Tuition

Expires: April 30, 2028

1. Preamble

The Students' Union believes that the Government of Alberta has the duty to fund the cost of a post-secondary education system that has the capacity for all eligible individuals to participate given the increased importance of an educated populace and the growing demands of an emerging knowledge economy.

2. Facts

1. According to the Tuition and Fees Regulation, tuition is defined as fees for instruction for courses that are part of approved programs, fees to be paid by a student to the institution for materials and services that facilitate instruction for
   courses referred to in subclause (ii) or that facilitate classroom instruction referred to in subclause (iii),[1]
   a. Tuition covers covers all expenses related to instruction at the university, including:
      i. Instructor salaries
      ii. Creation and maintenance of classrooms
      iii. Creation and maintenance of study spaces
      iv. Supplies related to instruction that are consumed during instruction and not retained by the student (materials owned or leased by student are covered by other fees)
      v. Utilities
      vi. Maintenance of research enterprise that supports instruction libraries.
2. In 2018, the Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA) was amended to include:
   a. Giving the Minister of Advanced Education (or equivalent) the ability to freeze domestic tuition;
   b. A cap on domestic tuition to not exceed the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation across a post-secondary institution, not exceeding a 10% increase per program;
   c. A mandate that post-secondary institutions must communicate the entire sum of a degree to an international student when they begin studies;
   d. An administration and the Students' Union must present a joint submission in order to apply for approval of an exceptional tuition increase to a faculty or program.
3. In Budget 2022, the Government of Alberta capped tuition to CPI for the 2023/24 school year.[2] This meant tuition would be able to increase by 5.5% for that school year. In Budget 2023, the Government announced its intention to cap tuition to 2% starting 2024/25 school year.[3]
4. The high and unpredictable costs of post-secondary education are barriers to students.[4]
   a. From a Perks survey, the vast majority (e.g. 91% of students
      living alone) make do with a cost of living lower than the Canadian poverty line.
   b. In a survey about cost of living, students commonly reported that a reduced cost of education would help them maintain their lifestyles.
   c. From a Perks survey, One-quarter of all respondents (24%) anticipated having $30,000 or more of student debt upon graduation; one-third (34%) anticipated $20,000 or more.
5. International tuition is consistently being increased beyond the cost of a degree due to a greater reliance on revenues from international students.[5]
6. Tuition proposals are approved and are at the sole discretion of the Board of Governors. The Students' Union has historically fought against unjustified and unaffordable tuition increases. However, there are cases when students have agreed to approve proposals to increase tuition.[6]
7. At present, the price and content of in person and remote courses are similar. There also exists a price difference in similar courses delivered in different faculties.[7]
   a. Students have voiced concerns around this price similarity for the quality of education they are receiving.

3. Resolutions

1. The Students' Union will work towards a reduction of any tuition increase at the University of Alberta.

2. The Students' Union shall advocate for a tuition policy that:
    a. Protects tuition from increasing due to fluctuations in funding grants to the University from the government;
    b. Ensures tuition levels are predictable for domestic and international students;
    c. Has as its primary indicator of affordability the ability of students to pay without having to accrue the burden of debt;
    d. Provides for the fact that tuition is only one of the costs of pursuing a post- secondary education; and
    e. Ensures that no student will ever be denied the opportunity to pursue post- secondary . education because of their inability to pay.
3. The Student's Union will advocate for the costs that students pay in tuition, be demonstrated in a transparent way by the
   University of Alberta.
    a. The Students' Union will advocate for transparency in tuition cost changes. Further, it will advocate for publicly available information in language tailored to be easily comprehensible for students.
4. The Students' Union shall advocate that the Government of Alberta legislate tuition policies that:
    a. Requires post-secondary institutions to provide to the Board of Governors of the institution, the Auditor General of Alberta and the Minister of Advanced Education (or equivalent) a detailed and verifiably transparent public plan on how additional tuition revenues will be spent.
    b. Is reflective of an open and transparent consultation period, including the publishing of stakeholder (including student) feedback.
    c. Does not make tuition levels reliant on the current economic state of the province or country.
5. The Students' Union will oppose funding models that seek to increase the reliance of post-secondary funding on tuition paid by students, as opposed to government funding.
6. The Students' Union shall advocate for an international student tuition policy that:
    a. Protects international student tuition from increasing due to fluctuations in funding grants to the University from the government;
    b. Ensures tuition levels are predictable for international students;
    c. Provides for the fact that tuition is only one of the costs of pursuing a post-secondary education;
    d. Transparent and publicly available in language tailored to be easily comprehensible for student;
    e. Provides flexibility and latitude regarding tuition payments; and
    f. Ensures that no student will ever be denied the opportunity to pursue post- secondary education because of their inability to pay.
7. The Students' Union will demand accountability of the University regarding the following:
    a. Defining quality consulting and the minimum required percentage of students in a faculty consulted to be considered quality consultation.
    b. Financial supports for students who will be detrimentally impacted by increases

Consultation Pathways:

1. CoFA
2. Perks Surveys

4. References

1. https://open.alberta.ca/publications/2018_228
2. https://open.alberta.ca/publications/9781460146989
3. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-caps-tuition-hikes-for-post-secondary-students-starting-in-2024-25-1.6750876
4. https://www.su.ualberta.ca/media/uploads/1143/Survey%20Report_%20Tuition%20Increases%20and%20Funding%20Cuts.pdf
5. https://www.ualberta.ca/registrar/coststuitionfees/tuitionincreases.html#:~:text=The%20university%20has%20also%20approved,7.55%25%20of%20total%20international%20tuition.
6. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/u-of-a-law-school-tuition-proposed-to-jump-to-15k-a-year-1.2744795
7. https://www.su.ualberta.ca/media/uploads/1143/2020%20Annual%20Survey%20Report.pdf

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