

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

Wednesday, November 27<sup>th</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 November 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 Chair concluded with a quote by Henry Ford: "Coming together is a beginning. Staying together is progress, and working together is success."

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.

Notable introductions included:

Opara Jethro (School of Environment and Sustainability Students Association, CENSA)

Sana Nasser (Graduate Student in Public Administration, University of Saskatchewan)

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: Approval of Executive Meeting Minutes**

### **1. Approval of October 9<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> 2024, Meeting Minutes**

The Chair asked about the approval of the minute from GSA council meeting from October 9 and October 28, 2024.

The motion to approve the October 9 and October 28 minutes was approved by the majority of the council members.

- **Agenda: Election of the GSA council chair**

The Chair introduced the next agenda item: the election of the GSA Council Chair.

David Ohene-Amoako, leading this part of the meeting, read out the election rules. He noted that the Council Chair must be a regular member of the association and cannot be a member of the Council Executive or Association Staff. Additionally, the Chair should be familiar with all governing documents, including the Saskatchewan Nonprofit Corporation Act, 1995, and Robert's Rules of Order.

Two candidates had submitted nominations for the position:

1. Devopriya Tirtho
2. Kimia Khavaninzadeh

the President called upon each candidate to present their statements. Each candidate was given one and a half minutes to speak, followed by an opportunity for council members to ask questions.

Devopriya Tirtho introduced himself as a master's student in computer science. He shared his experience with the GSA, having initially joined as a Vice Chair before stepping into the role of Chair after the previous Chair's resignation. He spoke about his contributions to the GSA, including volunteering efforts and designing the GSA T-shirt for 2023. Devopriya expressed his commitment to continuing his work in ensuring the smooth operation of the GSA, fostering collaboration between executives and graduate students, and representing students' voices effectively. He requested support from the council members for his candidacy.

the President then attempted to call on Kimia Khavaninzadeh, but there was no immediate response. After a brief delay, Kimia was able to join the discussion, explaining that she had technical issues with her microphone. She introduced herself as a graduate student in the music department and highlighted her active participation in various GSA meetings. She expressed her interest in playing a role in the council, emphasizing her enthusiasm for decision-making that benefits all students.

Following the candidates' presentations, the President posted the voting link in the Zoom chat. Council members were given time to cast their votes. An inquiry was raised about whether executives were allowed to vote, to which David confirmed that all members, including executives, were eligible to participate in the election. Once voting was completed, David proceeded to check the results while the meeting continued with other agenda items.

- **Agenda: Election of the GSA council vice-chair**

The Chair introduced the next agenda item: the election of the GSA Council Vice-Chair. As per GSA bylaws, this is a voluntary position open to regular members of the Association who are not part of the Council Executive or Association staff. The Vice-Chair is responsible for presiding over council and general meetings in the absence of the Council Chair and is encouraged to attend at least one council and general meeting even when the Chair is present. The Vice-Chair must also be familiar with all governing documents, including the Saskatchewan Nonprofit Corporation Act, 1995, Robert's Rules of Order, and the Association's constitution, bylaws, and policies.

The Chair then initiated the election process, inviting each candidate to introduce themselves.

- Doreen Mora Ozoro introduced herself as a new student in the School of Public Health, eager to contribute to graduate student learning activities and gain leadership skills.
- Muhammad Ismail Jobiullah, a second-year MPA student at the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, highlighted his prior experience as a student organization president in Bangladesh and his desire to support graduate students.
- Sana Nasr, a first-year MPA student, emphasized her six years of relevant experience and her commitment to contributing valuable insights to the GSA.
- Shaily Tandekar, a second-year graduate student from the Plant Science Department, acknowledged her limited prior involvement but expressed a strong desire to step up and dedicate time and energy to the role.

Following the introductions, voting happened. The Chair confirmed that candidates were not allowed to vote. The voting link was shared, and participants were asked to confirm access. After votes were counted, a tie was identified between Shaily Tandekar and Doreen Mora Ozoro. In response, a motion was proposed by Luke Dojack to hold a second round of voting with only the tied candidates. The motion was seconded and approved.

Upon further verification, the Chair identified two duplicate votes for Doreen Mora Ozoro, which were removed. The corrected final vote count resulted in Shaily Tandekar being elected as the GSA Vice-Chair. The Chair announced the results and congratulated Shaily on her election.

Shaily thanked everyone for their support and expressed her enthusiasm for the role.

- **Agenda: Election of the GSA Council Recording Secretary**

The Chair introduced the next agenda item: the election of the GSA Recording Secretary. As outlined in the Bylaws, the Recording Secretary must be a regular member of the Association and cannot hold the positions of Council Chair, Vice Chair, Council Executive member, or Association staff. The Recording Secretary is responsible for closely working with the Council Chair (or Vice Chair in their absence), recording and preparing minutes for council and general meetings upon request, and receiving a fee equivalent to the graduate student hourly rate for each hour of work. The Secretary may claim a maximum of four hours per meeting, though this does not reflect the actual hours worked.

The Chair then proceeded with the election process, inviting each candidate to unmute and introduce themselves before the Council.

The first candidate called was Atifa Amin Sadehi, but there was no response. The Chair then moved to the next candidate, Arman Heydari.

Arman Heydari introduced himself, stating that he is a second-year master's student in computer science. He expressed confidence in handling secretarial duties, mentioning his experience with weekly Zoom meetings and previous volunteering work with the GSA, particularly during orientation sessions. He stated that he found the GSA environment engaging and was enthusiastic about taking on the role of Recording Secretary.

The Chair then called for Christy Donco, but there was no response. Similarly, there was no response from when called. The Chair made a final call for Atifa Amin Sadehi, Christy Donco, and Parnia Nikkhah, but none of them responded.

Following this, the Chair provided the voting link in the chat and requested all council members to cast their votes. He waited for two minutes to allow members to complete their voting and then confirmed that voting had concluded.

The Chair shared the voting results in the chat, announcing that the majority of votes were cast in favor of Arman Heydari, who was thereby elected as the new Recording Secretary of the GSA.

The Chair congratulated Arman Heydari on his election.

Arman Heydari expressed his gratitude, thanking the council members for their votes and support.

- **Agenda: GSA Executive Reports**

- **President**

The President, David Ohene-Amoako, provided an update on recent activities and initiatives.

The GSA is working on developing a strategic plan to guide its long-term direction. The plan will be presented to the council for discussion and approval, ensuring continuity in GSA's goals and activities. Similar plans exist in other institutions, and the GSA aims to adapt best practices to benefit graduate students.

The President attended the recent CFS conference, representing the University of Saskatchewan and, in part, the province. As the Deputy National Chair, he emphasized the importance of student advocacy and thanked the council for the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

Planning is underway for Black History Month in February 2025. The President is part of the organizing committee and invited all students to participate. Events will include a screening of the film Ubuntu, which highlights the theme of community and shared identity.

The GSA is also collaborating with Career Services to organize a career readiness event specifically for graduate students. The event will focus on employer expectations and how graduate students can better prepare for the job market. The goal is to improve employment outcomes for students completing their master's and PhD programs.

The annual warm clothing drive, which started recently, is ongoing and will conclude on December 6. Donations have been coming in steadily, with efforts now extending to collecting toys and children's clothing as well.

Concerns about changing immigration policies and tuition costs have been brought to the GSA's attention. Some students have expressed worries about fee increases and the uncertainty surrounding immigration rules. These issues were also discussed at the University Council meeting, where university leadership acknowledged the challenges and indicated they are working on solutions. The GSA executive team will review these concerns and explore ways to support students.

The President concluded by noting that he has attended over 10 meetings this month, with more to come, and remains committed to addressing student concerns and strengthening the GSA's impact.

### ➤ **VP Finance and Operations**

Lindsay Carlson provided a detailed update on several key issues. One major concern raised in early November was the reduction in OneDrive storage, which posed challenges for students with data-intensive research. Lindsay worked with the other GSA executives to write and present a letter to the President's executive committee, advocating against the change. While initial pushback was received, the committee ultimately reversed the decision after realizing the impact on graduate students' ability to store necessary data. Lindsay also encouraged students to check their OneDrive storage, as it appears some users have been arbitrarily affected by storage reductions, and students requiring more storage are advised to contact IT.

Additionally, Lindsay announced that the Fall needs-based bursary, which was initially set to close on October 31, 2024, will have its deadline extended to November 8, 2024. This extension was necessary due to scheduling conflicts for the bursary selection committee, which will allow for more applicants. The bursaries will be distributed electronically for the first time in collaboration with CGPS and are expected to be sent out before the holidays to support students facing financial hardship during the holiday season.

Finally, Lindsay highlighted the successful approval of the operating budget for the 2024-2025 year. She thanked everyone involved for their efforts in ensuring the budget was approved before the year's end, making it officially part of the upcoming fiscal year. Lindsay concluded by inviting any questions and passing the floor to the next speaker.

➤ **VP Academic and Student Affairs**

Nickson Joseph provided a report highlighting his recent activities. Over the past month, he focused primarily on the ratification of academic councils and social groups. As outlined in the GSA's Bylaws and Policies, the annual ratification process is essential for the proper functioning of the Council, ensuring that ratified councils and groups receive funding and other benefits. This year, with coordination from the other executives and office staff, Nickson was able to complete the ratifications on time, achieving better success compared to previous years. Currently, 18 academic councils and 6 social groups have been ratified.

Nickson also took the opportunity to apologize for any miscommunication that may have occurred between the office and council members during this process. In addition, he mentioned that the GSA was a silver sponsor for the One Health Symposium hosted by the University of Saskatchewan on November 23, 2024, which was a successful event. Nickson concluded by noting that the list of meetings he attended is available in the shared agenda package and invited members to reach out with any questions or concerns regarding his report.

➤ **VP External Affairs**

Reza Golpayegani, the VP External, provided updates on key initiatives undertaken over the past months. The new GSA logo has been successfully implemented across physical spaces in the GSA Commons building, as well as on the GSA's website and social media platforms. Additionally, a GSA Volunteers group has been created, now consisting of 26 members. Graduate students interested in joining and contributing to GSA activities are encouraged to reach out via email. Lastly, the VP External reminded members to attend the next Council meeting, where important details regarding Gala 2025 will be discussed.

➤ **VP Indigenous Engagement**

The VP Indigenous Engagement provided a brief report on ongoing initiatives. Work continues on establishing a daycare to support graduate students, though progress remains slow due to significant challenges in securing both space and funding. Currently, the efforts involve the VP Indigenous Engagement, the President, a professor, and a representative from the CDPS office. There is also interest from the Indigenous Students' Union, with four students expressing support for the initiative, along with some members of the GSA Council. However, resource limitations remain a key obstacle, as finding both space and financial support requires substantial time and effort.

Additionally, the VP Indigenous Engagement attended several meetings throughout the month, including representing the GSA at the 2024 Opahatan Ball Symposium on November 8 and the Louis Riel Day Métis flag-raising ceremony at Nobel Plaza on November 15. She noted that as of last Friday, the Métis flag was still flying and encouraged members to visit the site.

During the meeting, a member asked about a previously mentioned discussion with USSU regarding anti-racism initiatives. The VP Indigenous Engagement clarified that while a meeting with USSU and the President did not take place as initially expected, discussions about the 3rd Pass initiative are ongoing. Currently, students experiencing racism have only two formal options: filing a complaint through Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services, which has a high standard of proof, or attempting to resolve the issue independently. The VP Indigenous Engagement noted that there is growing interest from the Indigenous Students' Union to address this issue, and discussions continue on potential improvements.

The President added that while no formal anti-racism system exists at the university, USSU has expressed willingness to collaborate on the issue. A meeting took place earlier in the day to discuss next steps, and the GSA will remain involved in the process. Updates will be provided as progress is made.

### **Agenda: Other Business**

#### **➤ Announcements:**

#### **David Ohene-Amoako, GSA President**

David announced the upcoming GSA hangout events, tentatively scheduled for December 27th, 28th, and 30th. He emphasized that these dates are subject to final confirmation in the upcoming GSA Newsletter and encouraged council members to participate as the organization prepares for the new year. Any changes will be communicated in due course.

#### **Lindsay Carlson, VP Finance**

Lindsay reminded academic councils that their annual funding has been processed and should have been received. She urged council representatives to check with their treasurers and reach out to either her or Nixon if there were any issues. Additionally, she highlighted that academic councils are eligible to apply for up to \$750 per year in event funding, which could be useful for upcoming holiday events.

Lindsay also announced that the Canadian Federation of Students has been invited to present at the next meeting on December 18th. The presentation will cover the benefits of CFS membership, as all graduate students pay a related fee through their tuition.

Lastly, Lindsay initiated a discussion on whether the December 18th meeting should be held in person or online, considering many members may be traveling for the holidays.

#### **David Ohene-Amoako, GSA President:**

David added that Dean Debbie from the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) may attend the December 18th meeting to discuss an important decision affecting graduate students. He encouraged an in-person meeting to allow for direct engagement with the Dean. However, if the majority of members preferred an online format, alternative arrangements would be considered.

Members were asked to submit their meeting format preferences in the chat, and a final decision will be communicated later.

#### **➤ discussion on the amendment of the SSA to include 3 weeks of vacation**



**Matthew Chapelski** provided a report summarizing his recent activities and key discussions. One of the main issues raised was the vacation entitlement for international students. A concern was brought forward that the current two-week vacation period is insufficient for international students who need to travel long distances to visit their home countries. To address this, Matthew suggested negotiating an amendment to the Student-Supervisor Agreement to include a mandatory three-week vacation entitlement. This change would ensure fairness and consistency, preventing disparities where some students receive more vacation time than others.

Additionally, Matthew discussed the upcoming GSA election process. He proposed an improvement to how candidate information is presented during voting. Currently, students only see candidates' names on the ballot, which can make it difficult to recall their platforms. To enhance voter awareness, he suggested including a short statement—around 30 words—summarizing each candidate's key priorities or campaign slogan. This would provide students with a clearer understanding of candidates' positions at the time of voting, making the election process more accessible and equitable, especially for those who may not have had the opportunity to engage with campaign materials beforehand.

Matthew concluded by encouraging further discussions on these topics and welcomed any feedback from council members.

**Lindsay Carlson**, VP Finance, responded to Matthew's points by clarifying that election posters are a reimbursable expense, with candidates eligible for up to \$50 in reimbursement. She acknowledged that many students do not utilize posters, making Matthew's suggestion even more relevant. Lindsay also expressed interest in improving the election timeline, noting that her own nomination process had only allowed for a two-day window. Extending this period would give candidates more time to prepare and participate effectively.

**David Ohene-Amoako**, President, echoed the importance of the vacation policy discussion, stating that this concern had been raised previously by other students. He acknowledged the challenges international students face in making travel arrangements within the current two-week limit and supported the proposal to extend vacation time.

➤ **Updates on GSA daycare:**

David Ohene-Amoako provided an update on the ongoing efforts to establish a GSA daycare. He reiterated that the daycare project remains a priority and is being integrated into the strategic plan. While the current executive team may not be able to complete the initiative during their term, efforts are being made to ensure continuity. The plan is structured so that future executives can pick up the project where it is left off and continue working towards its completion.

➤ **Discussion on GSA Election:**

The Council discussed ways to enhance the accessibility and transparency of the GSA election process. Currently, candidates upload campaign videos to YouTube; however, concerns were raised that not all students engage with these materials before voting. Suggestions were made to explore additional communication strategies to ensure that students are well-informed before casting their votes.

Additionally, Jennifer Amarualik-Yaremko provided insight into the amendment process for the Student-Supervisor Agreement (SSA). She clarified that any changes must go through multiple

bureaucratic layers, including the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS) Executive Coordinating Committee and the CGPS Faculty Council. Despite the complexity of the process, it was agreed that advocating for necessary amendments is worthwhile.

**Agenda: Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

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

Information regarding the next Council meeting will be updated on the GSA website, with the next session tentatively scheduled for December 18.

## 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						
Chemistry Course Council	Marco Justino Loza Taghavi (Alternate)	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						
Computer Science Graduate Council (CSGC)	Thulani Hewavithana Norah Ridley Mumtahina Ahmed (Alternate)	P	A						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Biological	Sumana Majumder Emmanuel Ezechinyelu (Alternate)	A	P						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Biomedical	Danyil Dmytriev Bashu Gautam (Alternate)	A	P						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Chemical	Parvaneh Koranian Sara Nath (Alternate)	A	A						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Civil, Geological & Environmental	Anukul Basnet Bashu Gautam (Alternate)	A	A						

Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Electrical & Computer	Deepa Upadhyaya Subedi Bashu Gautam (Alternate)	A	A						
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Mechanical	Kiranbir Kaur Faizan Ansari (Alternate)	A	A						
English Course Council	Lydie Hua Gwen Rose (Alternate)	P	A						
Geography & Planning Graduate Council	Emily Ireland Prakash Sapkota (Alternate)	A	A						
Kinesiology Graduate Student Council	Matthew Chapelski Karissa Johnson (Alternate)	P	P						
Nursing Graduate Student Association (NGSA)	Jordan Sherstobitoff Ewurabena Sacky-Forson Hayen Chei Luri (Alternate) Stella Aluko (Alternate) Kristen Witter (Alternate)	P	P						
Plant Science	Luke Dojack	P	P						
Physical Therapy Student Society (PTSS)	Patrick Janzen-Brown Taya Stang (Alternate)	P	A						
SENSSA	Jethro Opara Chelsea Ohenewaa Nyarko (Alternate)	P	P						
School of Public Health (SPHSA)	Wasim Al-Khanati Omar Bardouh Theresa Agbeyei	A	P						

	Isfar Chowdhry (Alternate)								
Sociology GSA	Meaghan Boily Leah Houseman (Alternate)	P	P						
Soil Science Graduate Student Association	Andrea Cline Chloe Canning (Alternate)	P	P						
Animal and Poultry Science GSA	Megan Dubois Gus Halibert (Alternate)	P	A						
Toxicology Graduate Student Association (TGSA) Academic Councilor	Chantel De Lange Summer Selinger (Alternate)	A	P						
History Graduate Student Association	Kiegan Lloyd Catlin M. Woloschuk	P	A						
Physics & Engineering Physics (PEGASUS)	Jeissou A. Vanegas Carranza Nicholas Simonson	P	A						
Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy Student Association	Harjot Tur-harjot Bazal Khalid (Alternate)	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			
Exec. VP Finance and Operations	Lindsay Carlson	P	P			
Exec. VP Academic and Student Affairs	Nickson Joseph	P	P			
Exec. VP External Affairs	Reza Golpayegani	P	P			
Exec. VP Indigenous Engagement	Jennifer Amarualik-Yaremko	P	P			