UTGSU By-Elections: Division Two
Candidate Statements

Candidates
Ameer Ali
Sabeen Kazemi
Abdul Hamed Shekib Mohamed
Lily Ziyue Zhang

Ameer Ali
Dear UTGSU members,

It is with great enthusiasm that I announce my nomination for Division 2 Director (Social Science)! I am a third-year part-time Master of Industrial Relations and Human Resources (MIRHR) candidate. I was elected President of the Association of Students in Industrial Relations and Human Resources (ASIR-HR) for the 2023-24 academic year. This course union represents all full-time and part-time students in the MIRHR and PhD programs at the Centre of Industrial Relations and Human Resources (CIRHR) at the University of Toronto.

The ASIR-HR Executive Committee is elected every school year to represent its members as liaison with the CIRHR Advisory Committee (CIRAC) and the Graduate Student Union (UTGSU) through providing professional development, enhancing student life, and student voice. As President, I oversee the work of the Executive, provide leadership, and am the primary spokesmen. Also, I support the Executive and ensure the duties and responsibilities of the Executive are met. I organize, attend, and/or chair monthly ASIR-HR, CIRAC, and UTGSU Assembly meetings as well.

During my second year, I was elected ASIR-HR Vice-President, Student Life. This helped me to understand the importance governance plays in the student’s experience, and elevated the social experience including our first collaborative dinner/mixer with the CIRHR undergraduate association and students, and a year-end gala working with CIRHR staff and alumni as well! Academically, I advocated for more online course offerings, and Fall Reading Week – which became a reality this year!

I currently lead early career talent acquisition for General Motors Canada so regularly interact with students, graduates, professionals, and institutions that helped me be well connected and demonstrate characteristics of a leader. Also, I am an Executive on the Indigenous Peoples and
Persons with Disabilities employee resource group which has provided the opportunity to be an ally and good role model for the communities we work with.

During undergraduate studies, I held leadership roles in student life, career and alumni services, learning support, and student transition and mentorship. If elected, I will do my best and work tirelessly to ensure UTGSU members have:

- Higher base funding
- Better healthcare coverage
- A functional board

Helping make a lasting positive impact on this campus as well as the entire University of Toronto!

Let’s connect: https://www.linkedin.com/in/ameerali1

Sabeen Kazemi

I am writing to express my profound commitment to the principles of justice, equality, and community engagement as I submit my candidacy for nomination to the Graduate Student Union Board of Directors. My journey, as detailed in my resume, is not just a testament to my academic and professional pursuits but, more importantly, to my unwavering dedication to community-based activism and the pursuit of a more just, equitable, and empowering academic environment.

As an Advisory Member to the Race and Inequality Research Cluster at the University of Toronto, I had the privilege of contributing to the development and shaping of the cluster’s mission and principles. This experience deepened my understanding of the complex intersectionality of issues related to racial, social, political, economic, and gender justice. I actively engaged in proposing changes that would make the graduate student admissions application process more inclusive, striving to create an environment that reflects the diverse needs and experiences of our student body.

My involvement as a Board Member has underscored my commitment to institutional change that reflects the values of justice and equality. I firmly believe that student representation is crucial in shaping policies and initiatives that foster a truly inclusive environment. My experiences have equipped me with the skills to navigate institutional structures, advocate for change, and ensure that the student voice is heard in the decision-making processes.
During my undergraduate years, I was actively involved in various student clubs, each centered around issues that resonate with my commitment to justice and equality. Serving as the President of McMaster Muslims for Peace and Justice, I spearheaded initiatives to raise awareness about social and political issues faced by Muslim communities locally and internationally. I organized events, workshops, and keynote speakers to create a dialogue on campus concerning Islamophobia, anti-black racism, and their impact on Muslim communities in the West. This experience honed my leadership skills and reinforced the importance of providing platforms for underrepresented voices.

The documentary project, "The Elephant in the Room – Racism and Antiracism in Hamilton," stands as a testament to my dedication to community-based initiatives. As a documentary interviewer, I actively contributed to unveiling the realities of racism in our local context. This project, funded by McMaster University, sought to bridge academia and the community, aligning with my belief in the transformative power of engaged scholarship.

My understanding of the need for student services and programming is rooted in my active participation in various student clubs and organizations during my undergraduate years. These experiences have allowed me to witness firsthand the positive impact of programs that address the diverse needs and concerns of students. From organizing networking events for Muslim women professionals to being a part of clubs addressing issues of racialization and immigration, I have seen the transformative power of community-based programming in fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment.

The amalgamation of my experiences has fueled my passion for justice and equality. As an academic, my research which focuses on law, policy, inequality among other things has not been confined to the theoretical realm. Rather, it has been a dynamic exploration of how these concepts manifest in real-world issues and how they can be addressed through meaningful action. My conference presentations and publications underline my commitment to advancing knowledge on decolonization, racialized personhood, and post-colonial legal continuities.

As a nominee for the Graduate Student Union Board of Directors, I envision a future where the Board becomes a dynamic force for positive change. I am passionate about creating an environment that not only recognizes the diverse needs of our student body but actively works towards dismantling systemic barriers. I see the Board as a platform for fostering partnerships with local organizations and ensuring that the student voice is not only heard but actively incorporated into the decision-making processes.

In conclusion, my candidacy is rooted in a deep understanding of the intersectionality of justice issues and a commitment to transformative change. I am excited about the prospect of contributing to the Graduate Student Union Board of Directors, where I can leverage my
experiences, skills, and passion to create a more just, united, and empowered academic community. Together, let us embark on a journey towards a future that reflects the principles of justice and equality that we hold dear.

Abdul Hamed Shekib Mohamed

Hello, fellow graduate students,

My name is Abdul Hamed, and I am honored to stand before you as a candidate for the position of Director for Division 2 of the Graduate Students Union. As a dedicated student pursuing a Master of Social Work, I have not only acquired valuable skills and insights from my professional program but also fostered an unyielding passion for advocating for the welfare and rights of my fellow students.

Throughout my academic journey, I have honed my abilities in understanding societal issues, analyzing complex problems, and implementing effective solutions. These skills, coupled with my unwavering commitment to championing the cause of people’s wellbeing, position me as a strong contender for this role.

I firmly believe that the Graduate Students Union plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic experience of every student and researcher in our community. If elected, I am committed to utilizing my expertise and enthusiasm to foster an inclusive, supportive, and empowering environment for all graduate students.

My vision for our union revolves around amplifying the voices of our diverse student body, advocating for essential resources and support systems, and ensuring equitable opportunities for academic and personal growth. I am dedicated to actively engaging with each of you, listening to your concerns, and working tirelessly to address them.

I am eager to leverage my skills, experience, and passion to serve as a dedicated advocate for your needs, aspirations, and rights. Together, let us build a vibrant and inclusive graduate community that thrives on solidarity, compassion, and progress.

As a candidate for the Graduate Students Union, I’m committed to reviving our union and restoring its functionality. I will tirelessly work to reclaim the bargaining power for graduate students and researchers, ensuring fair representation. Additionally, I will advocate fiercely for improved healthcare and overall wellbeing to support the vibrant community of grad students and researchers. Together, let’s build a stronger, more supportive GSU for all.
I humbly ask for your support and trust in electing me as Director for Division 2. Together, let’s embark on a journey to create a brighter, more inclusive future for all graduate students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lily Ziyue Zhang

Hello, my name is Lily (she/her)! I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Geography, Geomatics, and Environment at UTM, and I am completing a collaborative specialization in Global Health through the Dalla Lana School of Public Health. I have long been passionate about collective organizing within universities, as exemplified by my 9 years of service in various elected student positions. Most recently, I organized with a group of graduate students to stop attempts to defund the UTGSU. I am eager to bring my skills, passion, and collaborative spirit to the UTGSU, working towards reinvigorating it to truly serve the students at the University of Toronto and strengthen student bargaining power to improve conditions, particularly in terms of funding and benefits.

My commitment to student advocacy began during my time at the University of Alberta Student Union as an Undergrad and continued through my Master’s at the University of Western Ontario as an elected cohort representative. During my Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, I gradually became more involved in student politics as an elected cohort representative with my department’s graduate student society, and then elected CUPE 3902 departmental steward. Since 2022 (elected 2022 by-election, re-elected 2023 election), I have served as the first vice-president. Through this experience, I have gained unique insights and learned about department issues throughout U of T, not only in my own department, which I would bring to my role as Division 2 Director.

I am fed up with the dysfunction in the UTGSU and am confident in my ability to diligently fulfill the duties of Division 2 Director. My extensive experience in governance and management, coupled with my active engagement in the student movement, positions me well to address the challenges and opportunities that come with serving on the UTGSU Board.