



Priorities Document

Governance

CAUS believes that appropriate student representation at all levels of university governance is essential for our undergraduate students. This is especially true at the Board of Governors, which is the highest governing body of each institution. With students being the largest stakeholders within their institutions, it is necessary for them to have equitable representation within decision-making bodies. Currently, Mount Royal University and MacEwan University only have a single undergraduate student representative on their Board of Governors—unlike their university counterparts across the province, who each have two. CAUS believes this inconsistency must be rectified by way of granting these two institutions a second undergraduate board representative to ensure the student voice is effectively represented and heard. The appointments of undergraduate student representatives should continue to be decided by the students' association or union at each respective institution.

Additionally, CAUS believes that decisions impacting the affordability and accessibility of an education for students must be protected at the Board of Governors of all public institutions. To ensure transparency and appropriate representation, we believe that a super majority vote, meaning a vote which requires a minimum of two-thirds of those present and voting, for the passage of any motion pertaining to the tuition and fees must be adopted. This will ensure that even though students make up a proportionately small number of votes on the Board of Governors, their perspective can be meaningful and impact the accessibility of an education for future generations.

CAUS calls for better student representation at the Board of Governors of each institution and a more equitable voting structure to ensure that the primary stakeholder, students, are represented as best possible.

Mental Health

In 2017, students across the province saw an investment of \$25.8 million over three years in campus mental health by the Government of Alberta. This investment and its support for a long term commitment to sustainable funding dedicated to on-campus mental health supports is crucial to the health and wellbeing of students across the province. On-campus supports directly impact a student's wellbeing and can target issues like depression, high levels of anxiety and stress, and suicide. CAUS recommends that funding for on-campus mental health supports be distributed to the institutions on a per-student basis. Furthermore, CAUS calls on the Government of Alberta to keep its commitment to continue to fund services on campus. Finally, CAUS believes that student engagement and consultation is vital to the implementation of mental health supports on campuses and calls on the Government of Alberta to insist on student consultation by the institution regarding mental health services.

Institutional Funding

The commitment of consistent and predictable operating funding has been a vital component of Alberta's post-secondary success - and students are glad to see this commitment being met. For the third straight year, our system saw a 2% operating funding increase. This predictable increase has allowed our institutions and our students to plan and make good decisions; it is important that we maintain that sustainable support as well as expand our public investment.

Universities are collections of students, faculty, staff, and buildings— buildings that are some of the most important assets of our province— and it's important that we provide the resources to ensure our institutions and our students are able to be good stewards of these assets. Volatile funding arrangements in the past and decisions that saw institutions needing to decide between academic costs or basic maintenance has resulted in significant deferred maintenance at Alberta's post-secondary institutions, across many campuses. Deferred maintenance in the Albertan post-secondary system has now ballooned to over \$2 billion, and a plan needs to be put into place in order to give our students, faculty, and staff a safe and effective learning environment.

New buildings, too, need dollars to function. Antiquated formulae and cuts to the initial lights-on funding have changed the initial assumptions when institutions - and student associations - made capital investments in new infrastructure on campus. Restoring dedicated funds for lights-on funding will ensure our new buildings are able to meet their full potential and the system uses its available resources to the best benefit of students and Albertans.

CAUS is calling for continued predictable increases to core operating funding as well as a commitment to protecting our physical post-secondary infrastructure through increasing funding dedicated to deferred maintenance and providing lights-on funding.

Affordability

CAUS believes a long term, legislated tuition policy needs to be put in place to provide predictable and affordable tuition. Through this, students, families and institutions can plan beyond a year-to-year cycle for the cost of tuition, and therefore allow current and future students access to post-secondary institutions.

The affordability of tuition remains a pressing issue for undergraduate students. Prior to abandoning strict legislation on tuition processes in 1992, Alberta had one of the lowest tuition fee levels in the country. CAUS proposes rolling back tuition to 1992 levels, increasing by Consumer Price Index (CPI) for each subsequent year, and capping all future increases to CPI. Therefore, CAUS strongly recommends that the result of the tuition review be a tuition cap included in legislation, specifically the Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA). Furthermore, CAUS calls for tuition cap legislation to extend to all international students. CAUS looks forward to the imminent release of the Tuition Review.

In terms of associated fees, CAUS calls for the end of exceptional tuition increases, also known as market modifiers, and regulation of Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIFs). This can be accomplished by striking section 5.1 from the Tuition and Fees Regulation to prevent the possibility of future market modifiers, and by eliminating the 'basket of goods' mandatory non-instructional fees if they are not transparent for students. These changes will ensure institutional accountability regarding the implementation of new and existing MNIFs.

Student Financial Aid (SFA) is an essential component of affordability for students. Therefore, CAUS recommends increased investment into SFA through scholarships, bursaries, and grants. Additionally, CAUS proposes targeted grants to demographic groups who need the most support in post-secondary education – for example, students that come from rural areas, students with disabilities, individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and students in high-cost programs. Any Albertan who is qualified should be able to enroll and complete their program without worrying about managing a huge student debt at the end of the line. This can be accomplished by the reallocation of all tax credits into up front grants for low-and-middle-income students. CAUS also recommends the repayment threshold for loans increases in light of the changes to minimum wage.

Student Employment

Student employment continues to become more necessary as the costs of education rise. Students are expected to have relevant work experience upon graduation to enter the workforce. This means more students are pressed to find employment while studying and may settle for opportunities that do not provide meaningful experiences that supplement their degree. The Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP) currently benefits some students, but has the potential to support more in the following ways. CAUS recommends raising the STEP subsidy line in agreement with minimum wage as it has not been indexed to increases. Additionally, data on current work opportunities can be used to tailor experiences closer towards a students' field of study which gives students relevant experience, and better equips them to join the workforce. CAUS recommends that the program become more accessible by operating year-round, as opposed to just the summer.

In terms of student employment, international students are at a disadvantage, and federal regulations limit how many hours they can work. Thus, we believe that all student employment opportunities should be accessible to international students, to help alleviate some of the burdens they face. In the past few years, the Alberta Innovates grants have remained static, meaning they have not been adjusted for either inflation or the minimum wage increases. CAUS calls for an increase to the funding students receive from Alberta Innovates, so that these student internships are fairly and comparably compensated to at least a full-time minimum wage job.



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