

BGSA 2022-2023 Election

Official List of Candidates (with bios)

Tori Scherle

Nominated for: President

“I’m a Masters student in the Harris Lab and I study Natural Health Product interactions with the body. I am the Vice President for Rotaract Ottawa and a member of uOttawa Glee Gees. Last year I was a CUPE steward on BGSA and attended monthly stewards meetings as well as AGAs. Being heavily involved in all types of extracurriculars, I have learned to manage my time well, stay organized and relate to people with a variety of interests. These roles have also taught me great communication and leadership skills that will benefit me as president. I am very passionate about Women in STEM and fair pay. I even helped to organize the Women in STEM panel and different initiatives pertaining to grad student pay over the past year. When I am not in the lab or being involved in my community I enjoy reading, creating content and adventuring! I have lots of ideas for BGSA activities in the following year, but I am also very open to suggestions! I hope you allow me the opportunity to lead this year's BGSA council to provide you with support and opportunities to build connections with fellow bio grads.”

David Schuster

Nominated for: Vice President Internal

“I'm a first year PhD student working in the GReAT lab of Prof. Dr. Carole Yauk and at Health Canada for Prof. Dr. Francesco Marchetti. My project aims toward the validation of a novel error-corrected sequencing method called Duplex Sequencing (DS). I am comparing mutation frequencies and spectra measured by DS to conventional mutagenicity endpoints. This project involves many international collaborators to potentially establish DS as the new gold standard for *in vivo* mutagenicity testing.

As an international student the BGSA was one of my first social communities in Canada and I have enjoyed meeting fellow bio students ever since. I would like to improve the graduate experience for future students by strengthening the sense of community and advocating for student needs as a member of the BGSA.”

Brianna Raven

Nominated for: VP Social Media

"I'm entering my second year of my PhD in the Trudeau lab studying novel hormones and how they affect frog reproduction. Since starting my graduate studies, I've gone to numerous BGSA events and met a lot of really great people and am hoping to get more involved this year. I would love to join the BGSA as the VP Social Media to connect students in the department and let everyone know what great things the BGSA is doing. I have run social media accounts in my undergrad for frosh teams and it was always something I really enjoyed doing, so I'm hoping to get back into it with the BGSA!"

Alibek Kruglikov

Nominated for: VP Finance

"I am a PhD student in the Xia lab studying protein folding in thermophilic bacteria. Previously, I have worked in audit and consulting and have first-hand experience in financial reporting and budget administration. Being an international student, I know how vital financial responsibility is, especially in the current uncertain times. I seek to be an active member of the BGSA and also was a co-chair of 2022 OCIB symposium. Outside of academia, I have many interests and especially enjoy intramural sports. My experiences and personal qualities will help me to do a good job as a VP Finance."

Maddie Empey

Nominated for: VP Communications

"I have been a BGSA social coordinator for 1.5 years, and I have had a lot of fun organizing events for students. This year I am looking to shake things up by running for another position and (hopefully) becoming VP of Communications. Other than being involved in extracurricular projects, my other passions include reading, writing, volleyball, hiking, and amphibians and reptiles. I have three frogs at home (Spring, Peep, and Frog – original, I know) and two cats, Cricket and Bees. I love being involved in my community and helping students however I can. Being a part of the BGSA is a great way to do this, and I hope to continue being involved again this year."

Alexa D'Addario

Nominated for: Social Coordinator

"I am a 2nd-year PhD student in Dr. Jeremy Kerr's lab. I am interested in the position of social coordinator as I know how important it is to have connections in the department and to make time to relax and socialize. Graduate school is very difficult and very taxing at many times, so it is important to foster and maintain relationships with others in the department for solidarity, advice and leisure. I had a great time coming out to many of the BGSA events last year and over the summer as a first-year in the department and school. Maddie and Emil did an amazing job of making me feel welcome and helping me find a community and friends with similar yet also diverse backgrounds and interests, and I want to continue their legacy and help welcome new students, as well as maintain strong ties with the older ones.

I think I would be the ideal candidate for the job because of my hard work ethic, value of making everyone feel included, love of planning social calendars, passion for the department and commitment to my community and friends. I always am full of ideas. I love how Emil brought a lot of his Swedish culture to us in Canada and I would like to do the same. I think group activities like bocce, football, hurling and soccer would be a great way to get outside, get physical and bond. We could even have days where we go to watch soccer games, football games and horse races live or at sports bars on wing nights. Sports not your thing? Crawfish cookouts are delicious and Friyay was a hit last year so why change it? We have great after work Irish pubs, tapas bars and Izakayas in Ottawa that many people don't know about. We could even hit up special events on particular days like Cinco de Mayo, Diwali, Independence Day and Italian week or Ferragosto. Vegetarian or Vegan? What about tomato or paint fights, Halloween parties and pagan festivals are always fun! Not a drinker? Boardgame and shisha nights, and even activities like trad music or Karaoke provide students with the option of enjoying each other's company without the need for drinking, but still having that as an option.

I know how hard starting graduate school at a new school, in a new city can be, especially when you don't know anyone. I think we have a great community of graduate students that understand each other's struggles, while also exposing us to different personalities and cultural backgrounds. As social coordinator, I believe I have the best potential to involve students new and old, and foster communication and bonding as a group for the betterment of our students' mental, social, intellectual and even physical health."

Pierluca Pica

Nominated for: CUPE Representative

“I am in my first year of a master's in biology after having completed a bachelor's in biomedical sciences with honours in 2022. I am fluently bilingual, very much a people person, and really believe in the power of teamwork and communication, especially when defending student's rights or when promoting a sense of belonging for all those apart of the BGSA. I want to give a voice to those I would represent, and I would especially like to hear what is on our members' minds, to make sure their thoughts and suggestions can be properly addressed.

I will listen to you, and my work will be in the total interest of the group as a whole. As students, you will feel as though your issues are being brought to light!”

Mohamad Ojaghi

Nominated for: CUPE Representative

“I am a PhD student from Pamerter’s lab; I always would like to work closely with others in the student union. I was a member of the bylaw CUPE2626 committee for six months. In this role, I help to negotiate with the dean and VP of education regarding CUPE scholarships and teaching assistantship opportunities.”

Haya Hawari

Nominated for: Student Support Advisor

“I believe I'm a great fit for the position as I present a strong set of communication skills and a strong sense of curiosity. Allow me to explain to you how curiosity would present to be a needed skill for this position. As the person who will respond to the students' worries and questions, I will undoubtedly encounter a few queries or predicaments that I would be unsure of how to handle just yet. However, being in such a situation would only make my persistent and enduring curiosity bound to figuring out a response or a way to the inquiries or situations presented, I will use all of my resources in an effort to find a solution or a course of action to finding an answer or an approach. It, in fact, appeals to me greatly to be there for my fellow peers and colleagues that it would actually drive and motivate such searches. I find joy in being able to help someone out with an issue or provide knowledge and light to a situation that I know would ease their academic and/or personal life.

I have volunteered within my community all throughout my undergraduate years at uOttawa. I have been an info guide for the Ottawa hospital for 2 years now, a buddy with connexions for multiple newcomers to Canada, a free store clerk for Ottawa Sustainability office, and a residential service representative for email and

messaging system maintenance and for the connections with residents. With BGSA, I would be able to do as much and more as not only will my peers benefit for the association but the would benefit from a guide as would I. I would become part of a community, part of a society, part of a support system that will be there for me and with me throughout my journey through academia.”

Tovah Kashetsky

Nominated for: Student Support Advisor

“I am a great fit for this position because I am organized, attuned to people’s needs, and have experience supporting friends and peers. Support is a foundational pillar to having a positive graduate school experience. I’ve now attended four universities and moved to a new city three times, so I understand how important support is for a student after experiencing complete lack of support. Throughout my academic career, I’ve witnessed many circumstances where students lack support. These circumstances include minor difficulties like not understanding how the Presto bus pass system works, all the way to assault allegations with the university inappropriately handling the situation and neglecting victims. My previous university, McMaster, did not have a committee position to support students, nor did it even have a departmental graduate student committee. I did my best to help my friends in these situations, but my role was limited by the lack of departmental structure. I hope that in the Student Support Advisor position, I can provide students with the resources and support they need to have a healthy and happy grad school experience.”

Roisin Kierstead

Nominated for: Student Support Advisor

To briefly describe myself, I am a biology Master's student in Jessica Forrest's lab (start May 2022). I completed my undergraduate studies at Mount Allison University. During undergrad, I was a part of the field hockey club, biology student advisory committee, and multiple biology laboratories that I TA'd or volunteered in. Overall, I love being involved in my community, and like to take roles or responsibilities in the groups that I am a part of.

After graduating, I worked for two years as a lab manager at Mount Allison. As a lab manager, much of my time was spent mentoring, providing support or pointing students to resources (e.g. Honours students, volunteers, students completing independent studies, etc.). I was often the first "point of contact" between the

students and our lab P.I. I think that my experiences in undergrad and as a lab manager make me a great fit for the Student Support Advisor role.

Tricia Skelton

Nominated for: EDI Coordinator

“I'm a second-year MSc Biology student studying cognition in crickets. My past year on the BGSA has been spent as a CUPE representative, but this year I am looking to take on the EDI coordinator position. As an EDI coordinator I hope to help create and maintain a safe, welcoming space for biology students. Last year, I helped to do this by working with the EDI committee on projects including a women in STEM panel and an infographic about microaggressions. I work to keep myself educated constantly and welcome new ideas and suggestions.”

Karen Kadamani

Nominated for: Bilingualism Officer

“I am currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Pamerter Lab studying naked-mole rats and their immune response. They are extremely cool animals and one of the most hypoxia-tolerant mammals identified to date! During my undergrad, I made the mistake of not participating in university activities and taking advantage of everything uni has to offer outside of learning. I told myself I would be more implicated in grad school! I'm currently a member of the Editorial Board for BioMatters and have been involved in translating articles for the magazine for more than 2 years. I was also VP Comms for the uOttawa Cooking Club last year where part of my role was to translate the constitution and some outgoing messages. I believe the role of bilingualism officer would fit me very well!”

Pierluca Pica

Nominated for: Bilingualism Officer

“I am in my first year of a master's in biology after having completed a bachelor's in biomedical sciences with honours in 2022. I am fluently bilingual, very much a people person, and really believe in the power of teamwork and communication, especially when defending student's rights or when promoting a sense of belonging for all those apart of the BGSA. I want to give a voice to those I would represent, and I would especially like to hear what is on our members' minds, to make sure their thoughts and suggestions can be properly addressed.

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Matthieu Vilain

Nominated for: Bilingualism Officer

"I'm a second year Master's student in the Aris-Brosou lab. I attended your presentation this afternoon, and I am interested in applying for the new Bilingual Counselor position.

My first language is French since I am from France but I have been living in Ottawa for the past 5 years and I am now bilingual. During my time here, I completed my undergraduate in biology at uOttawa while being part of the geegees swimming team. Balancing swimming and academics (especially during my 1st year of masters) gave me good time management skills which I think could be very useful for this position.

I would love to work with the BGSA to help with events and be involved in graduate student affairs since it is something I did not have the opportunity to do in my undergraduate!"

Emmanuelle Monniez

Nominated for: Bilingualism Officer

"I am starting my second year as a Ph.D. student and I was able to meet people from the department last year, thanks to the BGSA, after arriving from France. As a native French speaker, I will be happy to help translate BGSA's communications, documents, and get involved a bit more in the association."

Carol-Ann Chabot

Nominated for: Bilingualism Officer

"I am a Master's student in the MAD lab under the supervision of Julien Martin. My research consists of understanding the causes and life-history consequences underlying the AFR in yellow-bellied marmots. I believe that I would be a great fit for the Bilingualism Officer position, since I am French-speaking and my experience as a French translator with the BioMatters magazine. I am curious of nature and always looking forward to embark in new adventures. Being part of BGSA would give me this opportunity but will also allow me to meet new people and contribute to our community."