



GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION—UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO COUNCIL DECEMBER 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. Graduate Financial Support:** The GSA has secured additional funding (\$60k) for supporting the financial wellbeing of graduate students during the ongoing pandemic. In addition to a \$30k contribution from the GSA, both GSPA and GSEF will be supporting a trilateral funding initiative designed to provide additional financial resources to the academic readiness bursary, contingency fund, and thesis completion award.
- 2. Student Advocacy:** The GSA remains committed to providing advocacy support for graduate students. Our team recently supported the resolution of a longstanding issue a student had within their program. Their feedback was as follows: *"It is no less than a miracle for me and I wouldn't have made it this far without your help and support. Thank you being there for me and supporting me in my time of crisis. I don't have words to show my gratitude. Now I can focus on my future and try leaving everything behind. This would have not been possible without your support."* This is why the GSA exists. Please ensure your constituents are aware of our great advocacy resources offered through our Student Wellness Coordinator (gsa-wellness@uwaterloo.ca).
- 3. COVID-19 Impact Survey:** The GSA launched an initial survey measuring the impact of the pandemic on graduate students early in the Spring 2020 term. In November 2020, we launched a follow-up survey to measure trends and new issues faced by graduate students during the pandemic. Results of the new survey will be shared with Council in the near future.
- 4. New Legal Services:** Through our existing partnership/fee structure with Studentcare, we will be rolling out complimentary commissioning and notarizing services for graduate students.
- 5. International Graduate Student Events:** The GSA launched a new series of international graduate student-focused events. Our first milestone was hosting an event on building careers in a remote setting. Stay tuned for more content soon!
- 6. Political Events:** The GSA launched a new series of political events designed to support the political development and engagement of graduate students. Off-campus stakeholders will be engaging with our community soon!
- 7. Sexual Violence Task Force:** The GSA provided preliminary recommendations for ensuring a safe environment to UW's Sexual Violence Task Force. Collaboration with the Task Force will be an ongoing initiative.
- 8. Accessibility Communications:** The GSA worked with Accessibility Services to develop a communications plan to support better understanding of their services and broader engagement with graduate students.
- 9. GSA Equity Plan:** The GSA's initial Equity Plan has been developed and will be shared at the December meeting of Council.

Lastly, please be advised that after much consideration, the GSA Executive Team and Board have determined that the Graduate House will be closed in the Winter 2021 term due to the ongoing pandemic. This decision has been made after much discussion and consideration – and communications to all membership on the matter has been developed.

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