



GSA Council 14 Jan 2013
ITEM 17- Update on the Strategic Work Plan: Cover Letter

Dear GSA Council,

As you may recall, **the GSA Council received the GSA's 2012/2013 Strategic Work Plan at its October 15, 2012 meeting.** This Plan (which is available online for your review at <http://www.gsa.ualberta.ca/~media/gsa/AboutTheGSA/GSAStrategicPlan201213ForCirculationOct2012.pdf>) was prepared by me along with my fellow elected officials and GSA Management to direct our efforts and identify areas where we can work with others in the University community.

The 2012-2013 SWP provides us at the GSA with **a planning document for this year and into the future in an effort to not only work towards achieving our vision but that of the University of Alberta as well.** It is meant to align closely with the University of Alberta's guiding documents - Dare to Discover, Dare to Deliver, and the 2012 Comprehensive Institutional Plan, while at the same time pursuing the GSA's 'agenda'.

Since releasing the GSA SWP, the GSA elected officials have met with several members of the University Administration to discuss common goals, and devise strategies to implement aspects of the plan of mutual interest. As we arrive in the home stretch of our terms as elected officials, I would like to offer you **an update concerning the GSA's progress in pursuing the strategic goals outlined in the GSA 2012/2013 SWP.**

MARKET MODIFIERS AND FGSR REORGANIZATION

Two major issues, **the potential introduction of a market modifier and the proposed reorganization of FGSR, have kept the GSA elected officials extremely busy this past fall** and caused us to temporarily redirect our efforts in order to tackle these important matters. These two matters have been my top priorities as GSA President. I am happy to report that **discussion of market modifiers for this year has ceased and that the GSA continues to work very closely with FGSR and Catherine Swindlehurst on the proposed reorganization of FGSR.** We have recruited over 20 students to participate in focus groups for Dr. Swindlehurst and have filled our seats on the FGSR Quality Measures working group with qualified and engaged students. **This matter continues as a top priority for the GSA** and we look forward to continue working with FGSR and the Provost's Office to ensure the best interests of the graduate students of this University are the driving force behind this initiative.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

A key strategic goal for the GSA is **the negotiation of "a fair collective agreement that supports graduate students who are employed by the University"** (GSA SWP 2012/2013) and this process is well underway. You will continue to be updated by the GSA VP Labour frequently concerning the progress of this issue. We are also **developing strategies concerning education and enforcement of the Agreement.** The VP Labour has put a commendable amount of work into the collective agreement negotiation process, as have the members of the GSA Labour Relations Committee (chaired by the VP Labour).



FUNDING

Another strategic goal was continued involvement in the Graduate Student Funding Task Force, which was struck in 2011. However, the work of this task force stalled and so we have, in consultation with Phyllis Clark, VP Finance and Administration, struck terms of reference for a new committee, **the Graduate Student Tuition and Funding Data Committee, which will meet to gather information regarding graduate student support.** As GSA President I will be serving as co-chair of this committee.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We are also continuing research into various **professional development programs** which may benefit graduate students at the U of A. The VP Academic has worked throughout his term on the Attributes and Competencies subcommittee, which is working on important issues of professional development.

RESETTLEMENT BURSARY

We are investigating the potential of advocating for a **resettlement bursary for international graduate students.**

RECOGNITION AND RELIEF

We are working closely with the University and FGSR to **develop policies surrounding the recognition and relief of GSA elected officials** to ensure that future involvement in graduate student government will be a viable and attractive option for students.

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING AND RENT INCREASES

The VP Student Life has been hard at work throughout the year on **a series of important issues related to graduate student housing.**

MENTAL HEALTH

Our participation in the Administration's ongoing mental health review has resulted in an initiative on the part of Provost's Fellow Robin Everall to establish **a dedicated graduate student counseling space in Triffo Hall.**

U-PASS

Negotiations for the **continuation of the U-Pass agreement** were recently completed, thanks to the efforts of the VP Student Services. A referendum on the agreement will be forthcoming.

MODERNIZING GSA INFRASTRUCTURE

There have been a number of strategic goals identified by the GSA concerning infrastructure which I am proud to report we have met. **The implementation of online fillable forms and a modernized direct deposit system** are completed and constitute a huge step forward for the GSA.

GSA'S LONG TERM HEALTH

The ongoing hard work of the GSA staff, management, and financial team have ensured **that the GSA is developing into an organization that will remain robust over time.** Planning for the next five-year budget (which will come before the GSA Council) is underway.



MOVING FORWARD

Moving forward, your GSA elected officials will continue to work hard in pursuit of the goals outlined in the GSA SWP 2012/2013. In the coming term we will be taking part in both **IGNITE: The Future of Alberta's Post-Secondary Education System Conference**, which will be held on campus and offers an important forum for engagement with government leaders on the future of post-secondary education, and the **University of Alberta Political Science Graduate Students' Association (PSGSA) upcoming conference which will focus on the future of the University**. The GSA elected officials, in particular the VP Student Services, continue to work on the **development and construction of the PAW Centre**.

Finally, as GSA President, I am investigating the **GSA's external lobbying presence**. We are lobbying to attend the upcoming **Western Deans Conference** as well as looking forward to the upcoming **GU15 Conference** as well as investigating the possibility of a future **relationship between the GSA and APIRG**. A number of other key issues, including access to daycare services on campus, remain on the list of upcoming projects for the GSA.

Sincerely,

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