

# Advocacy & Campaigns Committee Semi-Annual Report

October 28, 2025 AGM

## Committee Membership:

Co-chairs: Jitendra Palaparty, Sarah Roberts

2024-25 members (serving until August 31, 2025):

- Victor Marrugat Arnal
- Yasmeen Barakat
- Bryce Bartsch
- Jesse Delmage
- Semyon Drozdetskii
- Neve Sugars-Keen
- Mahmoud Chick Zaouali
- Kyla Turner, ex officio, non-voting

2025-26 members (elected Fall 2025):

- Victor Marrugat Arnal
- Latifa Yusuf
- Clara Troje
- Lauren Burton
- Kyla Turner, ex officio, non-voting.

The 2024-25 Advocacy & Campaigns committee members have been a delight to work with over the past months! Thank you especially to Victor for your involvement and continued hard work on many different committee projects!

## Duties of the Committee

The Advocacy & Campaigns committee proposes, plans, and organizes advocacy work targeting graduate student issues. This includes identifying and researching issues that affect graduate students, developing and implementing campaigns and actions that align with the GSS's Annual Plan, and suggesting areas of advocacy for future Annual Plans.

## Major Advocacy Win: UVic is moving forward on a grad dorm!

We'd be remiss not to start this report off with one of the biggest advocacy wins the GSS will see this decade: UVic has all approvals required by the province to start building a new dormitory, which will include a 150-unit tower designated for exclusive graduate student housing. The GSS has been advocating for many years to get a graduate student dorm built on campus! We started working on this advocacy campaign immediately after the opening of Cheko'nien and Sngsequ Houses in ~2020.

We'd like to thank Hannah Brown and Babak Ashrafkhani Limoudehi, the 2022-23 work study hires who researched graduate dorm standards across Canada and globally. Additionally, many years' worth of

Board members and Student Affairs/Advocacy and Campaigns committee members have worked on this issue directly, including but not limited to Harvey Mackenzie, Lauren Burton, Wyatt Maddox, Nahid Pourdolat Safari, and Lindsay Beal. These folks have dedicated their time to researching dormitory standards, attending public meetings, writing letters to the Province, UVic, and each of the local municipalities. We've shaken a lot of politician's hands to support UVic's bid for this dorm. We've been focused and persistent in our support of UVic's applications for funding to the province, writing detailed support letters for at least 4 different applications for different dorm sizes, sites, etc.

At the time of writing, the District of Saanich still needs to approve bylaw variances before UVic can begin construction. We hope all GSS members will continue to make their voices heard when it comes to the need for a grad dorm at UVic.

Again, at the time of writing and therefore subject to change: UVic plans to begin construction in 2026 for a building opening in 2030. By this time, it will have been a decade of work for this advocacy campaign to see fruition, but this is the most impactful change we can support on campus during an on-going cost of living crisis and provincial housing shortage!

### [Overview of Work Completed \(final report from the 2024-25 committee\)](#)

Overall, the advocacy and campaigns committee has worked on several key issues that concern graduate students at UVic, these are some of our achievements since the last reporting term:

- Inclusion recreation campaign:
  - The Access to Inclusive Recreation (AIR) committee within UVic's CARSA now has a permanent graduate student seat.
  - CARSA has improved advertising for the bookable open workout space that is available to students without a CARSA membership, and will relaunch their AIR website, highlighting affordable and free recreation options.
  - The District of Saanich has added students to their eligibility criteria for the [LIFE pass](#), a low-cost recreation pass for low-income Saanich residents.
- TA Accommodations Advocacy:
  - GSS is supporting CUPE4163 (the TAs' labour union) in requesting further support for TAs who have students with an accommodation plan in their courses. UVic has committed to new training sessions to be available to TAs for Fall 2025.
  - GSS is advocating to the Faculty of Graduate Studies to create better tools that equip graduate students with the skills and confidence to discuss and establish appropriate academic accommodations with their supervisor. FGS has committed to this work as part of the Graduate Supervision Policy review process, and we hope to work closely with them as this project evolves.
- Healthcare Resources:
  - A&C has been working on access-to-healthcare supports for our members and providing clear information about province-wide services/benefits available.
  - Our new insurance broker, Alumo, has provider networks and can provide some similar support in accessing healthcare in Canada with GSS insurance
- International Student concerns re: IRCC Changes

- GSS is still advocating for the University to support graduate students registered with CAL and taking part-time studies with full-time status as part of their accommodations to receive a full-time Verification of Enrolment letter, enabling them to retain their ability to work off-campus, and support future applications to IRCC for extensions, work permits, post-grad work permits, etc.

## Overview of incomplete and outstanding work

As noted above, the GSS remains committed to advocating to the District of Saanich for bylaw variances that will allow UVic to break ground on a new graduate dorm in Spring 2026.

The 2025–26 Advocacy and Campaigns Committee held its first meeting on October 9 and identified the following key focus areas for the year:

- **Improving access to transit**, including advocating for the reinstatement of the 76 bus service from UVic to Swartz Bay and for improved service to Victoria International Airport. This will likely involve collaboration with community and institutional partners such as the UVSS, Royal Roads, and Camosun College.
- **Encouraging transit use** and highlighting the benefits of increased ridership to BC Transit through initiatives such as a “Go by Bus Week.”
- **Identifying transit service gaps** across Greater Victoria, including Langford, Sooke, and the Malahat corridor.
- **Addressing parking access and campus congestion** through targeted research and engagement.
- **Supporting the graduate dorm project** and emphasizing the benefits of increased on-campus housing for reducing parking demand.
- **Advocating for parking and height variances** through ongoing engagement with local and provincial representatives.
- **Continuing to support international students** through targeted advocacy addressing challenges in an evolving immigration landscape.

We are also continuing work toward the broader advocacy goals outlined in our annual plan. This includes reviewing accommodation policies, promoting affordability by targeting the GSTIOP fee, and advocating for the stabilization of the BC Graduate Scholarship. We continue our efforts to empower graduate students to access health services and benefits (such as Fair Pharmacare) while maintaining a strong focus on international student needs amid ongoing austerity and shifting immigration policies.

Please note that Advocacy and Campaigns Chair Jitendra Palaparty took a leave of absence over the summer. Wyatt Maddox was elected as Interim Director of External Relations in August. He led several campus orientation events in September, which would typically be handled by the Director of External Relations. He also provided valuable advice and insight, consulting on our annual plan and advocacy strategies. We thank Wyatt for his continued service and support.

Jitendra returned to her role in September but has since resumed her leave of absence. I hope you'll join me in wishing her the very best during this time.