



# CAUS 2017/18 Priorities

## Ensuring an Affordable & Accessible Post-secondary System

### WHO WE ARE

The Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) represents over 100,000 undergraduate students at MacEwan University, Mount Royal University, the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary and the University of Lethbridge. As elected student leaders from all five institutions, we advocate on behalf of our students to university administrations, the government, and the greater community. We also govern our individual students' associations in order to improve the student experience at our own institutions. Our students elected us based on platforms advocating an affordable, and predictable post-secondary education system. Our priorities reflect those mandates.

### INTRODUCTION

Over the course of 2016 and 2017 the Government of Alberta has taken several steps towards reviewing the Adult Learning System. This has included reviews of tuition and fees, institutional funding frameworks, roles and mandates, campus mental health, and student financial aid. Students anxiously await the results of these reviews and hope to see their recommendations included in any changes. Alberta's post-secondary sector is a critical aspect of our province's economy, and students feel it is important to ensure the system remains affordable, accessible, and of the highest quality.

### 2017/18 PRIORITIES

#### AFFORDABILITY

One of the most crucial concerns for student's is ensuring affordability throughout their post-secondary experience.

The affordability of tuition remains a pressing concern for undergraduate students. Alberta had one of the lowest tuition fee levels in the country until 1992, prior to abandoning strict regulation on tuition increases. CAUS proposes a sustainable and predictable tuition model by rolling tuition back to 1992 levels, and adjusting tuition to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from each year thereafter. CAUS strongly believes that any new funding model should have, at its core, a tuition cap enshrined in legislation. The level of the tuition cap should be tied to the rate of increase to the CPI and this policy should be contained in the Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA). CAUS calls for the same CPI regulation to be attached to all international student tuition increases.

When discussing associated fees, CAUS calls for an end to exceptional tuition increases, also known as market modifiers, and the regulation of Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIFs). These recommendations can be accomplished by the Government of Alberta striking Section 5.1 of the Tuition and Fees Regulation to eliminate the possibility of all future market modifiers, in addition to introducing strict regulations that ensure the accountability of our institutions regarding the implementation of new and existing MNIFs.

Student Financial Aid (SFA) is an essential component of affordability for students. CAUS recommends that all foregone revenue from tuition and education tax credits be directed towards needs-based, up-front grants for low- to middle-income students. These grants should be provided along a progressive sliding scale to ensure those who need funding receive it. This system of SFA has been introduced in other Canadian jurisdictions with research showing it increases access to post-secondary. Additionally, CAUS recommends that there be increased accessibility and availability of scholarships, awards, and bursaries for all students, especially international, indigenous, and low-income students, to ensure that systemic barriers are reduced.

## GOVERNANCE

Equal student representation at all levels of university governance is essential for our undergraduate students. Currently, Mount Royal University and MacEwan University do not have two undergraduate representatives on their Boards of Governors. With students being the largest stakeholders within their institutions, it is necessary for them to have equitable representation within decision-making bodies. The appointments of undergraduate student representatives should continue to be decided by the students' association or union at each respective institution. Additionally, CAUS believes all board committees should be open for student board member participation, incorporating the valuable and unique lens students bring to those discussions. CAUS calls for the alignment of the students' associations' or unions' mandate to represent students all throughout the governance structure of their institution.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Students are excited to see the recent increased investment in campus mental health by the Government of Alberta. It is encouraging to see this commitment to sustainable and long term funding dedicated to on-campus supports for students. Access to mental health services is crucial for student wellbeing and targeting issues like depression, high levels of stress and anxiety, and even suicide. CAUS proposes that funding for on-campus mental health supports be distributed to our universities through a per-student funding model at the same rate the University of Lethbridge received in 2013 – approximately \$148 per full-load equivalent (FLE). Moving forward, CAUS calls on the Government of Alberta to keep its commitment to long-term, stable funding without reducing services on campuses and engage students throughout the process of implementation.

## STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

Experiential learning and meaningful employment continue to be at the forefront of student concerns. Lack of experience poses a significant obstacle to graduates entering the job market. CAUS advocates for the release of data from the reinstated Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP) to better inform meaningful work opportunities. Improvements made to the program should include the expansion to year round accessibility and increased opportunities matching students' fields of study to appropriate work experience. CAUS further advocates for increased resources and expertise towards the implementation of meaningful work-integrated learning and paid internships.

## INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING

The quality of a student's post-secondary educational experience is dependant upon adequate funding for their institution of choice. In collaboration with the Government of Alberta's Funding Framework Review, CAUS recommends that a funding framework be based on the principles of affordability, sustainability, and predictability. These principles allow institutions to budget accordingly so that there is a consistent quality of education and no fluctuations in tuition fees. Understanding that diversity across academic disciplines creates a robust, knowledge-based economy, CAUS further advocates for a funding framework that is primarily motivated by educational outcomes.

Many of our institutions are in desperate need of campus infrastructure upgrades and, as a result, students' safety and campus experience is suffering due to a lack of investment. CAUS recommends that the Government of Alberta make significant and continued investments into campus infrastructure and deferred maintenance while developing its funding framework.

## CONTACT US


#1, 9908 - 109 Street Edmonton, AB T5K 1H5

Reed Larsen, Chair  
780-492-4241 / [chair@caus.net](mailto:chair@caus.net)

Conner Peta, Vice-Chair  
403-329-2780 / [vicechair@caus.net](mailto:vicechair@caus.net)

Joshua McKeown, Interim Executive Director  
780-297-4531 / [josh@caus.net](mailto:josh@caus.net)

[caus.net](http://caus.net)

 /CAUstudents

 @CAUS

 @caustudents