

Kusum Bhatta

I am honored to be running for a second term as President of the Graduate Students Association (GSA). My leadership has focused on improving the graduate student experience in health and wellness, student support, academic and social events, advocacy for higher funding, and active engagement. In 2024/25, I introduced the **Compassionate Fund** to support students dealing with the loss of loved ones and expanded **eye care coverage**, increasing the cap from \$50 to \$150. I also secured partnerships with eye clinics to offer **full coverage for eye exams** and glasses. I led initiatives like the **Free Period Products Project**, **Pantry Table**, and the **Thrift event**: short-term solutions until we secure long-term alternatives. I personally visited 25 departments during orientation, ensuring students received essential resources, were informed about services, understood how their dues are utilized, and learned about available support. From redesigning the website to a strong social media presence and effective newsletters, I worked to expand GSA's outreach efforts, making them impactful. I strongly advocated for graduate student employment opportunities at Phoenix and am working on a policy to prioritize graduate student hiring. As an observer in Graduate Council and a **student senator**, I actively pushed for key graduate student issues like student **supervisory guidelines**, the **Persona Non Grata policy**, and adequate **funding**. These concerns, which I have raised before my GSA role, will continue to be a priority regardless of the election outcome. There are areas that need deeper focus, especially accountability and leadership driven by genuine commitment. It is concerning that after decades of GSA operations, we still lack long-term assets like dedicated GSA-owned workspaces and facilities (such as laptops) for graduate students. These gaps highlight the need for stronger planning and sustained advocacy. I am committed to fostering a culture of accountability, where leadership is taken seriously, and contributions are made with integrity. In 2025/26, I plan to focus on securing additional funding and resources to expand essential services for graduate students. However, I must be transparent about the challenges we faced. While we made strides in student support, advocacy, and community-building, we were unable to better the dental coverage, health services (including physiotherapy), and childcare support before finalizing the 2025/26 budget. These remain critical priorities for 2025/26, and I am committed to advocating for expanded funding and resources to meet the needs of graduate students. If re-elected my focus will be on expanding services, advocating for increased funding, enhanced health and dental services, larger bursaries, childcare support, and travel funding. I remain committed to ensuring accountability, transparency, and collaboration within the GSA to ensure we evolve into a more inclusive, supportive, and effective organization. By strengthening our finances and centering student voices, we will continue to improve essential services and support our graduate student community. Thank you for your ongoing support this year. I look forward to your continued trust as we work towards our shared goals.

