



GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION—UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

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**PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO COUNCIL
OCTOBER 2020**

To the Graduate Student Association Council:

Please accept this monthly update on the activities of the GSA Executive Team.

I would like to highlight the following recent accomplishments of our team:

1. **GRT Refund Program:** This is the first year that the GSA has provided membership with a refund program for the GRT transit service. This required significant, last-minute negotiations with the regional transit authority to provide graduate students working remotely due to COVID-19 with the opportunity to receive a refund for the GRT fee. There are also several other conditions available for students who wish to receive a GRT fee refund. To support this refund program, our team set up an online refund platform that aligns with the data and audit requirements within our contract with GRT. I believe that our efforts on this front will directly benefit the financial wellbeing of our members – both for those who do not need the transit pass, and for those who do wish to receive our preferential member rate.
2. **Studentcare (International Student Refunds):** We engaged in negotiations with Studentcare (our health/dental policy provider) to ensure the financial wellbeing of international students is protected. International students are now eligible to opt-out of the health and dental plan if they intend to remain outside of Canada for the current academic year. Information on opting out of this service has been provided to our international student membership and is on the Studentcare website.
3. **Orientation:** Although we cannot have our traditional orientation gathering at the Graduate House due to COVID-19, our team has prepared a series of virtual orientation events for new and returning graduate students. We have collaborated with numerous partners—including athletics and Organize UW—to provide our membership with a wide array of orientation activities. Note that we may also offer a series of in-person events, depending on the health and safety regulatory environment.
4. **Graduate House Launch:** On September 10th, the Graduate House was opened to customers for the first time since March. We have aligned with regional COVID-19 health and safety requirements and are supporting industry best-practices to ensure the wellbeing of our staff and membership. The Graduate House is open Monday through Friday from 11:30am – 6:00pm. Please be advised that graduate students are welcomed to work in the pub without purchasing anything – this could be a valuable study space for students that wish to work out of their home!
5. **Team Building:** We have built an entirely new executive team. In addition to onboarding our new Vice Presidents, we have hired ten individuals to help advance our organizations mandate. I am looking forward to completing the onboarding process for our new team and updating Council on their future successes.

Should you ever want to chat about ideas, issues, or initiatives, please don't hesitate to contact me at GSA-President@uwaterloo.ca.

I hope the new academic year is going well thus far!

Regards,
David Billedeau