

# Why Serve on the Board of Directors for the UW Graduate Student Association?

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The GSA UW is a not for profit organization incorporated in the Province of Ontario. This may come as a surprise, since we also serve you as representatives to the University and to local and regional decisionmakers. We're probably best known for owning and operating the "Grad House" on UW's main campus, but many people reach out to serve with the GSA on the Council, where they represent the interests of students in their department to the GSA's political body.

Those who are interested in higher service are encouraged to seek one of the 12 seats on the GSA Board of Directors. As an incorporated body, the Board has the highest decision-making power in the GSA, and the experience of serving on the Board is unlike many other student leadership positions.

## What's in it for you:

Serving on the Board of Directors of a not-for-profit corporation is a unique and rare experience for this early stage of many peoples' careers. Directors gain in-depth experience in organizational governance, strategic planning, and approving a multi-million-dollar budget. Directors work directly alongside the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the organization (our President) and the Executive Manager to oversee smooth operations and achievement of the GSA's goals and mission. Directors are also asked to attend meetings of the Council, so they can keep an accurate pulse on issues in the student body. Board and Council meetings are also catered with tasty treats.

In this position a Director learns how to make themselves indispensable to an organization by understanding the fundamental vision, mission, and values of the organization and understand the structure of the organization. These are key elements that can help them gain intimate knowledge of what key problems the organization is having, and possibly lead them to sharing input on how to solve those problems. This self-starter attitude is a valuable commodity that leads to a successful career.

## What's asked of you:

In seeking a position on the Board, candidates will be asked to fill out a skills matrix detailing their expertise in areas relevant to the responsibilities and activities of the Board. Candidates need not be an expert in everything, but the Board's goal is to recruit qualified and complimentary members to further improve its operation. The Board is not a representative body like the Council, though diverse fields, backgrounds, and experiences contribute greatly to Board operations.

When accepting a seat on the Board, Directors sign confidentiality agreements following standard corporate practice, and are further legally bound to fulfill their [fiduciary duties](#) to the corporation. Directors volunteer their time to the GSA, which may consist monthly of 3-6 hours of Board meetings, a 2-hour Council meeting, committee meetings and committee work that they are passionate about (1-5 hours per month), and 1-2 hours of time reviewing documents prior to meetings (10-15 hours per month total).

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## 5 Reasons to Serve on a Nonprofit Board

from an [article](#) by Wayne Elsey (Founder and CEO of Funds2Orgs)

The primary reason you should serve on a nonprofit board is that you want to make the world a better place and you care about the cause. But, serving on a board and bringing your knowledge, energy, and expertise to the table is something that can not only benefit the organization but you as well.

Many reputable and leading charities have seasoned business leaders serving on their boards. That means, that for those starting out in their careers, or perhaps wanting to get to the next level, serving as a nonprofit board member gives you the chance to meet and network with community leaders. The experience of working with senior executives at a nonprofit also brings a unique experience many junior professionals might not get for years—and that's the experience of closely working with seasoned business leaders.

...Many [nonprofits] rely on the expertise and knowledge of business and community professionals—especially board members—to help them advance their missions.

You [will work directly with the CEO of the corporation]. Additionally, many nonprofits have events, and this is another opportunity for younger professionals to network and connect socially with leaders in the community.

### 1. Build Your Network and Contacts

We all know you have a better chance to get ahead in your career if you have a good network of people and contacts. Since your fellow nonprofit board members will personally know you, they will be much more open and amenable to brainstorming ideas with you or even making introductions if and when you're looking for other business opportunities.

## 2. Diplomacy

You will have the opportunity to learn about dealing with others as it relates to issues of leadership, finance, and other business areas. Make no mistake; nonprofits are businesses—and there will be times where there will be disagreements. This experience of working with others in different areas will teach you about diplomacy and how to navigate potential landmines and delicate situations.

## 3. The Art of Persuasion

Nonprofits need money. The best nonprofits, even if they're small, will work closely with their board members to help them facilitate financial contributions. You're going to become comfortable in asking for money. In other words, you're going to learn about the art of persuasion. It's a skill you should have in your career.

## 4. Meeting Management

When you serve on a nonprofit board, you will gain another career skill, and that's learning how to have a productive meeting with people who do not report to you. Again, dealing with people is an art. Many young people become managers, and they have team meetings, but frequently this is with people who work for them. Working at a nonprofit teaches you a valuable skill of managing individuals who don't work for you or that you manage.

## 5. Deep Dive on an Issue

You can learn a lot from a nonprofit about education, health, the environment of whatever interests you. Nonprofit organizations are typically excellent at understanding the cause related to the mission. If you want to dive deep into an area and know it well, a nonprofit board is a great place to help you gain insight.

In the corporate world, one of the key factors that senior leaders look at when considering promoting people is whether or not they have experience serving the community. Businesses want to be good corporate citizens, but they also understand the value and skills learned by professionals who serve on nonprofit boards.