



IDEAS FOR **POST-SECONDARY** EDUCATION

For Immediate Release

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Ignite: Ideas for Post-Secondary Education Report **Launches Across Alberta**

Thousands of Alberta Students Consulted in Unique Student-Led Initiative

Edmonton, Alberta – Student leaders at post-secondary institutions in Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge publicly released findings from the **Ignite: Ideas for Post-Secondary Education** report today, highlighting increasing financial pressures on students, fallout from the 2013 budget cuts, and greater demand for up-front financial aid, quality teaching and flexible learning pathways.

Says project champion and Steering Committee member, Petros Kusmu, “unsurprisingly, in today’s competitive and high-cost education landscape students remain most concerned about affordability, quality and access of their post-secondary education options.”

The largest student-led initiative of its kind, the Ignite project report compiles the results of student focus groups held at 23 post-secondary institutions across Alberta as well as a survey of thousands of Alberta students. The initiative gauged student opinions on cost, access, and quality on Alberta’s post-secondary education system, and prompted students to share their vision for the future of PSE in Alberta.

Student leaders will present the report to Innovation and Advanced Education Minister Dave Hancock at a meeting on February 8.

To learn more about the project, visit IgniteAlberta.ca

Student leaders from the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS), Alberta Students’ Executive Council (ASEC), and Alberta Graduate Council (AGC), as well as students who participated in the Ignite focus groups will be on hand to answer questions following the press conference.

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IGNITE Alberta is a collaborative partnership between the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS), the Alberta Students’ Executive Council (ASEC), and the Alberta Graduate Council (AGC)

For more information or to schedule a media interview, please contact:

Carol Neuman, Executive Director
Alberta Students’ Executive Council
cell: 780-437-4531
e-mail: ed@albertastudents.ca

Beverly Eastham, Executive Director
Council of Alberta University Students
cell: 780-297-4531
e-mail: beverly@caus.net

Highlights

Access and Cost

Access and cost of post-secondary education were by far the highest priorities for Alberta's students. Students believe that the high cost of post-secondary education is reducing access to higher education, increasing student debt, and diminishing the quality of education by hindering the ability of students to concentrate on their studies.

- 83% of students agreed that in order to reduce the average debt-load of current students, more non-repayable student financial aid (grants and bursaries that do not need to be paid back) is needed.
- More than 90% of survey respondents also agreed that our post-secondary system should have predictable and affordable costs for students.
- Access to post-secondary goes beyond costs and has a cultural and geographic component for students from under-represented groups. In the focus groups, the majority of groups indicated that it is more difficult for some populations to attain a post-secondary education. When it came to rural students, about half of the groups indicated that geographic access to post-secondary education acts as the main barrier.

Institutional Funding

- 87% of respondents agreed that provincial and federal funding to post-secondary institutions needs to be increased and sustained for the long-term growth in enrollment and continued excellence of Alberta's post-secondary education system.
- In focus groups, the most frequently raised concern was cuts to provincial funding, as reduced provincial funding dedicated to post-secondary institutions has increased the financial burden on students and caused programs to shrink or be cut all together.

Quality

- More than 90% of our survey respondents agreed that high-quality teaching should be the leading focus of Alberta's post-secondary institutions.
- The way students want to learn is changing. Focus group participants, mainly from Alberta's colleges, noted that credit-transfer is a significant issue that many students deal with on a daily basis, and that can have a large impact on their academic career.