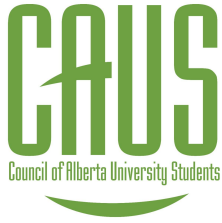




2021-22 Advocacy Priorities



Supporting Students, Supporting the Economy

Who We Are

The Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) represents over 140,000 undergraduate students at Athabasca University, MacEwan University, Mount Royal University, the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge.

As elected student leaders from all six institutions, we advocate on behalf of our students to university administrations, the government, and the greater community. We also govern our individual students' unions in order to improve services and the student experience at our own institutions.

Our students elected us on platforms advocating for a consistent, affordable, and predictable post-secondary education system. Our priorities reflect those mandates.



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
STUDENTS'
UNION



samru
students' association
of mount royal university



2020/21 PRIORITIES

Ending Gender and Domestic Violence

Sexual violence is an increasingly prevalent issue on our campuses. Its impact on students is detrimental to their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and academic well-being, and affects the overall community. Sexual violence encompasses a broad range of non-consenting sexual instances, including rape, assault, indecent exposure, among many others. Students deserve to be safe in their studies and lives, and sexual violence hinders their ability to do so.

CAUS worked for two years to compile a [first-of-its-kind, research-informed white paper](#) on the prevalence of sexual violence on university campuses. This paper, released in early 2020, includes 5 recommendations that CAUS has provided to the Government of Alberta as a pathway to address campus sexual violence. These include both policy and funding asks and that programs be implemented at post-secondary institutions.

CAUS advocates for the safety and success of all students, and in order to put this advocacy into action, calls for increased funding and attention from the provincial government for sexual violence prevention and response. This would be accomplished through awareness campaigns, inclusivity, teaching consent education, training students and faculty members to be responders to sexual violence, as well as allowing for more counselors available for people who have been affected by sexual violence during their

time at university. Funding would also allow for more diverse and inclusive methods to address sexual violence, as it would allow for more accommodation for diverse backgrounds of students including culturally relevant counseling and training in the diverse needs of the LGBTQ2S+ community.

“Students deserve to be safe in their studies and lives, and sexual violence hinders their ability to do so.”

CAUS Recommends:

- The Government of Alberta to immediately implement all of the recommendations within the CAUS Sexual Violence on Campus report.

Supporting Students; Supporting the Economy

Expanding Affordable Childcare, Expanding PSE Access

The high cost of childcare in Alberta is a barrier to parents with young children trying to achieve a post-secondary education. With average monthly fees in Calgary ranging from \$1,075 to \$1,300, depending on the age of the child, it is completely understandable for a parent to seek more affordable options - including deferring employment or their studies.

The Government of Alberta does provide a childcare subsidy to offset the cost of childcare. Unfortunately, this subsidy may only cover half the total monthly fee, leaving a parent to cover the rest. The stress caused by the high cost of childcare can result in poor academic performance, impacts on mental wellbeing, and, potentially, deferring the completion of their studies.

CAUS calls on the Government of Alberta to implement an affordable childcare system that focuses on accessibility for parents and high-quality care for their children.

CAUS Recommends:

- The Government of Alberta expands affordable and flexible childcare options with the intent to reduce the cost to parents.

Funding Indigenous Centres, Funding Reconciliation

Alberta has one of the lowest post-secondary participation rates in Canada for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) yet holds the third largest

population of this group amongst all provinces and territories. The Indigenous community is, on average, younger than the non-indigenous community, and has a higher ratio of youths aged 14 and under. This is to say, the Indigenous population in Alberta is young and growing. However, this population growth is not reflected in post-secondary enrollment.

Given the intergenerational trauma caused by state sponsored educational institutions forced onto the Indigenous peoples of Canada, one can understand the trepidation that many may feel as they transition from primary and secondary education to a college or university in an unfamiliar city.

The Government of Alberta must encourage and support Indigenous students seeking a post-secondary education not only to support the student, but also to subsequently support their community and the Albertan economy as a whole.

CAUS Recommends:

- The Government of Alberta dedicates funding to universities to support Indigenous students through Indigenous Centres that consists of culturally appropriate services, including but not limited to financial support, counselling, secure housing, health and mental health care, and academic support.

Improving Affordability, Improving Student Aid

Alberta has consistently had one of the lowest post-secondary participation rates in Canada.¹ A significant contributor to this problem is the fact that, out of all ten provinces, Alberta has the lowest provision rate of non-repayable student financial aid (grants and scholarships). Recent changes to the Student Financial Aid system have exacerbated the situation with the cancellation of the tuition and education tax credits which provided over \$200 million annually to students and their families.

“Out of all ten provinces, Alberta has the lowest provision rate of non-repayable student financial aid”

CAUS calls on the Government of Alberta to increase the value of up-front grants. These grants should be provided based on a student’s level of academic success and their financial need in order to ensure that the up-front grants are providing the largest possible benefit to students and Alberta.

Aside from non-repayable aid, the single largest funding source remains

student loans. Over a decade ago, the Government of Alberta lowered the interest rate applied to Alberta Student Loans, moving from Prime + 2.5% to a flat prime for the floating rate. At the time, it was estimated to save the average student approximately \$5,000 over the life of the loan, which instead could be used to buy a home, a car, or start a family. This trend was reversed in 2019 with the student loan interest rate being increased by 1%. This increase, costing the average student approximately \$2,000 over the life of the loan, will negatively impact the provincial economy by removing thousands annually that could be spent by Albertans to feed and support their families. As a means to increase post-secondary affordability and increase Albertans disposable funds, the provincial student loan interest rate should be reduced to Prime as a floating rate, and Prime + 2% as a fixed rate.

CAUS Recommends:

- The Government of Alberta provides an additional \$200 million annually into non-repayable up-front grants.
- The Government of Alberta lower the interest rate on provincial student loans to Prime as a floating rate and Prime plus 2% as the fixed rate.

¹<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2020027-eng.htm>

Supporting Students; Supporting the Economy

Supporting Campus Mental Health

Campus mental health has been an important focus of students, and the Government has responded with annual funding provided through multi year agreements. However, more still needs to be done. Services that students require are often unavailable due to wait times, or are simply unknown. As university enrolment in Alberta is poised to surge in coming years, demand on these services will only grow. It is crucial that predictable funding be allocated on a per-student basis, to stop the resources per student from eroding. In 2013 the University of Lethbridge was granted \$147 per Full Load Equivalent (FLE) and was able to drastically reduce the waiting lists for their services. CAUS calls on the Government of Alberta to fund on campus mental health services at \$165 per FLE, the 2013 rate adjusted for inflation.

“Services that students require are often unavailable due to wait times, or are simply unknown”

CAUS Recommends:

- The Government of Alberta increase mental health funding commitments to \$165 per FLE at each institution.
- The Government of Alberta create an advertising campaign to raise awareness of the Mental Health services that are available to students across the province such as 211 and Distress Lines.

Contact Us

Rachel Timmermans, Chair
chair@caus.net

Matthew Yanish, Vice-Chair
vicechair@caus.net

Jon Mastel, Executive Director
780.297.4531 / ed@caus.net

Box 96 2-900 SUB 8900 - 114 Street NW
Edmonton AB T6G 2J7

www.caus.net