



**University of Saskatchewan- Graduate Students' Association**

**Summer Council Meeting**

**Wednesday, August 13, 2025; 17:00-18:30**

**Meeting Location: In person at GSA Commons**

**AGENDA**

*The GSA operates on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis Nation. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.*

	ITEM	ACTION	PAGE
1	Call to order		
2	Approval of agenda	Decision	
3	Election of GSA Recording secretary	Decision	
	GSA executive reports		
	a. President		
4	b. Vice President Finance and Operation	Information	2-11
	c. Vice President Academic and Student Affairs		
	➤ Vice President External Affairs		
5	Other Businesses	Information	
6	Adjournment		

## **GSA EXECUTIVE REPORTS**

Dear GSA Councillors,

Serving as GSA President over the past few months has been both rewarding and challenging. We have seen important progress in advocacy, collaboration, and student engagement, while also navigating moments that have tested our governance and commitment to due process. These experiences have only strengthened my resolve to ensure the GSA moves forward with purpose, integrity, and unity in the months ahead.

I am writing to provide you with an update on my June, July, and August activities as President.

### **1. Collaboration with the Student Recruitment Team**

In Aug, I met with the Student Recruitment team to discuss opportunities for engaging with incoming graduate students. Plans include hosting a GSA booth at the upcoming Welcome Event, producing a short introductory video highlighting the GSA space and services, and conducting tours of the GSA Commons on September 19, 2025.

### **2. Anti-Racism Symposium Planning**

Planning continues for an Anti-Racism Symposium in partnership with a dedicated team from student health and wellbeing and the USSU. The event will include panel discussions, departmental-level conversations, and interactive sessions aimed at fostering an inclusive campus environment. Participants will be eligible for Co-Curricular Record (CCR) recognition. The date is not yet finalized, but the event is proposed to take place in the GSA Commons later this fall.

### **3. Update from the University Governance Office (Administrative Fee)**

We were informed by the University Governance Office that, historically, the 1% administrative fee associated with collecting GSA fees from students had not been charged. The university plans to correct this moving forward. Further discussions will take place to understand the implications

for the GSA budget and operations.

#### **4. Tuition Payment Plan Discussions**

The GSA will be engaging in discussions with the university regarding payment options for tuition fees. The two main options under consideration are:

- Paying late fees directly (this is the current procedure)
- Utilizing the tuition payment plan, which would involve interest charges.

We will evaluate which approach is most feasible and financially sustainable for graduate students.

#### **5. Collaboration with the University Library**

We are exploring collaborations with the University Library to expand engagement opportunities for graduate students. This includes supporting Academic Councils in showcasing their research through poster sessions or uploads to Harvest for greater visibility. We are also discussing the potential for the library to host an arXiv database for preprints, providing graduate students with a credible platform to share early-stage research.

#### **6. Graduate Student Research and Life Stories**

We are planning to highlight graduate students by sharing both their research and their experiences of graduate life on campus. A new page on the GSA website is under development in collaboration with the VP External, which will feature these stories along with the GSA newsletter. We are also exploring the possibility of showcasing graduate research on university-wide digital monitors to further increase visibility.

#### **7. Meeting with Federal MP (Advocacy Priorities)**

In the coming weeks, we will meet with a Federal Member of Parliament to discuss advocacy priorities for graduate students. Councilors are encouraged to share suggestions for issues they

believe should be raised, whether related to funding, housing, immigration, or other pressing concerns.

#### **8. Advocacy for a Seat on the University Board of Governors**

We have begun advocacy efforts for graduate student representation on the University's Board of Governors. While there are restrictions in the University Act, we will raise this matter in upcoming discussions, as this remains the only major university governance body without graduate student representation.

#### **9. Continuation of Childcare Advocacy**

We will continue the advocacy efforts initiated by past executives to establish a dedicated GSA childcare facility, recognizing the importance of accessible childcare for our members' academic success and well-being.

#### **10. Saskatoon Transit (Spring/Summer Pass Feasibility)**

We are arranging a meeting with Saskatoon Transit to explore the feasibility of introducing a spring/summer U-Pass option for graduate students. This initiative will help ensure year-round affordable transportation access.

#### **11. GSA Orientation (New Format)**

This year, we are hosting the GSA Orientation in a new and more engaging format. All executives are working collaboratively under the leadership of VP Academics, Mandela, to deliver an improved experience for incoming students. Mandela will provide more details in his own report, but I welcome suggestions from Council members to ensure the event best serves our graduate community.

Meetings Attended as President

June 11, 2025, Meeting with VP Finance

June 13, 2025, Executive Meeting

June 19, 2025, GSA Council Meeting

July 10, 2025, Special Council Meeting

July 24/2025 Operations Manager Meeting

July 25, 2025, Executive Meeting

July 30, 2025, Student Wellness Centre Meeting

July 31, 2025, Student Recruitment, GSA and USSU Touchbase Meeting

July 31, 2025, University Provost & University VP Academic Meeting

August 8, 2025, Library Officials Meeting

The GSA is strongest when we work together with respect for both our shared goals and our diverse perspectives. My commitment is to lead with transparency, act with fairness, and ensure that every effort we make leaves graduate students in a better position than before.

Thank you for your collaboration and trust as we continue to work together to strengthen the GSA and the graduate student experience. Lastly, please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

Regards,

Palash R. Roy (he/him)

President, Graduate Students' Association (GSA)

PhD Student, Department of CompScience, University of Saskatchewan



Dear GSA Councilors,

I am writing to provide you with an update on my July and August activities as the Vice-President Finance and Operations.

### 1) GSA-CGPS Need-Based Bursary Report

The 34 recipients of the GSA-CGPS Spring-Summer Need Based Bursary were notified by email on July 15. We received 216 applications for this call, and unfortunately, there were many more deserving applications than available bursaries. The Fall Term call will be announced in September, and the remaining 76 bursaries will be distributed during the fall and winter terms.

A question at a previous council meeting was raised about the proportion of Master's vs PhD students who apply for and receive the bursary, in comparison to the proportion enrolled. Reports from CGPS ([published annually here](#)) indicate that 73.7% of enrolled graduate students are Master's (or other) and 26.3% of enrolled students are PhD students. Of recent applications for which I have access to data, 69% of applicants were Master's students and 31% were PhDs – of recipients 59% were Master's and 41% were PhD students. Please note that the current selection rubric does not prioritize students by program type but does aim to assist students nearing the end of their program, as well as other criteria described in GSA Policies.

### 2) Completion of 2024 audit

Since the beginning of my service, I have been working closely and communicating regularly with our auditors to ensure they have the information needed to move forward with the audit process. This audit began in December of 2024, following completion of the previous audit in November 2024. The finalized audit for the fiscal year which began May 1, 2023 and ended on April 30, 2024 was completed in June 2025 and approved by the GSA Executives.

The audit was favorable and found no significant concerns but did describe higher-than-typical accounts payable and accrued liabilities associated with payments not made to GSA vendors including Studentcare, CFS, and City of Saskatoon between the months of January 2023 and April 2024. The higher-than-typical “cash” line under assets indicates that the funds were not otherwise spent but were sitting in the bank account. The delayed payments were not cited as a significant concern because I had ensured all outstanding debts were paid in full during my first term in office/before the audit was concluded. The failure to pay was a combination of a period without office staff, inattention/oversights by the 2023-2024 Executive Committee, and poor performance/negligence of the previous office manager. Fortunately, diligent work by the 2024-2025 Executive Committee rectified the situation and ensured there was no disruption to student

services, and GSA is now in good standing with all its vendors. The major take-away is that Council should be aware that the “assets” listed in the 2024 audit are over-inflated, and the remediation of this value will be reflected in the 2025 financial statements, which we have already begun and aim to complete by November 2025.

### 3) GSA Events Survey

We conducted a survey during the month of July to seek input from students on what kind of events they are most interested in seeing GSA host. The top five preferred events were free professional headshots, GSA research conference, financial literacy information sessions, a health and dental plan information session, and movie nights. I am currently planning three financial literacy events: budgeting in October, saving and investing in February, and taxes in March. The GSA Executives will work to provide as many other events as possible this year, starting with Fall Orientation on September 10. We thank the 180 participants who filled out the survey and congratulate the five students who were drawn as winners of grocery gift cards.

### VP Finance Meetings Attended

6/17/2025	Student Finance Meeting
6/18/2025	Celebration of Be What the World Needs Campaign
6/19/2025	GSA Executive + Chair Meeting
6/19/2025	GSA Council Meeting
6/24/2025	RBC Meeting
6/27/2025	Auditor Meeting - Review Draft Financial Statements
6/30/2025	GSA Executive Meeting
7/3/2025	HR Consultant Meeting
7/3/2025	Operations Manager Meeting
7/3/2025	Culinary Services Meeting
7/10/2025	Special Council Meeting
7/14/2025	GSA Executive Meeting
7/16/2025	Operations Manager Meeting

As always, please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns.

Regards,

Lindsay G. Carlson (she/her)

VP Finance and Operations, Graduate Students' Association (GSA)

PhD Candidate, Department of Biology University of Saskatchewan



### **1.0 Graduate Students' Association (GSA) 2025 Fall Orientation**

The Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Fall Orientation will be held on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the GSA Commons. This year, the GSA is introducing a more relaxed, drop-in style format in place of the traditional full-day session. Graduate students will have the opportunity to visit various information booths at their own pace, allowing them to tailor their orientation experience to their individual needs and interests.

The event will begin with a brief welcome and introduction to the GSA, including an overview of our mission, services, and ongoing support for graduate students. Following this introduction, attendees will be invited to explore the orientation booths. Participating booths include:

1. Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)
2. GSA Health & Dental Plan
3. College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS)
4. Career Services
5. Student Wellness Centre
6. Student Central
7. International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC)
8. University Residence
9. University Library
10. Saskatoon Transit (SaskTransit)

We require additional support to ensure the success of this event. Therefore, we are appealing to GSA Councillors to assist by securing at least three volunteers from their respective departments.

### **2.0 Ratification of Academic Councils and Social Clubs**

Academic Councils function as mini associations within the Graduate Students' Association (GSA), consisting of students from one or more departments who share common academic or professional interests. Each Academic Council elects representatives to participate in GSA General Council meetings.



The ratification of Academic Councils and Social Clubs is valid for the period September to August of each academic year. As such, all councils and clubs must re-ratify annually to maintain active status. A call for ratification will be issued at the beginning of September, and all Academic Councils and Social Clubs are strongly encouraged to submit their ratification packages promptly once the application period opens. For more information visit the GSA [website](#).

### **3.0 Graduate Opportunities Workshop – A collaboration between GSA and USSU**

The Graduate Opportunities Workshop is a joint initiative between the GSA and the USSU aimed at equipping undergraduate students with essential knowledge about pursuing graduate studies at the University of Saskatchewan. The workshop will be held on Friday, September 12, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It will start with an informative presentation covering topics such as graduate program opportunities at USask, admission requirements, strategies for finding a graduate supervisor, preparing a strong application package, and navigating the steps to graduate school.

The second session will feature Peer Mentorship Roundtables, where current graduate students will share first-hand experiences and insights. Discussion topics will include graduate research, application tips, the benefits and challenges of graduate studies, and more. To support this event, we issued calls for volunteer mentors in both the July and August newsletters. To date, 12 graduate students have volunteered for the roundtables. Our goal is to reach at least 20 volunteers to ensure a diverse range of perspectives for attendees.

We encourage all councillors and members to consider volunteering for this valuable initiative. Your participation will provide undergraduates with meaningful guidance as they explore the possibility of graduate studies.

Regards,

Mandela Alema

VP Academic and Student Affairs



**Dear Council Members,**

I am pleased to present my report for July 2025, outlining ongoing initiatives and upcoming priorities for the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) in the area of external affairs. This

month's work has focused on strengthening graduate student visibility, advancing advocacy priorities, and supporting preparations for Fall Orientation.

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## **GSA Research Feature Series**

We're launching a new initiative to celebrate and share the diversity, talent, and experiences of our graduate student community. This project will:

- **Create a dedicated page** on the GSA website to feature graduate student research and personal stories of life on campus.
- **Highlight inspiring work** from across departments, showcasing the diverse and impactful work of graduate students
- **Share these features** in the GSA newsletter to reach a wide audience within our community.
- **Promote visibility** by exploring opportunities to display graduate research highlights on university-wide digital monitors.
- **Strengthen community connections** by telling authentic stories and recognizing the achievements of graduate students from diverse backgrounds.

We have received responses from 2 graduate students. We are looking for more participation to make this initiative fruitful.

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## **Meeting with Federal MP – Advocacy Priorities**

In the coming weeks, we will be meeting with a Federal Member of Parliament to discuss advocacy priorities for graduate students. This meeting will provide an important platform to address pressing issues such as funding, housing, immigration, and other matters that significantly impact graduate student life.

I encourage all councilors to share suggestions for issues or concerns they feel should be raised during this discussion so that we can ensure our advocacy reflects the needs of our diverse membership.

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## **GSA Orientation – Social Media Engagement**

This year's GSA Orientation will be delivered in a new, more engaging format under the leadership of VP Academic and Student Affairs, Mandela Alema. All executives are contributing to this collaborative effort to ensure a warm and informative welcome for incoming students.

From the external affairs perspective, my focus will be on maximizing social media engagement before and during the event. This includes:

- Posting welcome messages and event teasers in the weeks leading up to Orientation.
- Creating short pre-event videos featuring executives and student leaders to build excitement.
- Highlighting Orientation activities in real-time through posts, photos, and short video clips.
- Sharing key moments post-event to showcase our community and encourage ongoing involvement.

I welcome suggestions from council members on how we can further enhance online engagement and extend the reach of our Orientation messaging.

**Regards,**

Biraj Saha Aronya (he/him)

Vice-President External Affairs, Graduate Students' Association (GSA)

PhD Student, Department of Computer Science, University of Saskatchewan