



GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION—UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO COUNCIL SEPTEMBER 2020

To the Graduate Student Association Council:

Please accept this letter as my first report to Council in my capacity as the President of the GSA.

The coming academic year will be important for our organization. Without question, the GSA—and the wider uWaterloo campus—is in a period of transition. It is my intention to quickly advance the GSA's capacity in the following areas to better serve our graduate student community:

- **Student wellness:** Providing increased resources for confidential student advising.
- **Data Reporting and Visualization:** Supporting increased transparency on the GSA's operations.
- **Policy:** Revamping the GSA's internal policies to better support our mission, vision, and values.
- **International Student Issues:** Supporting the resolution of issues impacting our international members.
- **Satellite Campus Engagement:** Improving the student experience in Cambridge and Stratford.
- **Student Engagement:** Fostering further student engagement with the GSA (e.g., expanding Council membership).
- **Equity:** Working to amplify BIPOC student voices, in collaboration with BIPOC faculty and staff.
- **Campus Partnerships:** Fostering better relationships with on campus stakeholders.
- **Community Development:** Creating sustainable relationships with regional stakeholders.

To support these goals, the GSA Executive Team has recently completed the following tasks:

- **2020/2021 Budget Approval:** Approved by the Board on August 19, 2020.
- **GSA VP Hiring and Onboarding:** Cindy Yeung and Zabeen Khamisa were approved as the Vice President of Administration and Vice President of Communications, respectively, at our Annual General Meeting.
- **Staffing:** Workforce planning and onboarding was commenced for seven new GSA staff members.

Additionally, the GSA Executive Team has been supporting to the following initiatives:

- **GSA Orientation:** We have been working to develop in-person and online orientation activities for the Fall orientation. Details of the finalized orientation schedule will be shared with all membership.
- **uWaterloo Orientation:** We have been supporting faculty/department-specific orientation activities designed to boost broader student engagement with the GSA.
- **Grand River Transit (GRT) Contract:** The GSA's contract with GRT has been finalized, which will allow our membership to have continued access to reduced transit passes. We have been working to set up a refund program for students who do not wish to use this service. Details will be communicated to all members.
- **Grad House Updates:** The construction of a first-floor patio has been completed and we have created a new operating model to support a September launch that aligns with the realities of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

We are also engaged in ongoing conversations with administration on matters pertaining to COVID-19. We hope to improve on-campus resources/access for graduate students while ensuring the health and wellbeing of our membership and wider campus community. Additionally, we are exploring the creation of additional COVID-19 financial resources for graduate students (in addition to the +\$100K in awards already committed).

Moving forward, I am eager to optimize our Executive Team while advancing our mandate to support the social and academic experience of graduate students. To do so, the GSA Executive Team will recommit to working with our membership, our Board and Council, and our colleagues in administration. Moreover, we will be looking to advance Council's recent support for unionization by collaborating with student organizers and CUPE staff.

I look forward to partnering with all of you in the coming year. Should you ever want to chat about ideas, issues, or initiatives, please don't hesitate to contact me at GSA-President@uwaterloo.ca.

Regards,
David Billedeau