International Students

Expiry: April 30, 2027

1. Preamble

In recent years, there has been a growing focus by the Government of Alberta and the University of Alberta to attract more International students. The cultural, economic, and academic contributions by International students enhances our campus experience, Alberta's economy and the overall quality of the student experience at the University of Alberta. Yet despite these
significant contributions, International students still face ongoing challenges that create detriments to their learning, social and academic experience at University. The purpose of this political policy is to highlight the existing challenges faced by International students and the advocacy steps that can be undertaken by the University of Alberta's Students' Union to ensure that International students receive an accessible, affordable and welcoming post-secondary education experience.

2. Definitions

1. **CBIE:** Canadian Bureau for International Education [1]
2. **International Differential Fee:** Difference between domestic and International student tuition fees. [2]
3. **Internationalization**: In higher education, this is the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global
dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education. [3]
4. **Student Loans:** Loan designed to help students pay for postsecondary education and the associated fees, such as
tuition, books and supplies. [4]
5. **Bursaries:** Non-repayable awards allocated on the basis of financial need and without undue emphasis on academic
standing. [5]
6. **Scholarships:** Non-repayable awards given to recognize high level of academic achievement. [6]
7. **Renewable Scholarships:** The scholarship will be awarded for every year of college if you meet the scholarship's
requirements. [7]

3. Facts

1. International students contribute to the diversity and culture of our campus
   - The University of Alberta received international students from 102 countries of citizenship in 2020/21; this represents a decrease from 106 countries in 2019/20 [8]
   - In 2020-21 14.5 per cent of total undergraduate enrolment, i.e. 4,940 students, were International students. China (61.3% of all International students), India (10.7%), and Nigeria (3.7%) contributed to becoming the top citizenship countries among International students, together making up 75.7 per cent of all International students. [9]
2. In 2020-21 International undergraduate students paid 4.5x more in tuition than domestic students. [10]
3. The transfer credit system plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of International students' education at the University of Alberta.
4. "Top three reasons International students choose Canada: [11]
   - The perceived quality of the Canadian education system
   - Canada's perceived reputation as a tolerant and non-discriminatory society
   - Canada's perceived reputation as a safe country"
5. There were 530,540 International students in Canada at all levels of study in 2020, representing a 135% increase since 2010, and a 17% decrease over the previous year. [12]
6. According to the Economic Impact Of International Education In Canada - 2020 International students spent $22.3 billion on accommodation, tuition, and discretionary spending in 2018. [13]

7. The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) 2018 International Student Survey (ISS) indicated that 60% of International students intend to apply for permanent residency. [14]
    - In Canada, one-quarter of International students who arrived in the 1990s and 2000s transitioned into permanent residency within 10 years of obtaining their first study permit. [15]
    - The rate of International students transitioning from temporary to permanent resident status in the past decade has not kept up with the pace of International student enrollment in Canadian post-secondary institutions. [16]
8. International students are required to meet English Language Requirements in order to be admitted to the University of Alberta. [17]
9. The associated consequences of charges under both the Code of Student Behaviour and the Code of Applicant Behaviour may be more severe for International students, who rely on a student visa to remain in Canada.
10. As of 2021, International students are disproportionately affected by food insecurity and disproportionately access the Campus Food Bank services. [18]
11. International students do not have access to Government of Alberta student loans. [19]
12. In 2020-21, 1,596 International students received financial aid. [20]
13. There has been an increase in the number of International students relying on need-based aid over the last three years. [21]
14. There is still a disparity in the amount of need-based aid versus merit-based aid for International students. [22]
15. The average tuition for International undergraduate students nationally was $33,623 a 4.9% increase last year and five times more than the average tuition for Canadian undergraduate students. [23]
16. The rise of tuition fees for both domestic and International students in recent decades has also raised concerns that International students are being used to compensate for funding gaps in provincial post-secondary grants. [24][25]
17. The Government of Alberta's Tuition and Fees regulation provides flexibility for institutions' Board of Governors to set tuition for international students, however, students must be guaranteed their tuition rates as long as the student remains in their programs. [26]
18. Aside from Entrance Scholarships, international students do not receive any other renewable Scholarships.
19. Employed and self-employed individuals affected by COVID-19, who were eligible, received $2,000 (for a 4 week period equivalent to $500 a week) as financial support-The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). [27]
    - Most International students in their first or second year of program were ineligible for this benefit as they did not meet the criteria of income being at least $5,000 in 2019 or in the 12 months prior to the date of their application. [28]
    - International students were also not eligible to apply for the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) unless they identified as a protected person. [29]
20. Full-time International students pursuing a post-secondary program are permitted to work off-campus for up to 20 hours per week and full-time during scheduled breaks under certain requirements. [30]
    - Any violation of this condition can result in severe consequences, even resulting in loss of student status.
21. International students often report culture shock, language barriers, difficulty making friends, face discrimination as well all inadequate transition into their new environment. [31]
22. International students also express frustration navigating immigration services such as: Visa applications, applying for work permits and immigrating with their spouses or family members. [32]
23. International students are required to provide proof of financial capacity to receive their Study Visa. [33] However, this capacity may change due to unforeseen circumstances, like job loss, death in the family etc., over their university career.

4. Resolutions

1. The Students' Union shall advocate for accessible, equitable, affordable, and predictable post-secondary education for International students at the University of Alberta.

2. The Students' Union shall advocate for the provision of culturally sensitive faculty advisors; administrative staff; mental health providers; etc.

3. The Students' Union shall work with the University of Alberta International to ensure that all International students intending to apply for permanent residency have access to information and other resources to assist them in the process.

4. The Students' Union shall advocate for the provision of intercultural communication training for Academic and Non-academic staff at the University of Alberta.

5. The Students' Union shall advocate for equitable practices for charges under both the Code of Student Behavior and the Code of Applicant Behavior for both domestic and International students.

6. The Students' Union shall advocate for the University of Alberta to provide clear and transparent transfer credit processes at the institutional, provincial, national, and international levels.

7. The Students' Union shall advocate that the University of Alberta provides adequate information and resources to inform international students about their tuition and any subsequent changes to tuition or non-academic fees.

8. The Students' Union shall advocate for the University of Alberta to create a fair balance between the distribution of international financial aid between the merit and need-based aid, and increase renewable scholarships available to international students. Aid should include, but not be excluded to such funding as scholarships, bursaries, and awards. Need-based aid need to be increased to better support current students.

9. The Students' Union shall not support any increases in English language requirements without consulting affected stakeholder groups. This includes but is not limited to the International Students'Association (ISA).

10. The Students' Union shall advocate for the federal government to raise the cap on student aid available for International students.

11. The Students' Union shall advocate that the provincial government begin providing Student Financial Aid to international students in the form of student loans, bursaries, scholarships, and/or awards.

12. The Students' Union shall advocate that the provincial government create international student-specific permanent residency streams within the Alberta Immigration Nomination Program.

13. The Students' Union shall advocate to the federal government for more funding for Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to address and process study permits.

14. The Students' Union shall advocate that the University of Alberta provide trauma-informed support services available to accommodate the needs of those impacted by complex international issues and climates.

15. The Students' Union shall work with the University to improve communication and transparency of the use of International tuition fees to International students.

16. The Students' Union shall work with the University of Alberta International and the International Students'Association (ISA) to ensure the continued provision of adequate transition resources including but not limited to information on Canadian culture,
language, etc to incoming International students.

17. The Students' Union shall work with the University of Alberta International to ensure incoming International students continue to receive adequate information and support in navigating immigration issues.

18. The Students' Union shall advocate to the Federal government for the
    a) Expansion of financial aid supports to international students;

b) Elimination of the need for international students to apply for a work permit for co-ops, internships and practicums;
c) Expansion of the eligibility criteria of the Canada Summer Jobs Program to international students.

19. The Students' Union shall promote events and holidays celebrated across different cultures and countries via different communication media.

20. The Students' Union shall work to conduct surveys and release data concerning the International student community to better understand their needs.

21. The Students' Union shall work with International Students'Association (ISA) and other regional student groups at the university to:
a) Enhance the accessibility of SU programs and services to International students including but not limited to:
i) Language
ii) Space
b) Better support International students during their degree on matters pertaining to student success.

23. The Students' Union shall consult the International Students'Association (ISA) on any internationally focussed student matter that is not accounted for in this policy.

24. The Students' Union shall empower the International Students'Association (ISA) in its advocacy for the interests of the international students.

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