

## Graduate students vote whether to join advocacy group

Referendum this week focuses on new Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council



By Katherine Lidgren

November 25, 2014

Graduate students will have a chance to vote on the future of provincial advocacy for themselves and their peers in a Graduate Students' Association referendum this Wednesday and Thursday.

The question posed in the referendum is whether or not the UCalgary GSA should join the newly formed Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC). The council is made up of graduate students' associations from across the province including University of Alberta, University of Lethbridge, and Athabasca University.

Previously, the UCalgary GSA was a member of a provincial advocacy group, but no referendum was held to join.

"I believe it is critical for our students to have a voice in the future of post-secondary education in the province," says GSA president Sarah Akierman. "The question isn't if we advocate, but how. This referendum will tell us the strategy that our students would like us to take."



Jeremy Hexham, GSA chief returning officer, with Sarah Akierman, GSA president, and Chris Carlile, GSA vice-president (external).

As a council, ab-GPAC will collaborate on strategies to advocate to the provincial government and community for their respective students. According to GSA bylaws, student consultation through a referendum needs to occur to join external groups.

"Whether for or against this group, graduate students are being given the privilege of having a say in the direction of their education and what they expect from their elected officials," says Jeremy Hexham, GSA chief returning officer.

On Tuesday, Nov. 25 in Science Theatres 147 at 5 p.m., there will be a referendum forum for students to ask questions and become more informed about the council.

All graduate students will be able to vote on Wednesday, Nov. 26, and Thursday, Nov. 27, on Desire2Learn through the GSA Referendum 2014 course. For more information on the referendum, please visit [www.gsa.ucalgary.ca](http://www.gsa.ucalgary.ca)



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