



# NASA

## Election Information

### Message from the NASA Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Laura Ortegon-Rico

Dear NASA Member,

At the close of the nomination period for the **2026 annual election of NASA Executive Board members**, each open position received only one nomination.

The candidate for <b>President</b> is:	<b>Quinn Benders</b>
The candidate for <b>Treasurer</b> is:	<b>Cassandra Van Essen</b>
The candidate for <b>Secretary</b> is:	<b>Jeff Papineau</b>
The candidate for <b>Grievance Chair</b> is:	<b>Adam Akkari</b>
The candidate for <b>PAC Chair</b> is:	<b>Fairfax Culpepper</b>

At the close of the nomination period for the **2026 by-election of NASA Executive Board members**, each open position received only one nomination.

The candidate for <b>EDI Chair</b> is:	<b>Priyanka Mittapelly</b>
The candidate for <b>Health &amp; Safety Chair</b> is:	<b>David Patten</b>

As per the [Election of Executive Officers Policy](#) passed by NASA members at the 2024 NASA Fall General Meeting, since each of these candidates is uncontested for their position **no vote will be required and these members are declared elected by acclamation**. They will assume their respective positions after the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Wednesday, June 3.

I would like to thank the members who showed their support of NASA by nominating their co-workers and colleagues to these positions. You can read the biographies of these incoming Executive Board members.

Your CEO, Laura Ortegon-Rico



# RE-ELECT FOR NASA PRESIDENT

DEAR FELLOW MEMBERS,  
FOR THOSE WHO MAY BE UNFAMILIAR WITH ME, THIS IS AN INTRODUCTION, AND FOR THOSE WHOM I HAVE BEEN WORKING ALONGSIDE, THIS IS A RENEWED CALL TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER.

OUR UNION HAS BEEN THROUGH A GREAT DEAL OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS. A COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS, A UNIVERSITY-WIDE HIRING LIMITATION THAT CONTINUES TO REDUCE OUR STAFF COMPLEMENT, BALLOONING WORKLOADS, AND ONGOING GOVERNMENTAL INTERFERENCE AT THE BARGAINING TABLE HAVE TESTED EVERY ONE OF US. AND YET, TOGETHER, WE HAVE NOT ONLY ENDURED, WE HAVE ADVANCED.

OVER THE COURSE OF THIS TERM, OUR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS HAVE PRODUCED REAL, TANGIBLE RESULTS. OUR BARGAINING TEAM SECURED A FOUR-YEAR AGREEMENT WITH 3% SALARY INCREASES IN EACH YEAR FROM 2024 THROUGH 2028, WITH RETROACTIVE PAY FOR THE FIRST YEAR — A HARD-WON OUTCOME THAT REFLECTS THE STRENGTH AND SOLIDARITY OF THIS MEMBERSHIP. THAT AGREEMENT ALSO BROUGHT SIGNIFICANT LANGUAGE IMPROVEMENTS, THE COLLAPSE OF THE CASUAL CLASSES UPWARD AND THE MOVING OF KEY PROVISIONS INTO COMMON PROVISIONS TO BETTER PROTECT ALL OF US.

BEYOND THE BARGAINING TABLE, WE BUILT SOMETHING EVEN MORE FOUNDATIONAL: THE COMMON FRONT. THIS ASSOCIATION OF UNIONS WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER TO PREPARE FOR THE NEXT ROUND OF BARGAINING IN 2028 THROUGH DEEPER INTEGRATION AND GREATER COLLECTIVE STRENGTH.

WITH OVER 100 WORKSITE MEETINGS, DOZENS OF NEW MEMBER ORIENTATIONS, AND COUNTLESS EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS, I HAVE STRIVEN TO DEEPEN OUR ROOTS ACROSS EVERY CORNER OF THIS UNIVERSITY. ALONG WITH SO MANY FRIENDS, I HAVE ALSO STOOD SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH OUR COLLEAGUES AT AASUA, THE GSA, THE PDFA, AND THE SU, REFUSING TO BE DIVIDED BY THOSE WHO WOULD PIT OUR CONSTITUENCIES AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. I AM ALSO CLEAR-EYED ABOUT WHAT REMAINS UNFINISHED. THE BURDEN PLACED ON OUR MEMBERS IS UNSUSTAINABLE. BURNOUT, MENTAL HEALTH PRESSURES, LONGER WAIT TIMES FOR CRITICAL SERVICES, AND A WORSENING CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT ARE NOT JUST "ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES." THEY ARE OUR ISSUES, AND THEY DEMAND OUR CONTINUED, COLLECTIVE RESPONSE.

MY ROOTS AT THIS UNIVERSITY RUN DEEP. FIRST BY RECEIVING MY UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE DEGREES, THEN, AFTER A HIATUS, BY STARTING BOTH MY EMPLOYMENT AND MY ROLE AS STEWARD IN 2012. BEFORE LONG, I TOOK ON THE ROLE OF CHAIR OF THE POLITICAL ACTION AND MEMBERSHIP EDUCATION COMMITTEE, THEN VICE PRESIDENT, WHILE CHAIRING NUMEROUS AD-HOC COMMITTEES AND RESEARCH PROJECTS. THE EXPERIENCE GAINED THROUGH THOSE YEARS HAS ALWAYS BELONGED TO THIS MEMBERSHIP, AND IT EXISTS TO SERVE US ALL. THE PATH AHEAD REQUIRES THE SAME THINGS THAT HAVE ALWAYS CARRIED US FORWARD: JUSTICE, TRANSPARENCY, ROBUST GOVERNANCE, AND ABOVE ALL — SOLIDARITY. EVERY DECISION, EVERY CAMPAIGN, EVERY NEGOTIATION HAS BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE ROOTED IN THE UNDERSTANDING THAT OUR POWER COMES FROM ONE ANOTHER. THIS NEXT TERM IS ABOUT CONTINUING OUR JOURNEY. THERE IS MORE WORK TO DO, AND IT IS WORK THAT CAN ONLY BE DONE TOGETHER.

PLEASE HELP SPREAD THE WORD. REACH OUT TO SHARE YOUR CONCERNS, YOUR IDEAS, AND YOUR VISION FOR WHERE NASA SHOULD GO FROM HERE. EVERY CONVERSATION STRENGTHENS WHAT WE ARE BUILDING. YOU CAN ALWAYS CONNECT WITH ME AT 587-335-5868.

IN SOLIDARITY,  
QUINN BENDERS NASA PRESIDENT, CANDIDATE FOR RE-ELECTION

QUINN BENDERS



**Cassandra Van Essen**  
for  
**Treasurer**



I am currently the Treasurer for NASA as well as the Treasurer for CHS Alberta a charitable organization for the Bleeding Disorders community and a social group I am involved in that runs different events around meetups and crafts.

# Jeff Papineau

for

## Secretary

It is my pleasure to be seeking re-election as the NASA Secretary / Bylaws Chair for the 2026-2028 term.

The coming years will be busy for NASA as we move through more tough times at the UofA, instability in the province and as we head back to the bargaining table. I am happy and honored to continue to serve NASA by ensuring that our governance documents serve the needs of our members and our organization.

Jeff has been a NASA member and University of Alberta employee since 2000 and has served in a variety of roles at NASA including 5 years as Secretary / Bylaws Chair. He works far below the Earth's surface as Collections Coordinator in Bruce Peel Special Collections.



# Adam Akkari

for

## Grievance Chair



Dear NASA,

I have worked for the University of Alberta's Parking Services as a Parking Compliance Officer for over 17 years. During that time, I have served on the Grievance Committee in different capacities and as a Union Steward, gaining extensive experience in representing members and navigating the grievance process.

I am deeply committed to labour relations and to ensuring that the Association fulfills its duty of fair representation. I believe every member deserves to be heard, respected, and advocated for with diligence and integrity.

I am seeking re-election as Grievance Chair to continue the work already underway. Continuity, accountability, and follow-

through are essential to maintaining trust in our processes.

I also want to ensure that all members, especially those working evenings, nights, and non-traditional shifts, have a strong and consistent voice at the Executive level.

I respectfully ask for your support.

In solidarity,  
Adam Akkari

# Fairfax Culpepper

for

## Political Action and Member Education Chair

I would like to stand for the position of Political Action & Member Education Chair.

I work in the Library as a Cataloguer and have been at the University since 2015. I have been the Political Action and Member Education Committee chair since September 2025 and would like to continue in this role.

I have been involved with the Member Action Team since its inception in 2021 and served on the Bargaining Team this last round of negotiations. My previous union experience includes having been a shop steward at a Starbucks during a period of job action, as well, I was part of a successful strike action at the community college I worked at prior to coming to the U of A. and, also before moving to Edmonton, I was involved with a political education group in B.C. that organized various labour and worker solidarity events and speakers. Additionally, I currently volunteer with the Greater Edmonton Library Association's Prison Libraries Project which provides library resources and programming to incarcerated persons, work that is beneficial in keeping people connected to the community they will eventually be expected to reintegrate into.

As chair of the Political Action and Member Education Committee, I would continue to prioritize member education, engagement and involvement in our union. Member participation and ownership are key to a healthy, democratic union. If elected, this is the focus I would aspire to bring to the committee as well as the executive.

Thank you for your consideration.



# **Priyanka Mittapelly**

for

## **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Chair**



Dr. Priyanka Mittapelly currently serves as the Plant Growth Facility Lead in the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Alberta. Prior to this role, she worked as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science and served as Vice President Operations for the Postdoctoral Fellows Association for two years.

Currently, Dr. Mittapelly is a member on multiple NASA committees, including the EDI, Award, and Bylaws and policy Committee. She is interested in serving as an EDI Committee Chair. Her academic and professional journey has equipped her with a diverse set of skills,

leadership experience, and a strong commitment to fostering inclusive and supportive environments. She looks forward to contributing to NASA initiatives and further developing her mentorship and leadership skills while supporting a diverse community.

# David Patten

for

## Health & Safety Chair



I'm a microbiology technician in the Department of Biological Science and have been a NASA member for nearly four years. I believe that meaningful change in health and safety comes from listening to people and trusting the data; that's exactly how I've tried to approach this work.

As chair of the Health and Safety Working Group, I oversaw the development of the NASA Health and Safety Survey to better understand what our members need, that is, where the gaps are, but also what's already working, both of which matter. Knowing what's working tells us what to protect; knowing what isn't tells us where to act. That survey happened because members like you showed up. You volunteered your time, you shared your concerns, and you trusted the process. I want to carry that momentum forward, because your voices deserve action.

Beyond the survey, I've contributed to developing safety orientation modules for the Faculty of Science and sit on the Culture of Care Focus Group, where I ensure that the employer's new initiatives prioritize the needs of staff. On the Joint Health and Safety Committee, I championed psychological safety as a core workplace issue, driving discussions on the factors affecting staff well-being. It was ultimately included at various levels in the Safety and Well-Being Action Plan.

My vision for this role is simple: a workplace where staff feel safe to raise concerns, where psychological safety is valued as much as physical safety, and where something actually happens when a concern is raised. You deserve that. I'd be honoured to keep working towards it.