



University of Regina
STUDENTS' UNION

**FUND THE FUTURE
ACCESSIBLE
POST
SECONDARY
EDUCATION
FOR ALL**

Who we are

The University of Regina Students Union (URSU) is the students' union representing 12,000 full-time, part-time, continuing education and post-graduate degree students at the University of Regina. URSU is mandated to fight for students' rights and a student voice at the table, offer cost-saving services, and provide programming that improves the student experience.

Our membership includes students from across the globe who are studying in varied full-time, part-time, and online programs unique to the University of Regina. Our membership is diverse, so our voice and our advocacy reflect that diversity.



Our recommendations are encouraged to be applied to multiple municipal, provincial, and federal governments, but this document is primarily intended for the Government of Saskatchewan.

URSU is Local 9 of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) and was a founding member of the CFS as part of the Saskatchewan component. The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) is a cross-Canada and provincial students' movement. The CFS represents over 530,000 students from coast to coast.

The University of Regina Graduate Students Association, representing around 2,500 full-time and part-time graduate students studying at the University of Regina, strongly supports the recommendations in this document proposed by the University of Regina Students Union (URSU). We believe these recommendations will deliver quality, accessible post-secondary education to students in Saskatchewan.

Setting the Stage/ Executive Summary

Many Canadians have utilized our post-secondary education system. However, the current system requires students to take on unprecedented and life-altering debt loads at a very young age to obtain an increasingly necessary education in our modern economy. Canadians are inheriting enormous debt and struggling to meet basic needs despite paying more than previous generations for housing and education.

The year is 2023, and the impact of COVID-19 has been very high for students. During the pandemic, students and graduates have struggled with rising tuition costs, debt, food insecurity, homelessness, and increasing mental health needs. And now, the increase in interest rates, high inflation, and cost of living is putting an additional burden on students. These intersecting challenges form the basis of the current post-secondary landscape, indicating a need for more government support—now more than ever.

To create a system of accessible, high-quality post-secondary education, the provincial government must move away from piecemeal reforms and a funding model that downloads costs onto individuals. In particular, the URSU is calling on the Saskatchewan government to prioritize these immediate aspects:

The nine recommendations outlined in the document are;

- **Relieve Student Debt,**
- **Replace Student Loans with upfront, non-repayable grants for low-income students,**
- **Increase Scholarships, Grants, and Bursaries for Indigenous and International Students,**
- **Fairness for International Students,**
- **Funding support for Graduate students,**
- **Addressing Student Mental Health Needs,**
- **Creation of Sexual Assault and Violence Prevention Policy,**
- **Creation of Trans Rights legislation,**
- **Addressing student food insecurity,**
- **Addressing issues with the Performance-based funding model.**

How we have got here

The proportion of revenue from the province has decreased from 53.1% in 2010/11 to 49.5% in 2019/20, whereas the proportion of revenue from tuition fees has increased from 14.2% to 21.5% in the same period. Reduced funding from the provincial government has led universities to charge higher tuition fees to students, forcing students to take higher amounts of student debt.

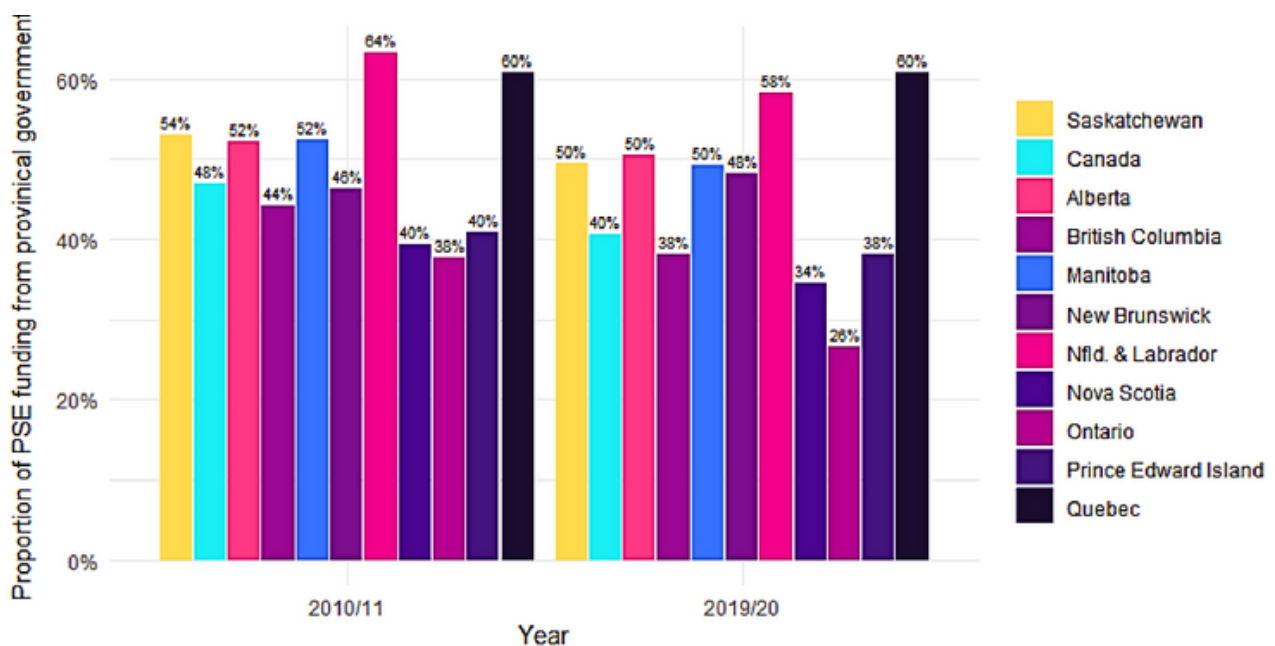


Figure 1. The proportion of PSE funding from provincial governments by province, 2010/11 and 2019/20 [i].

The level of real per-student provincial expenditure per student in Saskatchewan has declined by 12% from 2009/10 to 2019/20, entirely due to declining provincial government spending per student

[i] Statistics Canada table 37-10-0028-01 for government expenditure on colleges, table 37-10-0026-01 for government expenditure on universities.

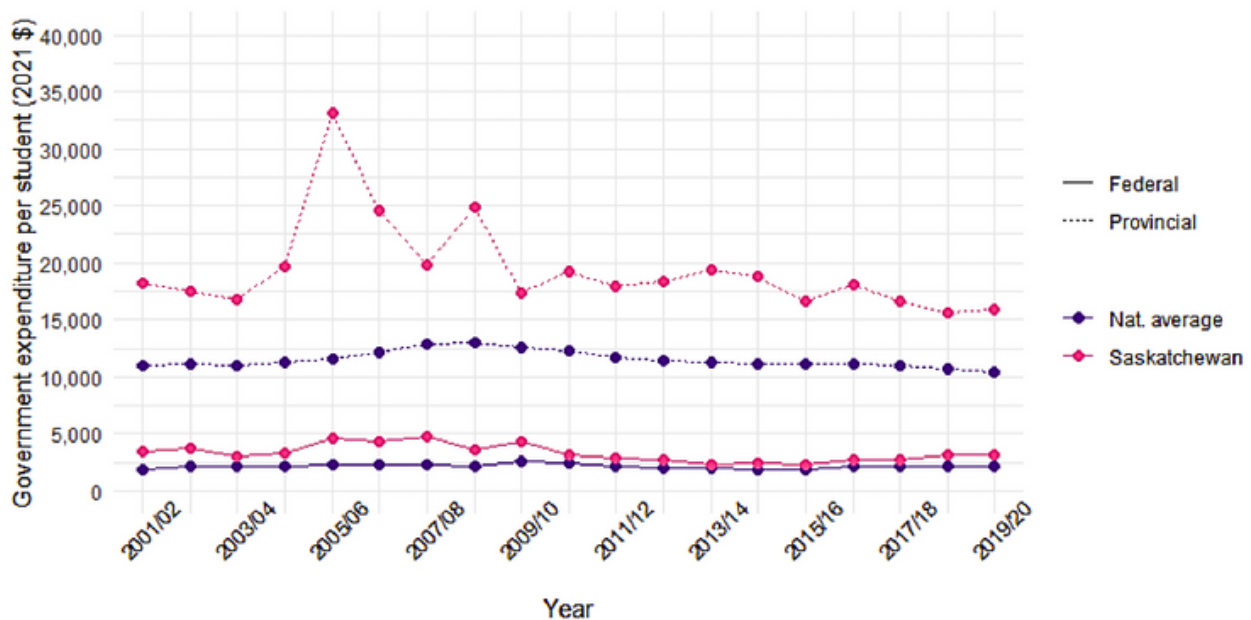


FIGURE 2. REAL PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING PER STUDENT FOR SASKATCHEWAN AND CANADA, 2001/02 TO 2019/20 [ii].

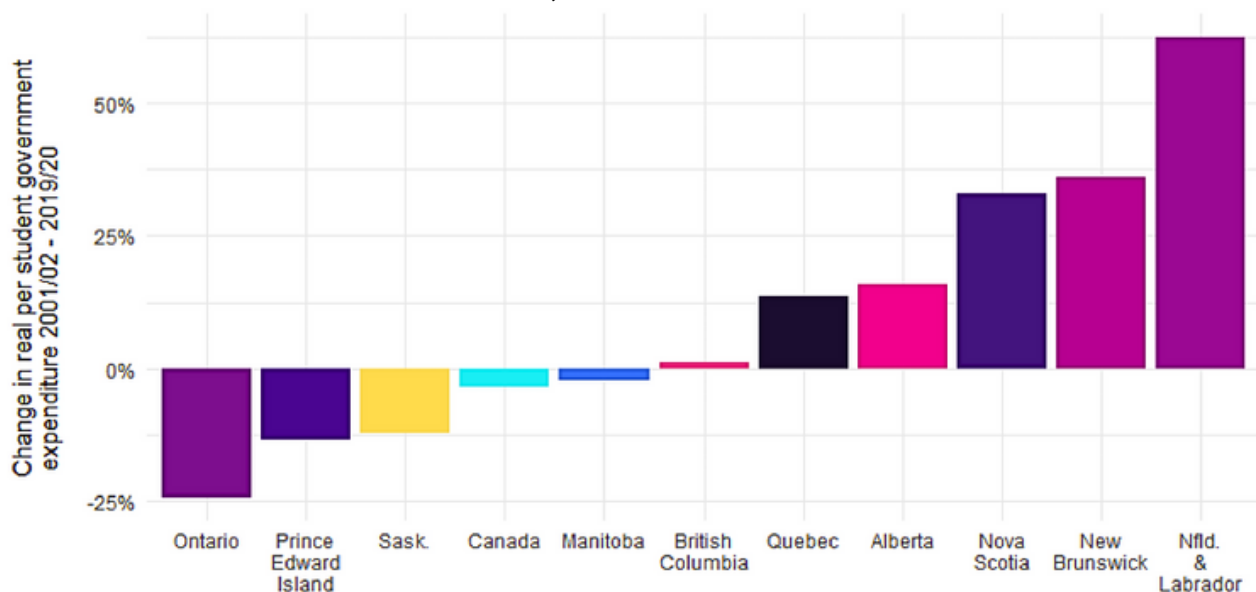


Figure 3. Change in real government spending per student by province, 2001/02 to 2019/20 [iii].

As a result of decreased government funding in the post-secondary education sector, costs have been increasingly downloaded onto students through the implementation of a user-fee model. Tuition fees, on average, have risen 1.7 percent higher than inflation rates each year across Canada. In Saskatchewan, funding to institutions has decreased by 7 percent since 2017[1].

In Saskatchewan, students pay the second highest tuition fees in the country, with average tuition fees increasing by 3.8 percent for undergraduate and 7.4 percent for graduate programs in 2021/22. In 2023/24, the average tuition fee paid by a student in Saskatchewan for undergraduate programs is \$8395, 30.4% higher than average student fees across the country.[2]

[1] <https://higheredstrategy.com/provincial-budgets-2022/>

[2] <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230906/dq230906d-eng.htm>

Student Grants and Loans

Apart from funding from the provincial government to post-secondary institutions, we have also seen a decrease in student aid. The student aid from the provincial government has not kept up with the rate of increase in tuition fees. Since 2017, we have actually seen the Saskatchewan government increasingly distribute student aid through loans instead of student grants. This has led to students in Saskatchewan accumulating an increasing amount of student debt to obtain a post-secondary degree, which has become necessary to obtain a job in this economy.

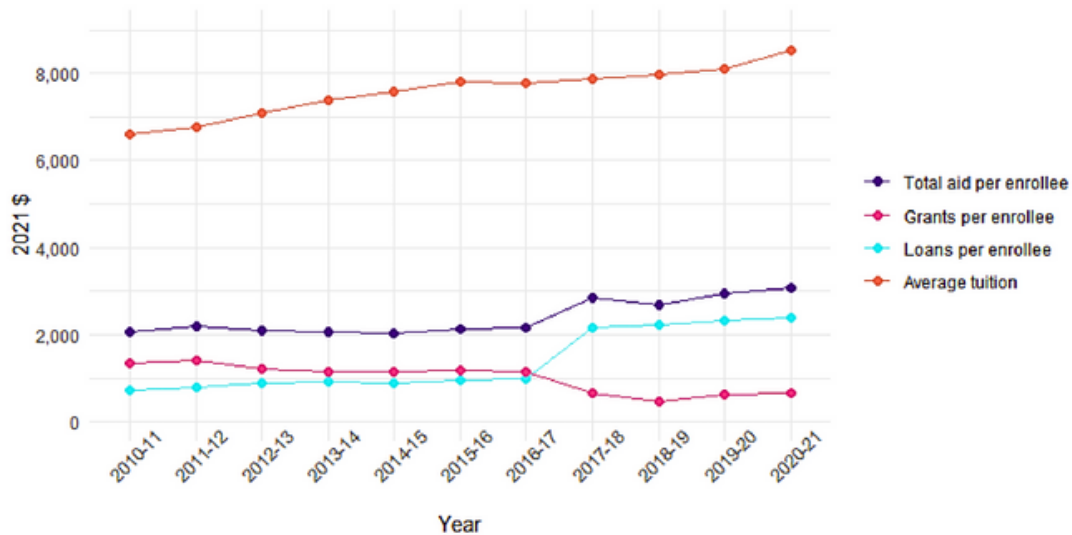


Figure 4. Real provincial post-secondary grants and loans per enrolled student and average domestic tuition fees, 2010/11 to 2020/21.[iv]

The above information contains excerpts from our report titled “Fund the Future: The State of Post-Secondary Education in Saskatchewan” released by URSU on September 12, 2023.

The full report can be accessed from:

<https://www.ursu.ca/Fund-the-future-the-state-of-sk-pse.pdf>

[ii] 37-10-0011-01 for enrollment by province. Spending per student is calculated as total (university + college) expenditure divided by the total number of students enrolled in college or university. The spike in per-student expenditure between 2005 and 2009 is due entirely to changes in enrollment numbers during this period and could reflect changing student classifications rather than a spike in per-student expenditure.

[iii] Statistics Canada table 37-10-0028-01 for government expenditure on colleges, table 37-10-0026-01 for government expenditure on universities, 37-10-0011-01 for enrollment by province. Spending per student is calculated as total (university + college) expenditure divided by total number of students enrolled in college or university.

[iv] Loan and grant information drawn from Saskatchewan Student Aid Annual Reports and Financial statements. Student enrollment numbers reflect total college and bachelor's degree enrollment from Statistics Canada Table 37-10-0011-01. Dollar values adjusted to 2021 dollars using Statistics Canada Table 18-10-0005-01



Short Titles

Relieving Student Debt

Eliminating interest on Student loans at a time of high interest rates and increased cost of living would benefit students.

Fairness for International International students

Ensure fairness for international students who contribute to our post-secondary education system and society as a whole.

Replace Student Loans with upfront, non-repayable grants for low-income students

Improve accessibility for post-secondary education to low-income families by replacing loans with upfront non-repayable grants.

Increase Scholarships, Grants, and Bursaries for Indigenous and International Students.

Honour Canada's treaty commitments on post-secondary education for Indigenous peoples.

Increased Mental Health Support

Allocate funding directly to post-secondary institutions to subsidize the upfront cost of mental health services for post-secondary students.

Funding support for Graduate students

Create dedicated scholarships and increase funding for graduate students to promote research in Saskatchewan.

Sexual Assault and Violence Prevention Policy

Create Sexual Assault and violence prevention legislation to mandate institutions to create sexual assault policies to create oversight and accountability on campuses.

Trans-rights Legislation

Create and ensure the Rights of Trans students are protected at post-secondary institutions.

Food Insecurity

Eliminate food insecurity among post-secondary students.

Performance-based Funding

The government should revoke plans to implement performance-based funding based on graduation and labour market outcomes.



Relieve student debt Elimination of student loan interest rates

Saskatchewan currently charges borrowers the highest interest rate in Canada, at prime + 2.5% for fixed interest rates and prime rate for floating interest loans. High-interest rates mean students who do not have the financial means to cover their tuition upfront will pay more for the same education than their higher-income peers. Six provinces, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland & Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, British Columbia, and Manitoba, have eliminated interest rates on the provincial portion of public student loans. Starting April 2023, the federal government permanently eliminated interest on the federal portion of student loans.

It is time for Saskatchewan to ease the burden on students by eliminating interest rates on all currently outstanding and future provincial student loans.

With inflation being so high after the pandemic, the Bank of Canada raised the prime rate to 7.2%, the highest it has ever been in over a decade. High inflation and a high-interest rate on student loans put an undue burden on students studying in Saskatchewan.

In 2015, 54% of bachelor's students in Saskatchewan graduated with debt, and 30% of students graduated with a debt of over \$25,000.00.

With the savings from eliminated interest rates, students could use this money to save and invest directly into our economy, becoming more independent and, in the long term, moving away from financial aid resources. This shift would positively impact current and future borrowers.

The University of Regina Students Union recommends the Government of Saskatchewan eliminate the interest on Saskatchewan Student loans.

Cost: \$4,853,000

Extending the Grace period for repayment of loans to One year after completion of studies.

Loan repayment has not been easy for students in previous years, especially now due to this last year and a half of extraordinary circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused an added layer of distress for students. As the pandemic continues to disrupt the job market, students have experienced severe opportunity and employment barriers.

Students' mental health has also been negatively impacted as many have lost jobs, opportunities, internships, and more.

Extending the grace period for repayment of loans to One year after completion of studies would provide the students the time needed to figure out the next steps and plan their careers. At the same time, we acknowledge that grace periods are not a time for students to ignore their debt but rather a time to prepare for financial reorganization toward repayment.

The University of Regina Students Union recommends the Government of Saskatchewan extend the grace period to one year after the completion of studies or six months after the beginning of the job, whichever is the earliest.

Cost: No additional cost to the government, as the entire amount is repaid after the grace period.

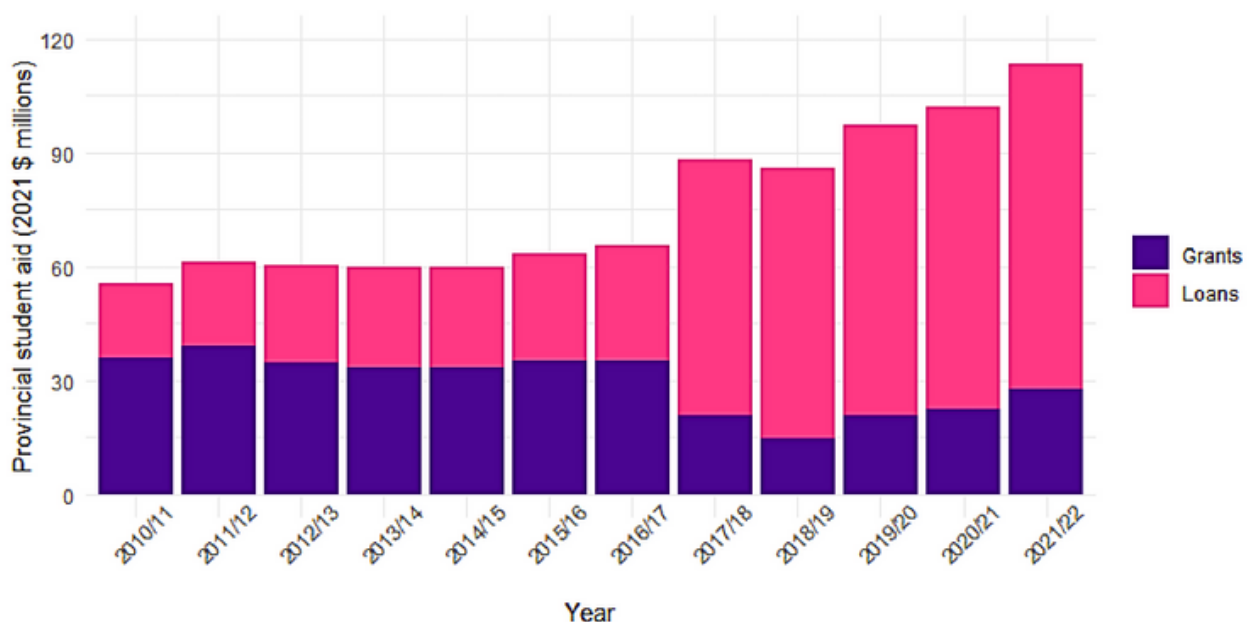


Replace Student Loans with upfront non-repayable grants for low-income students.

Accessing post-secondary education is increasingly essential to securing a good job that grows the province's economy, which has shifted from a public good to a personal investment accompanied by life-impacting debt. Rising tuition fees and the prevalence of loan-based financial assistance have pushed student debt to historic levels.

A loans-based financial assistance program further penalizes students who require a loan to cover their education costs. Due to the accrual of interest on outstanding student loans, students who need this financial assistance end up paying more for their education than those who can afford it up-front. Overall, the amount of provincial student aid has increased significantly over the past five years but has also significantly added to student debt levels.

Figure: Total value of provincial post-secondary grants and loans to Saskatchewan students, 2010/11 to 2020/21 [i].



Saskatchewan Government has introduced the Graduate Retention program, which provides non-refundable tax credits from 2015, a rebate of up to \$20,000 over seven years. While the tax credit is beneficial for students to reduce their taxes while earning, it does not provide relief for students unable to access the post-secondary program due to high tuition fees.

The University of Regina Students Union recommends the Saskatchewan Government replace Student Loans with upfront, non-repayable grants to low-income students. This would help the indigenous and marginalized groups, specifically low-income families, as it's a targeted program to benefit them.

Cost: \$15 million

[i] Saskatchewan Student Aid Fund Annual Reports.



Increase Scholarships, Grants, and Bursaries for Indigenous and International Students.

Indigenous and International students face various underlying financial challenges in their post-secondary education. While the obstacles imposed on Indigenous and International students are distinct, it is still essential to recognize that these challenges stem from institutional barriers to their identities.

The Ministry of Advanced Education is expected to increase enrolment by 60% by 2021 (from 2013) for Indigenous students[1]. Plans for a new enrollment goal for International students are expected to be released. While an increasing number of Indigenous and International students enrolled in post-secondary education is positive, students must receive adequate financial support to succeed.

There are many factors to the financial struggles of Indigenous and International students. Unemployment rates remain high after graduation among indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous students. International students face higher unemployment rates compared to domestic students.[2] Unemployment rates show a trend of economic inaccessibility for these students even after attaining degrees. Additionally, the pandemic increased barriers to job attainment for students at large[3].

The University of Regina Students Union recommends the Saskatchewan Government create special scholarships for Indigenous and International students to address the inequities and high tuition fees faced by Indigenous and International students, respectively.

The University of Regina Students Union recommends the Saskatchewan Government lobby the federal government to increase band funding for Post-secondary education, as per treaty rights, to ensure a higher number of indigenous students are able to attain post-secondary education.

- Government of Saskatchewan, “Ministry of Advanced Education - Plan for 2021-22,” Accessed November 22, 2021, <https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/api/v1/products/112414/formats/126400/download>
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, “2014 Graduate Outcomes Study Report (Revised),” Government of Saskatchewan, July 2017, <https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/api/v1/products/87415/formats/104068/download>
- Statistics Canada, “Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Postsecondary Students,” May 12, 2020, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200512/dq200512a-eng.htm>



Fairness for International Students

International students make an enormous contribution to institutions and communities, and the presence of international students in classrooms enriches the learning experience. The economic contribution to Saskatchewan is substantial, and international students spend over \$252 million annually in the province, supporting local businesses and employment [1].

On average, international students pay \$22,793.30 per year for a general arts degree in Saskatchewan, an amount close to three times more than domestic students. They are not eligible for student loans, and international students can only work 20 hours per week during their study periods, creating an overall gap in their financial sustainability. Most of these students do not qualify for the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship. Last October, the federal government of Canada removed restrictions on working hours for international students on a pilot basis until December 31, 2023. While this has been of great help to international students, the high inflation rate and increasing cost of living are putting an additional burden on international students.

The University of Regina Students Union recommends the Government of Saskatchewan work with the federal government to permanently remove the restrictions on working hours for international students.

Eliminating international differential fees for all international students will make the province a more attractive destination for talented learners from around the world. In addition, it will result in more disposable income being spent in the local economy.

The University of Regina Students Union recommends the Government of Saskatchewan mandate a cap on the increase in international student differential fees to the same level as domestic students.

Currently, 66% of International students are open to the possibility of staying in the province after graduating [2]. The Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) does not have a direct pathway for provincial nomination to permanent residency for students who have studied in Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions.

The University of Regina Students Union recommends the Government of Saskatchewan create a direct pathway for obtaining provincial nomination for permanent residency for students close to graduation, along the lines of the program offered by the Government of New Brunswick [3].

[1] Global Affairs Canada, “Assessing the Economic Impact of International Students in Canada,” 2018.

[2] Joe Garcea and Neil Hibbert, “International Students in Saskatchewan: Policies, Programs, and Perspectives,” (2014)

[3] New Brunswick Express Entry Scheme for International students



Funding support for graduate students

URSU believes the creation of a Saskatchewan Graduate Scholarship modeled after the Ontario Graduate Scholarship would aid in supporting and retaining graduate students in Saskatchewan.

A significant disincentive for graduate students to pursue their research and post-graduate education in Saskatchewan is the lack of a dedicated scholarship or bursary.

Saskatchewan should look to Ontario and its Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) [1] as a model for providing additional support to promote research and increase graduate student retention. The OGS offers funding to all full-time graduate students in Ontario, irrespective of their field of study. It is based on the funding model where the government provides 2/3 of the money and institutions contribute the remaining 1/3.

The University of Regina Students Union recommends the Government of Saskatchewan create the Saskatchewan Graduate Scholarship, modeled after the OGS. The creation of Scholarship opportunities for postgraduate students would make Saskatchewan an attractive destination for research.

Cost: \$3.5 million

While the OGS is administered through the university, The University of Regina Students Union recommends that the Saskatchewan Graduate Scholarship be directly open to students to apply, similar to Saskatchewan Student Grants, (with the exclusion of Tri-council award recipients).

[1] Ontario Graduate Scholarships (OGS)

* Scholarship for the top 10% of the graduate students to increase research at Saskatchewan universities and to attract and retain high-skilled individuals and jobs in the province.



Addressing student mental health needs

There are a variety of factors that can result in post-secondary students experiencing increased rates of mental health issues. Universities and colleges provide a setting where students can gain independence, learn life skills, and experience social and personal development. Post-secondary students have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, with social isolation, virtual learning challenges, job insecurity, and financial hardship profoundly impacting their mental health and well-being.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, more than half of Canadians aged 18-24 (61%) say their mental health has declined. Students have to work long hours and multiple jobs, in addition to studying, to pay for high tuition and increased living costs, which are detrimental to their mental health.

However, structural and financial constraints on post-secondary institutions have negatively impacted these institutions' ability to both be a supportive setting for this growth and provide necessary mental health services. The need for mental health services has far outpaced the ability of institutions to deliver them, as evidenced by growing waiting lists and restrictions on on-campus services.

The province has a role in ensuring that universities and colleges are health-promoting institutions, with the appropriate support to ensure that all students receive the help they need when they need it.

The International Association of Counseling Services cites one mental health counselor for every 1,500 students as its recommended ratio.[1]

To ensure that students have access to free, accessible on-campus mental health services when they need them, the University of Regina Students Union recommends:

Commit stable and sustainable annual funding to post-secondary institutions for on-campus mental health services and mandate University administrations to ensure they provide adequate on-campus mental health services, following the National Standard for the Post Secondary institutions, developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada [2] and the International Association of Counselling services.

To ensure this standard is upheld, the provincial government should share half the costs required to meet the standards set by the Mental Health Commission of Canada for post-secondary institutions.

The Saskatchewan Government conducts periodic consultations with students to understand their needs and experiences to ensure the mental health needs of the students are met and adequate resources are available.

Cost: \$5.5 million

[1] International Association of Counseling Services, "Statement Regarding Recommended Staff to Student Ratios," 2017.

[2] Mental health and well-being for post-secondary students - Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2020

Addressing Student Food Insecurity



An estimated 40% of post-secondary students in Canada experience food insecurity [1]. In other words, 2 in 5 university students do not have access to enough safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. Students belonging to marginalized groups (including international students, indigenous students, students in the 2SLGBTQ+ community, students who are parents, and students with disabilities) are at an even higher risk of being food insecure [2][3].

Student hunger has real consequences. Without adequate and nutritious food, students are more likely to experience illness, fatigue, and burnout, increasing the barriers to academic success [1]. People who experience food insecurity are also more likely to develop chronic diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and mental health disorders like depression and anxiety [4].

The demand for food security services on campus has far exceeded the ability of relevant programs to keep up. For example, the URSU Cares Pantry is a free biweekly service that URSU has provided since 2016. The pantry is currently able to serve 140 students and is operating at capacity. Given the estimated level of food insecurity on campus, the current services are insufficient to address student food insecurity. Until some financial pressures are relieved from post-secondary students through income support and reduced fees, students will continue to rely on non-governmental organizations and programs to feed themselves and their dependents.

The University of Regina Students' Union recommends the Government of Saskatchewan evaluate the adequacy of existing supports and establish a target for eliminating food insecurity among post-secondary students.

"As an international student, I didn't come here with much. Every dollar went to pay for school, and they often don't have any leftovers for food."

"Rising food prices and low minimum wage have made it really hard. The money we earn is not enough."

"[I'm] spreading out meals, eating less at each meal to extend how long an item lasts for."

[1] Promoting Food Security In Higher Education: Virtual Conference. (March 2021). Promoting Food Secure Campuses: Principles to Guide and Inspire Action on Student Food Insecurity. Retrieved from: www.mealexchange.com/resources

[2] Olason, C., Engler-Stringer, R., Vatanparast, H., & Hanoski, R. (2018). Student food insecurity: Examining barriers to higher education at the University of Saskatchewan. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 13(1), 19-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19320248.2017.1393365>

[3] Bottorff, J. L., Hamilton, C., Huisken, A., & Taylor, D. (2020). Correlates of Food Insecurity Among Undergraduate Students. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* (1975), 50(2), 15-23. <https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.v50i2.188699>

[4] PROOF. What are the implications of food insecurity for health and health care? PROOF | Food Insecurity and Policy Research. <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/what-are-the-implications-of-food-insecurity-for-health-and-health-care/>

[5] PROOF. What can be done to reduce food insecurity in Canada? PROOF | Food Insecurity and Policy Research. <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/what-can-be-done-to-reduce-food-insecurity-in-canada/>



Sexual Assault and Violence Prevention Policy

Increasingly high rates of sexual violence across Canada remain an ongoing issue. The rates of sexual violence in Saskatchewan are higher than provincial averages across the nation [1]. Individuals with minority identities are more likely to experience acts of sexual violence based on their marginalized identities relating to race, gender, disability, etc.

Sexual violence can also impact anyone regardless of gender, including 4% of men in post-secondary education who have experienced sexual violence [2]. These acts of violence can include assault, harassment, and abuse. The impacts can vary within the individual experience and can create trauma and detrimental harm to students' lives. Survivors may require ongoing physical and mental health support. In university spaces where students come to learn and gain knowledge, students should not be faced with a lack of security, safety, and the right to education.

Sexual violence remains highly underreported in post-secondary institutions due to fear of repercussions, victim blaming, and lack of support. Many of the resources universities have to rely on surrounding sexual violence prevention are based on their policies to support students and connect with local organizations for added help.

About 3/4 of post-secondary students in Canada see or experience sexual violence in post-secondary contexts [3]. Saskatchewan does not currently have policies surrounding preventive measures for sexual violence in post-secondary institutions [4].

The University of Regina Students Union (URSU) calls on the Saskatchewan Government to increase funding for sexual health education on campus. URSU also calls for the Saskatchewan Government to provide funding and mandate bystander training for staff in post-secondary institutions.

The University of Regina Students Union (URSU) calls on the Saskatchewan Government to create Sexual Assault and Violence Prevention Legislation. The Saskatchewan Sexual Assault and Violence Prevention Legislation should mandate that all University Sexual Assault policies follow the 11 minimum standards [5] listed below as the Students for Consent Culture Canada recommended.

Cost: \$865,000

[1] Mandy Vocke, "Sexual violence a prevalent issue in Saskatchewan: researchers," April 30, 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6885493/sexual-violence-issue-saskatchewan-researchers/>

[2] Statistics Canada, "One in ten women students sexually assaulted in a postsecondary setting," September 14, 2020, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200914/dq200914a-eng.htm>

[3] Marta Burczycka, "Students' experiences of unwanted sexualized behaviors and sexual assault at postsecondary schools in the Canadian provinces, 2019," September 14, 2020, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00005-eng.htm>

[4] Rebecca Akong, "Campus Sexual Violence Support & Prevention Offices, Part 1/4: Prairies Edition," November 30, 2020, <https://www.couragetoact.ca/blog/csvspo-prairies>

[5] <https://www.sfcccanada.org/provincial>





Trans Rights Legislation

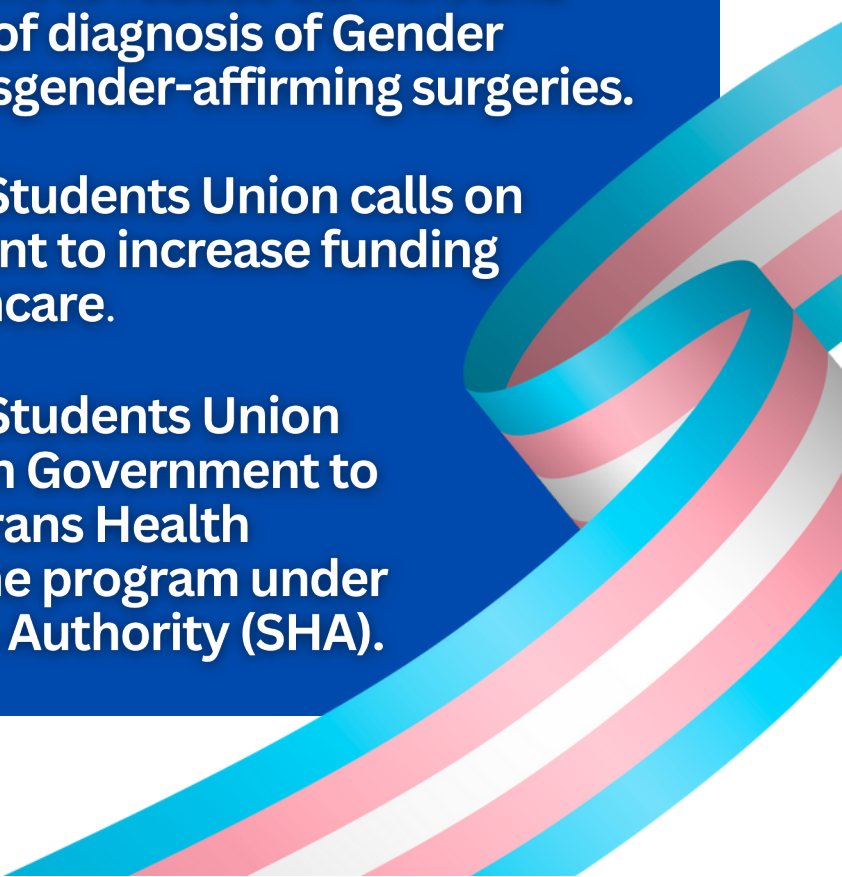
Many students face harassment and discrimination at school and other learning environments. Transgender and gender non-conforming students are particularly vulnerable to mistreatment from fellow students, school staff, and school administrators in school districts. The rights of transgender students aren't always respected.

Saskatchewan is one of the only provinces requiring a medical diagnosis for Gender Dysphoria. Currently, the waiting time to receive such a diagnosis is very long as there is a distinct lack of trans-affirming healthcare providers, which incurs barriers to receiving this diagnosis in the entire province.

The University of Regina Students Union calls on the Saskatchewan Government to reduce barriers and remove the requirement of diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria to access Transgender-affirming surgeries.

The University of Regina Students Union calls on Saskatchewan Government to increase funding for Trans-affirming healthcare.

The University of Regina Students Union calls on the Saskatchewan Government to provide funding for the Trans Health Navigators and include the program under the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA).



The University of Regina Students Union calls on the Saskatchewan Government to create and ensure the Rights of Trans students are protected at post-secondary institutions.

- **The right to an educational environment free from discrimination.**
- **The right to an educational environment free from harassment because the students identify as trans.**
- **The right to an environment free from violence, verbal abuse, threats, and bullying.**
- **The right to be addressed by the name and pronouns they use, regardless of their legal name or sex.**
- **The right to wear clothing that corresponds with their gender expression.**
- **The right to play on sports teams that correspond with their gender identity.**
- **The right to use bathrooms and locker rooms corresponds with their gender identity. Suppose their gender identity is not binary (male or female). In that case, they can choose the changing rooms, bathrooms, classes, and pronouns that are safest for them, including the use of the facilities for people with disabilities, if they are the only gender-neutral spaces available.**
- **The right to have their trans identity status treated with the same degree of privacy as medical information.**





Performance Based Funding

Provincial governments from across Canada, starting with Ontario and Alberta, have introduced Performance-based funding (PBF) for Universities based on “performance” based on the labor market, industry, and economic outcomes such as “Graduate employment earnings,” “Graduate employment rate in a related field,” and “Research funding from industry sources,” etc. Manitoba is set to follow suit, while New Brunswick and Quebec are openly considering implementing the same.

The Saskatchewan Government published Ministry of Advanced Education Plans for 2022-23[1], which indicated the Saskatchewan Government is moving in the direction of introducing various performance measures such as:

- Annual Number of Students in Credentialed Programs
- Number of Credentials Awarded / Graduation rate
- Post-secondary Educational Attainment of the Population Aged 15 Years and Over
- Educational Attainment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Populations Aged 15 Years and Over by Credential
- Number of Saskatchewan Students Studying Abroad
- Employment Rate by Credential
- Quality of Educational Experience
- Relatedness of Program to Current Job
- Expenditure to Revenue Comparison
- Reliance on Revenue Source Comparison

In the U.S., where versions of PBF are used in 30 states, it has not increased graduation rates as intended. A December 2020 systematic analysis [3] that reviewed 20 years of previous reports concluded that PBF led to either no impact or a modest increase in retention and graduation rates in the United States. Performance-based funding has also led to access and equity issues for disadvantaged students, worsened the situation of under-resourced schools, and triggered schools to game the system.[4]

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education's "Outcomes-based funding" Presentation shows that state appropriations for PSE decreased by close to 40 percent while students' share of funding for PSE increased by 70 percent [10].

The University of Regina Students Union believes using labour market outcomes such as the Annual Number of Students in Credentialed Programs, Number of Credentials Awarded / Graduation rate, Employment Rate by Credential, and Relatedness of Program to Current Job, to fund universities would increase the barriers faced by students to access post-secondary education.

[1]<https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/api/v1/products/117223/formats/134513/download>

[2]<https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/opinion-sask-on-dangerous-path-to-performance-based-post-secondary-funding/ar-AAV4UZs>

[3]<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0162373720953128>

[4]<https://www.universityaffairs.ca/news/nes-article/performance-based-funding-comes-to-the-canadian-postsecondary-sector/>

[5] <https://higheredstrategy.com/ontarios-pbf-system-much-ado-about-nothing/>

[6]<https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/06/14/1026148/ai-big-tech-timnit-gebru-paper-ethics/>

[7] <https://academicmatters.ca/the-role-of-governments-in-corporatizing-canadian-universities/>

[8]<https://www.heritage.org/education/commentary/administrative-bloat-universities-raises-costs-without-helping-students>

[9] <https://higheredstrategy.com/administrative-bloat/>

[10] Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education (2015). Outcomes Based Funding. December 23. Received through Access to Information Request AE05/21G



Alternative Performance Measures

The University of Regina Students Union believes using a different set of performance measures focused on improving access and equity for disadvantaged groups would increase the quality of education and research at post-secondary institutions. The University of Regina Students Union believes the Saskatchewan Government should instead use performance measures such as:

- Tenured Faculty/Student ratio
- Amount of Scholarships provided or number of first-generation students or low-income students
- Tenured faculty vs Contract faculty ratio
- Academic budget vs administrative budget
- EDI Outcomes - Gender/ Race/ Ethnicity / Language / Age, etc.
- Grad Students/Undergrad students ratio

URSU believes using measures such as “Tenured Faculty/Student ratio” and “Tenured faculty vs Contract faculty ratio” would increase the quality of faculty hired at institutions and reduce the dependency on Universities' use of precarious Contract faculty.

URSU believes the use of measures such as the number of scholarships provided or the number of first-generation students or low-income students, and EDI outcomes would lead to a reduction in barriers to access for marginalized groups and students from low-income families.

Canadian universities have increasingly turned to private sources of financial support. They have also devoted a significant share of institutional resources to external relations (such as fundraising and expansion of corporate-university partnerships). The result has been more and more career administrators hired outside of the university to govern with a corporate, managerial approach.[7]

URSU believes the use of performance measures such as the Ratio of Academic budget vs Administrative budget by the Saskatchewan Government would reduce the so-called “administrative bloat” [8][9] and refocus the university’s spending towards academic purposes.

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1. Cost of eliminating interest on provincial student loans in Saskatchewan

The estimated total cost of this policy to the Government of Saskatchewan would be \$4,853,000 per year.

Policy Design & Assumptions

- The cost of eliminating interest rates on provincial student loans in Saskatchewan is equivalent to the amount of revenue the province generates from student loan interest rate payments annually.
- In 2022, the Saskatchewan government generated \$5,191,000 (\$5.2 million) from interest on student loans, but from this you need to subtract \$370,000 in loans written off + space for rounding error.
 - Line item found on page 15 of the 2021-22 annual report:
<https://pubsaskdev.blob.core.windows.net/pubsaskprod/136264/SAF%252BAnnual%252BReport%252B2021-22.pdf>

2. Cost of extending the grace period for repayment of provincial student loans after completion of studies to one year

This would be revenue neutral for the Government of Saskatchewan as the total sum of the loan would still be paid back with only a small deferral of payments from previous students just starting their payment plan.

Policy Design & Assumptions

- We assume that the entire loan is interest-free, therefore an extension in the grace period only delays the first payment, but in the end, repays the same amount (the total value of their loan).
- We cannot determine how much revenue would be delayed by implementing this because we do not have the distribution of how far along students in their payment plans are.
- If the loan is not interest-free, generally interest is charged during the grace period, in which case the student repays a higher total amount than if there was no grace period. If the loan does not accrue interest during the grace period, the student would repay the same amount as if there was no grace period, unless they were able to pay off part of the loan during the grace period.

3. Cost of replacing student loans with grants for low-income students

The estimated total cost of replacing student loans with grants for low-income students would be \$14,971,014.

Policy Design & Assumptions:

- There is not enough data available to know the total amount of provincial loans paid out to low-income students in Saskatchewan. What we do know is:
 - i. In 2021-11, the Saskatchewan Student Aid Fund disbursed over \$102.7 million, of which over \$17.3 million were grants and \$85.4 million were loans, to 20,847 students.
 - <https://pubsaskdev.blob.core.windows.net/pubsaskprod/136264/SAF%252BAnnual%252BReport%252B2021-22.pdf>
 - ii. Low-income students in “One Year and Graduate Programs” receive from the provincial government are eligible for a \$30 grant and \$168 loan, weekly. We assume the number of students receiving these funding amounts is equivalent to the number of graduate students, including international students.
 - <https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/#/products/117742>
 - iii. Low-income students in “Multiple Year Certificate, Diploma or Undergraduate Programs” receive \$30 in grant funding and \$110 in loan funding from the provincial government, weekly. We assume the number of students receiving this amount is equivalent to the number of undergraduate students, including international students.
- b. Assuming low-income status is equally distributed between full-time undergraduate and graduate students, 3,438 undergraduate and 425 graduate students would see their loan replaced with a grant.
 - i. We estimate there are 28,410 full-time undergraduate students using the ratio of full-time to part-time students from University of Regina and applying it to University of Saskatchewan. We estimate there are 3,509 full-time graduate students using the same logic.
 - ii. Data from University of Regina 2022,
<https://www.uregina.ca/oir/assets/statistics/headcounts/2022-fall-FTE-census-headcounts.pdf>
 - iii. Data from University of Saskatchewan 2022-23,
<https://leadership.usask.ca/documents/about/reporting/academic-year-snapshot.pdf>
- c. The student aid annual fund report states that low-income students receiving the \$30/week grant receive \$1000 per week. Therefore, we assume that all students receive 33.3 weeks' worth of funding.
- d. Based on a study by Fritz & Tricia van Rhijn (2019), 12.1% of all PSE students in SK are low-income based on the after-tax LICO, which calculates low-income status at the household level by comparing family-level expenditure on necessities to total income.¹
<https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cjnse/article/view/68658>

[1] In this study, the total number of PSE students is higher than the numbers reported by Statistics Canada. We continue to use the numbers provided by Statistics Canada (Table 37-10-0086-01) to calculate the number of PSE students.

4. Cost of creating a SK Graduate Scholarship program akin to Ontario's OGS

The total cost for the Government of Saskatchewan to introduce a Saskatchewan Graduate Scholarship modelled after the Ontario Graduate Scholarship is estimated to be \$3,510,000.

Policy Design & Assumptions:

- The scholarship would be available to the top 10% of full-time graduate students. In total, we estimate there are 3,509 full-time graduate students in Saskatchewan. 351 students would be available for the scholarship.
- Using data from the latest year for which data is available, there were 2,336 graduate students and 1,195 (51%) were full-time at University of Regina. Assuming the same proportion of full-time students at University of Saskatchewan, there would be 2,314 full-time students.
 - Data from University of Regina 2022, <https://www.uregina.ca/oir/assets/statistics/headcounts/2022-fall-FTE-census-headcounts.pdf>
 - Data from University of Saskatchewan 2022-23, <https://leadership.usask.ca/documents/about/reporting/academic-year-snapshot.pdf>
 - At University of Toronto, 3.75% of domestic students and 0.3% of international students received OGS. We raised the threshold to 10% based on feedback from URSU.
- MA students are only eligible for OSG for two years and PhD students for four. Because we do not know which year of study graduate PSE students are currently enrolled in, we could not take that into consideration the number of scholarships awarded annually to incoming students compared to students already enrolled still receiving the scholarship.
- We assume that each recipient will receive the maximum allowable amount of \$15,000, assuming they are enrolled for three terms per year.
- The total amount of money paid out to students would be \$5,265,000, however, as per the funding model of OGS, the provincial government would only cover 2/3 of the funding and the rest would be covered by the universities.
- Information about OGS can be found here:
 - General information: <https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/AZListofAid/PRDR019245.html>
 - ii. How OGS operates at University of Toronto: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/wpcontent/uploads/sites/253/2022/11/OGS-Info-Session-Fall2022-Students.pdf>; and data on number of students: <https://www.utoronto.ca/about-u-of-t/quick-facts>

5. Cost of addressing student mental health needs

The estimated total cost to implement these policies would be \$5,523,060.

- \$4,273,060 to hire 55 mental health professionals to serve postsecondary students in Universities and Colleges across Saskatchewan.
 - 35 mental health counsellors (\$56,880/year)
 - 6 social workers (\$76,000/year)
 - 6 psychologists (\$86,540/year)
 - 6 nurses (\$90,000/year)
 - 2 psychiatrists (\$273,510/year)
 - Additional \$220,000 to facilitate hiring process (\$4,000/hire)
 - Salaries used are drawn from this database of average salaries in Saskatchewan, with the exception of psychiatrist salaries that are the median for Canada.
- b. \$25,000 per institution to conduct audits of existing mental health services and gaps.
 - To estimate the total cost, we assume that the University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan will both conduct audits.
 - This estimate is based off the cost the audit conducted at Algonquin College (21,000 students) conducted with \$25,000.
<https://www.algonquincollege.com/advancement/2021/04/algonquin-college-receives-25000-grant-from-bell-lets-talk-post-secondary-fund/>
- c. \$200,000 allocated to hiring human right support roles.
 - i. 1 equity coordinator (\$75,000/year)
 - ii. 1 diversity wellness coordinator (\$75,000/year)
 - iii. Additional funding used to facilitate hiring process.
 - iv. These roles could be integrated with the proposed support services for trans students and sexual violence and prevention.
- d. \$500,000 to create non-carceral crisis response teams active on campuses and surrounding student housing.
 - We assume University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan would both implement crisis response teams.
 - We define a non-carceral crisis response team as one that does not include members of the police service or campus security, instead utilizing crisis support workers and community members to de-escalate situations without the threat of violence or restraint.
 - These numbers are inspired by other similar projects and grants • Vivic Research's report: Alternatives for a Safer Ottawa: Non-Police Mental Health Crisis Response <https://vivicresearch.ca/PDFS/BH-Final-Strategy.pdf>
 - Mac crisis response team including \$100,000 for mental health nurse <https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/new-student-urgent-response-team-supports-students-in-distress/>
 - University of Waterloo's IMPACT program <https://wellness.uoguelph.ca/services/counselling/integrated-mobile-police-and-crisis-team-impact>
- Revenue-neutral recommendation to offer greater academic flexibility to students (e.g., flexible deadlines, no mandatory sick notes, hybrid options)
 - May potentially require professional development for staff to emphasize value and strategies for implementation.

6. Cost of addressing sexual assault and violence.

The estimated total cost to implement the following sexual assault and violence prevention policies would be \$864,500.

- **\$680,000 to create an office dedicated to sexual violence supports and education for each the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina (\$340,000 per large institution).**
 - The cost is equivalent to the salaries of 4 staff (compensated 76k/year) who offer bystander intervention trainings and sexual violence support.
 - This policy is informed by the one-stop office implemented at Simon Fraser University for \$340,000. SFU currently has just under 40,000 students enrolled so the cost can be scaled for smaller institutions.
 - We assume that the sexual violence office would take on more roles particularly student training therefore we did not scale the cost to be equivalent per student.
- **\$92,250 for the creation/maintenance of designated reporting process for post secondary institutions across the province.**
 - In 2022 the BC government gave \$500,000 to post-secondary institutions to “support and enhance sexualized violence reporting systems”.
 - <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022AEST0063-001352>
 - Scaled for the number of students in the province, an equivalent amount for Saskatchewan would be \$92,250.
- **\$92,250 for the creation of anti-violence training series for students and staff.**
 - In 2022 the BC government gave \$500,000 to post-secondary institutions to “improve and expand the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Training Series to address gaps when it comes to the safety of students, specifically Indigenous students, graduate students and international students, and sexualized violence through digital communications.”
<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022AEST0063-001352>
 - Scaled for the number of students in the province, an equivalent amount for Saskatchewan would be \$92,250.
 - The education series produced by this funding in BC can be found here: <https://bccampus.ca/projects/intersectional-sexualized-violence-project/preventing-sexual-violence/>

7. Cost of creating trans rights legislation

For this policy, we do not estimate the total cost as it depends on the number of bathrooms and institutions that would require funding for retrofits.

- **\$100,000 to hire 1 trans inclusion coordinator.**
 - **The cost includes salary and the cost of hiring, based on University of Waterloo's equity specialists whose salaries range between \$63,000 and \$94,000.**
 - **This role would facilitate trans inclusion education workshops for staff and students.**
- **\$5000/bathroom for a complete retrofit to make gender neutral, including floor to ceiling dividers**
 - **The cost is only \$800/bathroom for only changing signage and way-finding.**
- **\$25,000 for digital infrastructure retrofits to ensure that learning management systems and school administrative software is equipped to allow for accessible and consistent student name and gender changes.**

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University of Regina
STUDENTS' UNION