternate)	A	P	A					
History Graduate Student Association	Kiegan Lloyd Catlin M. Woloschuk	P	A	A					

Physics & Engineering Physics (PEGASUS)	Jeisson A. Vanegas Carranza Nicholas Simonson	P	A	A					
Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy Student Association	Harjot Tur-harjot Bazal Khalid (Alternate)	A	A	A					

<b>Executive member</b>	<b>Name of executive member</b>	<b>Oct 2024</b>	<b>Nov 2024</b>	<b>Dec 2024</b>	<b>Jan 2025</b>	<b>Feb 2025</b>
Exec. President	David Ohene-Amoako	P	P	P		
Exec. VP Finance and Operations	Lindsay Carlson	P	P	P		
Exec. VP Academic and Student Affairs	Nickson Joseph	P	P	P		
Exec. VP External Affairs	Reza Golpayegani	P	P	P		
Exec. VP Indigenous Engagement	Jennifer Amarualik-Yaremko	P	P	P		