

2025-26 Advocacy and Campaigns Committee Annual Report

March 23, 2026, SAGM

Membership

Chair: Lillian Abells (Elected 01/26), Jitendra Palaparty (Resigned 12/25)

Vice-chair: Sarah Roberts

2025-26 members:

- Becca Andelyn
- Maximillian Backhaus
- Lauren Burton
- Sophie Culos
- Astrid Han
- Victor Marrugat-Arnal
- Cameron Thiessen
- Clara Troje
- Latifa Yusuf
- Kyla Turner, Executive Director, ex officio, non-voting

Thank you to all our committee members. You have been an exceptional group to work with this year. The board's annual plan identified member training and skill development as priorities, and it has been inspiring to see committee members grow and improve skills through their work.

We especially want to acknowledge Victor Marrugat-Arnal for his support and dedication to the committee. Victor consistently steps up and takes on tasks, always making time to support colleagues. We look forward to his ongoing contributions as Director of External Relations. We also thank Sophie Culos for leading advocacy on building heat across campus; their initiative and dedication motivate us. Thank you for advocating for graduate students.

We also extend gratitude to our colleagues at the Graduate Political Society for their support, collegiality, and hard work on the post-secondary funding review. You have been a pleasure to learn from and collaborate with.

Duties of the Committee

The Advocacy and Campaigns Committee is informed by and responds to issues raised through the Graduate Representative Council (GRC) and our membership at large. Its purpose is to research matters of concern to graduate students and to advocate for graduate student interests.

These duties include identifying and researching campaign priorities, proposing, planning, and organizing political action campaigns and advocacy initiatives related to graduate student issues. The committee also communicates progress on these campaigns to the membership.

Overview of Work Completed

During the reporting period, the Board and committee focused on building advocacy skills and launching campaigns. In November, the Advocacy Committee participated in a work-planning workshop led by the Chair and Vice-Chair, focusing on advocacy skills and campaigns. The Executive Director led a letter-writing workshop in January, offering members practical strategies and supporting political engagement with the province's post-secondary review. This aligned with the GSS's Annual Plan to emphasize skill-building.

A key focus during this reporting period has been advocating to the Province of British Columbia regarding the post-secondary funding review announced in November 2025. Members participated in letter-writing training and supported efforts to mobilize the membership to write their own letters to MLAs expressing concerns about the timelines and terms of reference of this review.

Several campaigns were launched, including efforts to strengthen institutional supports for Teaching Assistants and Lab Assistants responsible for accommodations. Members identified gaps in training and information-sharing. The committee has begun outreach to stakeholders and partners such as LTI and CUPE 4163 to advance this work.

Transit access remains a priority. The committee has started researching current gaps in BC Transit services and explored data collection strategies. They are advocating for more graduate representation on the Victoria Regional Transit Commission's Advisory Panel and exploring potential partnerships enhance advocacy efforts across UVic and other post-secondary institutions.

To promote affordability, the committee developed a strategy to share provincial health-care benefits and affordability programs through our bulletin, helping students access resources that may help offset costs. The committee raised concerns with the Registrar's Office regarding enrollment reporting for international CAL students using "reduced-course

load” accommodations. The registrar reviewed the reporting of part-time students with this accommodation to IRCC, in the interest of representing these students’ lived realities.

The committee also heard from members who are designing and leading their own campaigns, including Sophie Culos’s work on advocating for better working conditions in campus labs. Sophie brought this work forward to the graduate representative council and continues to gather data from affected members.

Overview of Incomplete and Outstanding Work

The 2025–26 Board identified several goals in our Annual Plan, and while we are proud of the progress made in several areas, some work remains ongoing. Some campaign goals were put on hold due to wider changes in the provincial funding landscape and broader policy environment.

The Board’s Annual Plan outlined work on affordability mechanisms, including the removal of the GSTIOP (Graduate Student Income Offset Plan) administrative fees and advocacy to the province requesting stabilized funding for the BC Graduate Scholarship. While these remain important long-term goals, the GSS launched urgent advocacy in November in response to the province’s broader review of post-secondary education. This became a focus for the committee during the reporting period, including advocating for the protection of policies such as the 2% tuition cap. We will continue to monitor developments in the sector so that we can revisit these affordability priorities in the future.

We also recognize that affordable housing remains a significant challenge for our members, including pressures faced by those waitlisted for family housing. The GSS was disappointed by the province’s decision to postpone construction of a planned 500-bedroom graduate student and upper-level undergraduate residence. Although this project has been delayed, the need for graduate student housing remains clear, and we remain committed to long-term advocacy on this issue.

The committee is continuing to reach out to external stakeholders and explore strategic partnerships on issues such as transit access and TA supports, and we hope to continue building on these collaborative advocacy efforts. There are also many opportunities to further develop members’ advocacy skills through training in areas such as strategic planning, advocacy, and letter-writing.

Internally, the committee has also faced challenges related to Board and committee transitions. Leaves and resignations resulted in periods when the committee operated under interim leadership or without a formal chair, which affected committee capacity. We

are so grateful to those who stepped in as interim leaders, and especially to our dedicated volunteer representatives who ensured that committee work continued during these transitions.

In addition, we are working toward improved campaign management systems, including centralized work plans that will simplify task management and help ensure continuity through committee and leadership changes. These efforts support the 2025-6 annual goal of strengthening “feedback loops” and communication with the membership around advocacy priorities and progress. We are so proud of members who continue to identify priorities and focus on improving the lives of graduate students. The committee thrives on our volunteers’ amazing work, and we are very grateful for their continued dedication.