Dear Graduate Student Society,

My name is Ladan Kalani. I am pursuing my master's in Biochemistry here at Uvic. My studies focus on deciphering how an epigenetic reader protein becomes degraded. This year, I intend to run as the Chair and offer my expertise to graduate students' requests while learning new skills by taking a step entirely outside my “comfort zone”. I am incredibly thankful for the hardworking and kind colleagues and mentors who helped me in this incredible journey during my studies and volunteer work. Included here are some of my most recent volunteer experiences.

My involvement as a board member started with CFUV Campus and Community radio station during 2020 as a vice-president. I became acquainted with policymaking, and I reviewed the monthly report from station managers, listened to concerns and offered my support. For example, during the annual event of Fund Drive, I joined other volunteers in asking community members and local businesses to support CFUV by donating directly to CFUV or by partnering with the radio station. Together, we reached our goal despite all the challenges faced at the pandemic's start. I have remained an active volunteer at CFUV; currently, I host a weekly show where I promote local artists and talk about forgotten topics. For example, I speak about system redesign of the society to stop capitalization on human labour and exploitation of nature. Another issue I speak of is learning from indigenous cultures and recognizing how they have had implemented a pragmatic system to live in an egalitarian society without the need for manipulation. I believe the change we need to mitigate the consequences of ecological collapse must be robust and sudden, and I actively communicate this to my community in the weekly radio shows. CFUV has been an essential part of my Uvic experience that helped me grow and understand different perspectives. I cannot express my gratitude; suffice it to say that I am honoured to be a part of this community.

Other volunteering involvements at Uvic were with the Food Bank and Let's Talk Science. Let's Talk Science focuses on creating exciting science experiments targeted to elementary school students, inviting them to stay curious and eager to understand how the natural world works. During my volunteering, I went into community centres, classrooms and museums and demonstrated colourful and memorable science experiments. Beyond Uvic, I volunteered with Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) Canada. Despite my brief engagement with MAPS, I continue to strongly advocate for the therapeutic effects of psychotropic drugs as they have been used for centuries by many ancient indigenous cultures with respect and with care. My community has been a place where I am at peace, and I hope to expand this community by joining the GSS board.

I am thrilled to be working with a team of dedicated graduate students as a board to advocate for graduate students and make their experience as rewarding and as excellent as possible.