

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

Wednesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024; 17:00-19:00

Meeting Location: Online

***“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 January 2025. He emphasized the importance of collaboration and thanked all attendees for their participation in 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 5:06 PM after the quorum was met. Attendees were asked to write their names in the chat box along with their council affiliation to record attendance.

- **Rules and Regulation**

Before proceeding with the agenda, the Chair introduced the rules and regulations for the meeting. He also reminded members that there would be voting on certain motions, with only executives and council representatives eligible to vote.

- **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: Motion to Receive GSA Executive Meeting Minutes**

- **GSA Executive Meeting Minutes for November**

The meeting moved to accept the GSA Executive Meeting Minutes for November.

A motion was made and seconded.

A vote was held, and the minutes were passed with a majority vote in favor.

➤ **GSA Executing Meeting Minutes for December**

The meeting moved to accept the GSA Executive Meeting Minutes for November.

A motion was made and seconded.

A vote was held, and the minutes were passed with a majority vote in favor.

- **Agenda: Motion to Receive Spring/Summer, Fall Bursary Selection Committee Meeting Minutes (7 August, 18 December)**

The meeting moved to receive the Spring/Summer, Fall Bursary Selection Committee Meeting Minutes for August 7th.

Danyil Dmytriiev raised a question regarding the location of the meeting minutes within the agenda package, it was clarified that the November and December executive meeting minutes were in pages 3-9.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the August 7th meeting minutes.

A vote was held, and the minutes were passed with a majority vote in favor.

The meeting then moved to receive the Spring/Summer, Fall Bursary Selection Committee Meeting Minutes for December 18th.

It was clarified that those minutes were located on pages 10-14 of the agenda package.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the December 18th meeting minutes.

A vote was held, and the minutes were passed with a majority vote in favor.

- **Agenda: Motion to Discuss and Vote on Health and Dental Plan Fee Increase and Implications for Benefit Reductions**

Lindsay Carlson, VP Finance, began by referring to the informational meeting held earlier in the week, and asked if there were any lingering questions, with Ali from Studentcare present to answer. She then presented a table outlining potential fee increase options (8%, 16%, 24%, and 40%) and their implications for benefit cuts. An 8% increase would likely result in major cuts across all benefit categories, while a 24% increase would allow for targeted cuts to less essential benefits. A 40% increase would result in no benefit cuts.

Lindsay explained that the GSA has a reserve fund that has been used in the past to supplement health and dental plan fees. She cautioned that relying solely on the reserve fund would be unsustainable, especially with lower fee increases, and would severely disadvantage future graduate students.

Anukul Basnet asked for quantification of the cuts associated with each percentage increase. Ali from Studentcare explained that specific cuts could not be determined until after the insurance company provided confirmed renewal rates. He emphasized that even with a 24% increase, there would still be a substantial gap between the fee and the cost, requiring significant benefit cuts. He also stated that it had taken 10 years to build the reserve, and using half of it would be unsustainable.

Danyil Dmytriiev emphasized the need for a long-term perspective and acknowledged that the current low fees were not a guaranteed benefit. He suggested that the council should estimate future fee increases to determine the long-term impact of each option.

Ali clarified that claims, not inflation, are the primary driver of plan costs. He reiterated that the council was faced with a choice between higher fees or reduced benefits, noting that reduced benefits would lead to increased out-of-pocket costs for students.

Luke Dojack argued that the high utilization of the plan justified maintaining current benefits.

David suggested exploring a four-times payment option to ease the burden on students, but Lindsay clarified that it was not a feasible option. David then stated that the council should still consider the fact that the fees are spread over two terms.

Lindsay addressed a question from Keegan regarding a referendum, clarifying that a referendum is not required for health and dental plan fee increases, as per GSA bylaws and policies.

Lindsay also explained the urgency of the decision, stating that the University of Saskatchewan requires fee submissions by February 7th.

Ali reminded the council that increasing the fee aligns with the growing need for the service, and that benefit cuts would disproportionately affect students who utilize the plan the most.

Dev asked the council if they wanted to include reserve fund usage in the voting options. The council declined, so the voting options were limited to the percentage increases.

A vote was held, and the results were shared: 80.8% voted for a 40% increase, and 19.2% voted for a 24% increase. The 40% increase was passed.

Reza Golpayegani requested access to the individual voting records for transparency. Dev stated that the records would be shared with the recording secretary for inclusion in the meeting minutes, but not publicly during the meeting.

Ali thanked the council and left the meeting.

- **Agenda: Motion to Discuss on GSA Commons opening hours Information**

Lindsay Carlson, VP Finance, initiated the discussion by informing the council that the GSA's former office manager had departed in December 2024. The GSA Commons was being operated with reduced hours (10 AM to 4 PM) due to the absence of the office manager and extended closures during the holidays. She explained that the executives and coordinators were managing

the Commons, and the position would be filled later in the month, but it could take one to two months to hire a replacement.

Lindsay sought the council's perspective on operating hours during this interim period. Historically, the Commons was open from 9 AM to 7:30 PM, with councils and clubs charged for event use outside these hours. She noted safety issues during the later hours and that current usage did not justify staffing until 7:30 PM. She asked for input on whether to move to 9 AM to 5 PM hours and how to handle charges for councils and groups using the space outside regular hours.

Danyil Dmytriiev suggested maintaining 10 AM to 4 or 5 PM hours as a temporary measure and keeping council benefits unchanged until a new administrator was hired. He proposed extending coordinator hours for council events as needed.

Jeisson PEGASUS inquired about the previous manager's reported hours. Lindsay clarified that a time clock had been implemented in September to track hours, and the manager was required to clock in and out. She also clarified that the position was salaried.

Portia asked about council usage of the space. Lindsay stated that approximately one council or group per week rented the space between 7 PM and 11 PM, and it was more common for councils to rent between 4 PM and 7:30 or 8 PM. Jordan asked about the cost per hour for ratified and non-ratified groups, Lindsay stated that it was \$50 and \$75 respectively.

Lindsay summarized that the council preferred reduced Commons hours but wanted to maintain existing charges for councils and groups. In response to a question about profitability, Lindsay clarified that the GSA made money from non-ratified group rentals but not significantly from council rentals due to low charges and free hours.

Lindsay proposed a motion to maintain Commons hours from 10 AM to 4 PM, Monday to Friday, until a new office manager was hired, and to continue charging ratified groups and councils only after 7:30 PM.

The motion was seconded, and a vote was held. The motion passed with a majority vote in favor.

- **Agenda: Motion to Add Graduate Students to the Awards and Diversity Committees**

The meeting moved to discuss adding graduate students to the Hours and Diversity Committees. The Chair explained that some committee members had graduated, and the committee chairs required additional graduate student representation. Five members had been selected from an existing pool to join the Hours Committee.

A vote was held to approve the addition of these five members to the Hours Committee. The motion passed with a majority vote in favor.

The VP Academic and Student Affairs requested an additional member for the Diversity Committee. A motion was made and seconded to approve this addition. The motion passed with a majority vote in favor.

- **Agenda: introduction of PSAC to GSA council**

The meeting proceeded to the introduction of PSAC (Public Service Alliance of Canada) to the GSA Council. Ethan Klein (he/they) presented an overview of PSAC, explaining that it is the union representing graduate workers, postdocs, and research associates at the University of Saskatchewan. This includes teaching assistants, research assistants, and casual workers. PSAC serves as the labor representative, assisting with workplace issues such as supervisor disputes and payment problems.

Ethan noted that they had previously addressed questions about the recent collective bargaining agreement and asked if there were any further inquiries. Council members did not have immediate questions.

Ethan offered their email address for anyone needing representation or information. Lindsay Carlson, VP Finance, relayed that Jen, who had requested Ethan's presence, was absent due to illness. Lindsay shared Jen's concern that the university seemed too pleased with the negotiation, suggesting that the union might not have advocated strongly enough.

Ethan offered to locate the information regarding the collective bargaining agreement. David suggested proceeding with the next agenda item while Ethan searched for the information, to which Ethan agreed.

- **Agenda: Motion to Discuss on Proposed GSA Leadership Circle**

Nickson Joseph, VP Student Affairs, presented the proposal for a GSA Leadership Circle. He explained that the GSA faces challenges in maintaining long-term goals due to annual changes in the executive team, leading to a lack of stability and focus. The Leadership Circle aims to address this by establishing a consistent body to guide the association's long-term direction, even as executive teams change.

The proposal had already been approved by the Executive Committee and presented to the President's Executive Committee. Nickson requested council members to review the proposal, which was included in the agenda package, and provide feedback. The proposed circle would include current and past executives, senior leadership from the university and CGPS, appropriate Indigenous representation, and volunteer faculty members.

Nickson emphasized that the current discussion was for feedback, not a vote. After gathering input, a final draft would be prepared and submitted to the Governance Committee. The Governance Committee would then bring the proposal back to the council for a formal vote, as it involves a policy change.

In response to a question from Jeisson, Nickson stated that feedback on the proposal would be appreciated before the next council meeting.

- **Agenda: Motion to Discuss on Student Supervisor Agreement - Decision Feedback Form Circulation**

Nickson Joseph explained that, following recent discussions with the Executive Committee and CGPS leadership, the GSA Executive team proposed a revision to the Student Supervisor Agreement. This revision would require a thorough review of the entire document, providing an opportunity for graduate students to suggest updates.

Nickson proposed creating a Google Form to gather feedback from council members. He requested council members to share the form with their respective academic councils to collect individual feedback. The collected reviews would then be compiled into a list of proposed changes to be presented to the CGPS.

- **Agenda: GSA Executive Reports**

- **President**

David Ohene-Amoako reported on activities from the past year through January. He highlighted the success of the holiday hangout event, held on December 27th, 28th, and 30th, which averaged 60 student attendees per day. This event was organized in collaboration with Student Wellness and ISAC, with special recognition given to Licia Ellis from the Admissions Office for her support. David also mentioned meetings with MSL Group, a company that manages university websites and related online services. MSL Group proposed a collaboration with the GSA, but due to timing and budget considerations, David informed them that the proposal would be referred to the incoming executive team for further discussion. He then directed the council to his written report for a full list of meetings attended.

- **VP Finance and Operations**

Lindsay Carlson stated that her written report contained detailed information and feedback items, and asked the council to read it. She did not provide a verbal summary.

- **VP Academic and Student Affairs**

Nickson Joseph addressed a question from Portia regarding the circulation of feedback forms for the Student Supervisor Agreement, stating that the forms would be distributed by the end of the following week, with responses requested before the next council meeting. He then briefly reported on his activities, mentioning his coordination of the winter hangout, which was largely managed by David. He indicated that upcoming policy changes and a detailed report on the winter orientation would be discussed at the next council meeting.

- **VP External Affairs**

Reza Golpayegani reported that he had updated the GSA website and was available for further edits. He announced that the GSA Gala 2025 was booked for April 12th from 5:00 PM to 11:00 PM. He is currently in the process of raising funds for the gala and welcomed any assistance.

➤ **VP Indigenous Engagement**

The VP Indigenous Engagement was absent. Council members were directed to read the written report in the agenda package.

• **Agenda: Other Business**

Ethan Klein (he/they) from PSAC addressed the council regarding the new collective bargaining agreement. They apologized for technical difficulties and confirmed that their response to Jen's questions had been distributed via PDF and Doc. They acknowledged that Jen's primary concern, and potentially that of others, was the rationale behind the wage rates in the new contract.

Ethan explained that the PSAC bargaining team negotiated to the best of their ability with the university, and the resulting agreement represented the best offer the university was willing to provide. This offer was then presented to and approved by the PSAC membership.

Looking ahead to the next bargaining cycle in 2027, Ethan emphasized the need for increased membership engagement to secure better wages that reflect the cost of living. This would involve strengthening PSAC's organizational structure, engaging in long-term planning, and fostering collaboration with organizations like the GSA through shared events and volunteer efforts.

Lindsay Carlson, VP Finance, asked about the purpose of the 1% retroactive wage increase, given that it was not retroactively payable. Ethan clarified that the increase raised the baseline for future wage negotiations. He explained that although retroactive pay was a goal, the university's final offer included the 1% increase, which was considered a positive outcome.

Lindsay thanked Ethan for the clarification.

With no further questions, Ethan thanked the council for their time and departed.

• **Agenda: Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:33.

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



## Appendix A

Academic Council	Name of Councilors and (alternates)	Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Dec 2024	Jan 2025	Feb 2025	Mar 2025	Apr 2025	May 2025
Biology Graduate Student Association	Portia Mohrbutter Ayicia Nabigon (Alternate)	P	P	P	P				
Chemistry Course Council	Marco Justino Loza Taghavi (Alternate) Ozra	P	A	P	A				
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	P				
Computer Science Graduate Council (CSGC)	Thulani Hewavithana Norah Ridley Mumtahina Ahmed (Alternate)	P	A	A	A				
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Biological	Sumana Majumder Emmanuel Ezechinyelu (Alternate)	A	P	P	A				
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Biomedical	Danyil Dmytriiev Bashu Gautam (Alternate)	A	P	P	P				
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Chemical	Parvaneh Koranian Sara Nath (Alternate)	A	A	A	A				

Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Civil, Geological & Environmental	Anukul Basnet Bashu Gautam (Alternate)	A	A	P	P				
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Electrical & Computer	Deepa Upadhyaya Subedi Bashu Gautam (Alternate)	A	A	P	A				
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Mechanical	Kiranbir Kaur Faizan Ansari (Alternate)	A	A	P	A				
English Course Council	Lydie Hua Gwen Rose (Alternate)	P	A	A	P				
Geography & Planning Graduate Council	Emily Ireland Prakash Sapkota (Alternate)	A	A	A	P				
Kinesiology Graduate Student Council	Matthew Chapelski Karissa Johnson (Alternate)	P	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	P				
Plant Science	Luke Dojack	P	P	P	P				
Physical Therapy Student Society (PTSS)	Patrick Janzen-Brown Taya Stang (Alternate)	P	A	A	P				

SENSSA	Jethro Opara Chelsea Ohenewaa Nyarko (Alternate)	P	P	P	P				
School of Public Health (SPHSA)	Wasim Al-Khanati Omar Bardouh Theresa Agbeyei Isfar Chowdhry (Alternate)	A	P	P	P				
Sociology GSA	Meaghan Boily Leah Houseman (Alternate)	P	P	A	P				
Soil Science Graduate Student Association	Andrea Cline Chloe Canning (Alternate) Levi Lundell	P	P	P	P				
Animal and Poultry Science GSA	Megan Dubois Gus Halibert (Alternate)	P	A	P	P				
Toxicology Graduate Student Association (TGSA) Academic Councilor	Chantel De Lange Summer Selinger (Alternate)	A	P	A	A				
History Graduate Student Association	Kiegan Lloyd Catlin M. Woloschuk	P	A	A	P				
Physics & Engineering Physics (PEGASUS)	Jeisson A. Vanegas Carranza Nicholas Simonson	P	A	A	A				

Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy Student Association	Harjot Tur-harjot	A	A	A	A				
	Bazal Khalid (Alternate)								

<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	P	
Exec. VP Finance and Operations	Lindsay Carlson	P	P	P	P	
Exec. VP Academic and Student Affairs	Nickson Joseph	P	P	P	P	
Exec. VP External Affairs	Reza Golpayegani	P	P	P	P	
Exec. VP Indigenous Engagement	Jennifer Amarualik-Yaremko	P	P	P	A	

