



GSA-UW Strategic Plan 2020-2023

August 2020





Message from the President

We, the Graduate Student Association at the University of Waterloo (GSA-UW or GSA), actively promote and represent graduate student interests to the university administration and external organizations. We are an organization run by graduate students, for graduate students.

Over the past 3 years, we have invested heavily in internal structural changes and establishing relationships with stakeholders to better serve and represent graduate students. Amid several challenges and growth pains, we have been able to formalize these changes, and are now entering a new phase where we will be placing greater emphasis on outreach and

community building. Our efforts in this new phase will be guided by a multi-year Strategic Plan that will provide direction for the organization over the next three years.

The GSA's multi-year Strategic Plan has been developed utilizing feedback from various stakeholders on student experience and issues, GSA services and fees, as well as the GSA's mandate and efforts. We used multiple engagement methods to ensure we reached as many stakeholder groups as possible. The level of engagement and the valuable feedback we received have provided a solid foundation for our multi-year Strategic Plan.

This Strategic Plan will be shared with our members at the Annual General Meeting on August 20, 2020. We will invest in communicating the strategic plan and its progress to our members, partners, and other stakeholder groups through the GSA's communication channels.

Creating and implementing a multi-year Strategic Plan is a major undertaking for us, one that we have not done in the past several years. As we endeavor to adjust to a new normal, it is our hope that this Strategic Plan will provide a clear and steady direction to guide our efforts during these uncertain times.

We welcome you to join us in building a thriving community of graduate students where every graduate student is valued.

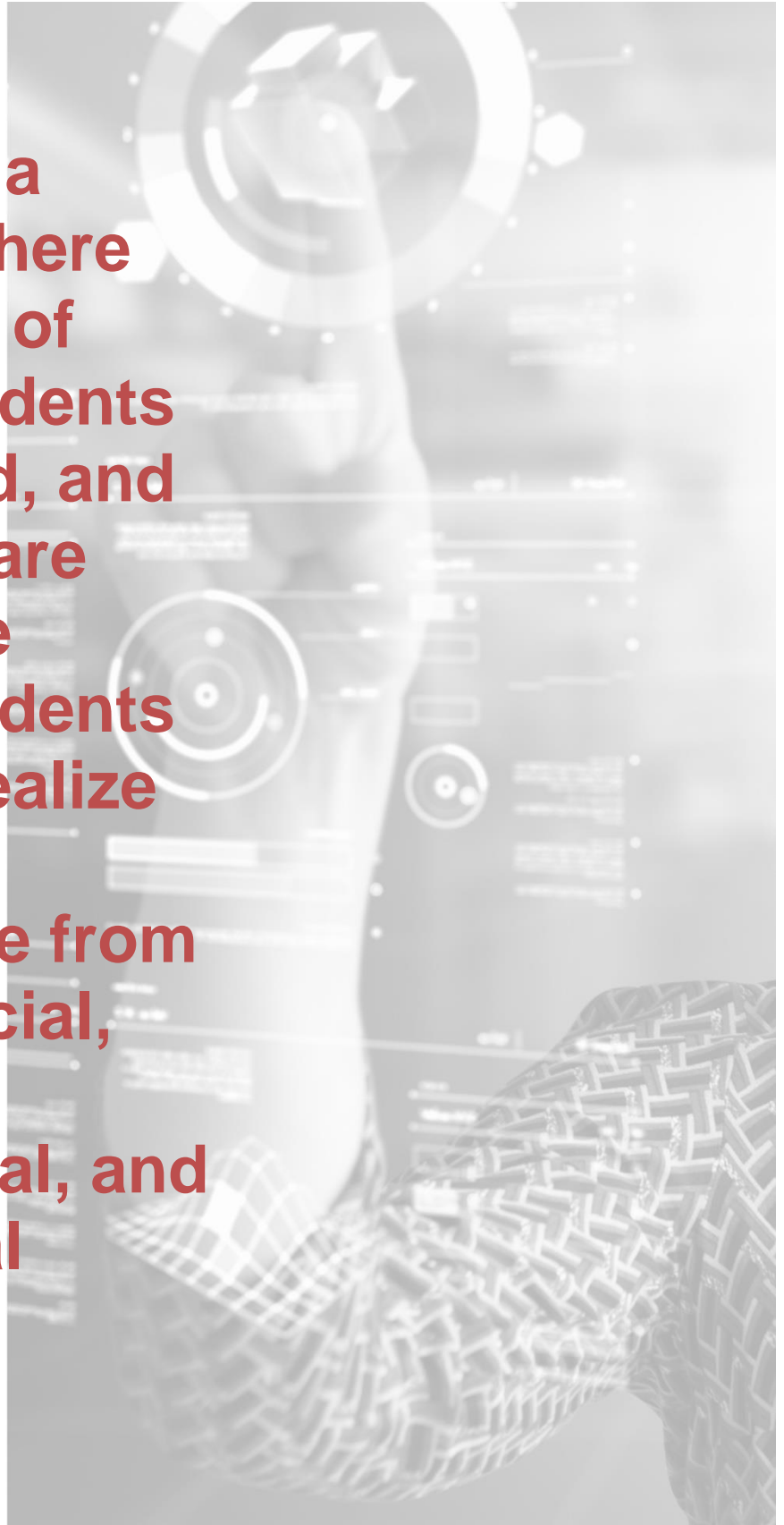
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Naima Samuel".

Naima Samuel
President & CEO

May 2018- August 2020

Our Vision:

We envision a University where the interests of graduate students are protected, and their voices are heard; where graduate students are able to realize themselves optimally free from social, financial, academic, environmental, and physiological barriers





Our Mission:

We serve the graduate students of the University of Waterloo with dedication and commitment to enhance the quality of their academic and social experience and promote their well-being

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The GSA comprises a dedicated group of staff and volunteers who are committed to working collectively to support graduate students and advance the mission of the organization. Over the next three years, we will direct our efforts to four main priorities, namely:

- 1 Enhancing our advocacy and representation efforts to better support graduate students
- 2 Promoting equity, inclusion and diversity at all levels
- 3 Building community to foster a sense of belonging for graduate students
- 4 Pursuing excellence in governance and service delivery

Our Values:



Transparency



Inclusivity



Integrity



Self-Improvement

① Leadership in Advocacy and Representation



The GSA aspires to be a leader in advocating for and representing its members' interests at the University of Waterloo and to all levels of government. To that end, we will:

- Empower the GSA Council to be a space where political issues most relevant to members can be heard and discussed.
- Strive to better inform members about their department's representation in GSA Council and available avenues for feedback.
- Proactively expand our outreach efforts to engage with community organizations and all levels of government, while continuing to strengthen campus partnerships including faculty and staff associations.
- Integrate graduate student societies into our advocacy network to strengthen our efforts at the department and faculty levels.
- Enhance our visibility by communicating consistently with members about our efforts and keeping members informed of relevant services and supports available to them.

② Promoting equity, inclusion and diversity at all levels



The GSA is fully committed to bringing about sustainable systemic change to advance equity, inclusion, and diversity for all our members. To that end, we will:

- Invest in researching issues pertaining to anti-racism and equity that impact our members.
- Engage with on and off campus groups to find synergies for advancing equity and increase visibility of collective efforts.
- Work towards reviewing and improving our own internal structures and systems to better align with principles of equity, inclusivity, and diversity.

③ Building Community to Foster a Sense of Belonging



The GSA aims to build a thriving community of graduate students where every member feels supported, and feels a sense of belonging. To that end, we will:

- Be intentional with our efforts to increase engagement amongst all our members, including satellite campuses, course-based programs, international students, and students with accommodation needs and/or disabilities.
- Actively work towards engaging smaller interest groups and communities on campus to integrate their work into the GSA's wider engagement efforts.
- Put effort into demonstrating impact of member engagement in building community.
- Find new avenues to engage with graduate students off-campus.

④ Pursuing Organizational Excellence



The GSA is dedicated to providing high quality services to its members and promoting a professional and safe working environment for all its staff and volunteers. To that end, we will:

- Review and improve our internal governance structure and processes to ensure they comply with legislation and align with best practices for not-for-profit corporations.
- Improve opportunities for serving in leadership positions within the GSA and at the University of Waterloo to better prepare student leaders for the workforce upon degree completion.
- Invest in continuously improving all services and supports, including the sustainability of Graduate house operations

ABOUT THE GSA

The Graduate Student Association-University of Waterloo is a not-for-profit corporation that serves graduate students at the University of Waterloo. The GSA is formally recognized as the sole representative of graduate students on all campuses of the University of Waterloo.

The GSA provides a number of services for graduate students, including but not limited to supplementary health and dental plans, GRT Universal pass, student advising, and a club-house featuring food and bar service and graduate student space.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Strategic Plan Facilitator

Naima Samuel, President & CEO

Strategic Planning Participants

Rebecca Stirling, Board Chair & CGO

Naima Samuel, President & CEO

Kareem Mostafa, Deputy Board Chair

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Jennifer Reid, Director

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David Billedeau, Vice President

Kevin McKay, Executive Manager

Matthew Robbins, Council Speaker

Strategic Planning Retreat Facilitation Support

Sandra Hammer, Executive in Residence at Capacity Canada

Strategic Plan Development Timeline

February 2020-August 2020

Supporting Documents

Vital Signs Survey 2020 Report

Partnership Survey 2019

Departmental GSA Survey 2020

Staff Survey 2020

Committee Representatives Focus Group 2020

Stakeholder feedback 2020

Council Feedback 2020

GP-15 Strategic Planning Policy

2019-2020 Annual Report

