

# **Students' Union Political Policies**

## ***Introduction***

Political policy is a directive from Students' Council to the Executive Committee that sets the direction of the Students' Union's advocacy efforts.

Members of the Executive Committee are responsible for creating and following implementation plans for political policies and must report their progress to the Policy Committee.

## ***Alterations***

Political policies may be created, amended, suspended, or retired by Students' Council. Generally, alterations to political policy are drafted by the Policy Committee and approved by Students' Council. Editorial changes to political policy are made by the Policy Committee. Political policies expire after a period of years at which point, Students' Council has the option to renew the political policy.

Responsibility for the effective administration of the political policy document, and all associated processes, shall rest with the Chair of the Policy Committee. The Administrative Assistant to Students' Council, under the guidance and direction of the Chair of the Policy Committee, shall be responsible for ensuring that:

- a) an up-to-date policy document is made publicly available and easily accessible by both members and employees of the Students' Union;
- b) outdated versions of the political policy document are appropriately archived; and
- c) the political policy document is formatted in a consistent and presentable manner.

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## I. ACADEMIC MATERIALS

WHEREAS the true cost of being a student is composed of many factors, such as tuition, fees, cost of living, foregone wages, and academic materials;

WHEREAS the rate of textbook price increases have exceeded the rate of inflation over the last decade; at the University of Alberta, the average textbook price increased between 1995 and 2007 was 280%<sup>1</sup>. Over the same period, the Consumer Price Index only rose 22%<sup>2</sup>;

WHEREAS students are increasingly required to purchase peripheral academic materials and other equipment to succeed in their courses;

WHEREAS these peripheral materials are not standardized across courses and faculties, which often leads to the mandatory purchase of several versions of the same equipment;

WHEREAS the Government of Canada already has mechanisms in place for Goods and Services Tax (GST) exemptions;

WHEREAS there are no provincial sales taxes levied on books for Canadian provinces that use a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST);

WHEREAS the Book Importation Regulations approved by the Governor General in Council in July 1999 allowed book importers to charge a premium of 10% on books imported from the United States and 15% on books from any other country;<sup>1</sup>

WHEREAS the use of copyrighted material for scholarship has been codified in S(29) of the Copyright Act RSC 1985 c C-42;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union, through its provincial and federal lobby organizations, will pressure academic material manufacturers, retail outlets, other student organizations, and post-secondary institutions to engage in practices designed to lower the costs of academic materials to students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will educate instructors about the costs of textbooks and about alternatives available to them;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate for

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada. Accessed Jan 2, 2013. "Book Importation Regulations. SOR/99-324. Copyright Act". *Justice Laws Website*. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-99-324/FullText.html>

peripheral academic materials to be standardized across the institution to avoid needless expenditures;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate to the Federal Government to exempt textbooks from the GST and/or any other federal sales taxes that may be implemented in the future;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate to the Federal Government for the elimination of the 10% and 15% price premiums from the Book Importation Regulations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate to the Federal Government that Canadian copyright laws be constructed in a way which does not derogate from the expansion of fair dealing rights as interpreted in recent legal decisions.

## **II. AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

WHEREAS the cost of housing is a significant financial burden for students often comparable to tuition;

WHEREAS mandatory meal plans comprise a significant portion of residence fees for students living in Lister Centre;

WHEREAS municipal property taxes on residences, passed on through increases to rent, represent an increased strain on affordability for students;

WHEREAS vacancy rates in the Edmonton area are traditionally low and rental costs relatively high;

WHEREAS a lack of affordable housing discourages both prospective and current students from pursuing post-secondary education;

WHEREAS Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada to assess property taxes on university residences;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the Government of Alberta and the City of Edmonton remove the burden of municipal property taxes from residences and that the University of Alberta passes any ensuing savings to students in residence;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the Government of Alberta provide capital funds toward the development of additional student housing; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall oppose any University of Alberta student residence rent and/or meal plan increase exceeding CPI.

### **III. CAPITAL PROJECTS**

WHEREAS the University has numerous sources of revenue and should not depend solely on students to finance capital projects;

WHEREAS the University should not be spending tuition revenue on capital projects;

WHEREAS capital projects benefit the University and serve a wide range of communities beyond undergraduate students;

WHEREAS there should be consultation with students as to the creation, use, and termination of student fees;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that tuition revenues shall not be used to fund capital projects;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that a dedicated student fee for a capital project shall not be used to fund the construction of academic or research space;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that the Students' Union shall participate in defining the purpose and scope of any project where a student fee is involved;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that all capital projects funded directly by a student fee dedicated to that project must include proportional commitments from other stakeholder groups;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that a dedicated student fee for a capital project shall not be implemented until such a time as students have the ability to receive benefits from their contribution;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that any capital project funded directly by a dedicated student fee shall have a governance structure that includes adequate student representation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that any dedicated student fee that funds a capital project shall be eliminated upon the final payment of the agreed upon student contribution.

## **IV. DEFERRED MAINTENANCE**

WHEREAS funding for routine building and systems preventive maintenance had been significantly cut back, resulting in a massive backlog of deferred maintenance;

WHEREAS the accumulation of significant deferred maintenance liability represents a failure of the government to adequately fund the operations of the University;

WHEREAS deferred maintenance reduces the quality of the undergraduate learning experience, the University's public image, and presents a potential health and safety hazard;

WHEREAS it is inappropriate for the University and the government to expect current and future undergraduates to fund the correction of historically deficient resource allocations;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates to the provincial government for a one-time capital funding package to be delivered over a period of years to remedy the historically accumulated deferred maintenance liability;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocates to the provincial government for the institution of an ongoing operational funding envelope to the University, designed to provide for adequate ongoing preventive maintenance;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocates to the University to adequately prioritize preventative maintenance in future budgets; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocates to the University to follow construction practices that minimize future maintenance costs.

## V. ENGAGEMENT

WHEREAS the University has declared the importance of student involvement in building a great university;

WHEREAS a comprehensive and holistic student experience is one that balances exceptional academic and extra-curricular opportunities and experience, both on campus and in the larger community;<sup>2</sup>

WHEREAS involvement opportunities lead to improvements in the mental, physical, and social health on campus and the larger community;

WHEREAS community and campus involvement actively develops the leadership qualities of individuals;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall encourage the University to actively foster campus community and student involvement by investing in initiatives and opportunities that promote engagement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University identify and reward the contributions of students who actively strive to improve their campus and the larger community.

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<sup>2</sup> Office of the President, *Dare to Discover: A Vision for a Great University*, (University of Alberta, 2006), p. 2-3, Learning, Discovery and, Citizenship §1-3, 7.

## **VI. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING POLICY**

WHEREAS experiential learning opportunities include, but are not limited to, internships, practica, co-ops, placements, work experience, undergraduate research, work abroad, community service learning courses, and field experience;

WHEREAS new learning experiences allow students to apply and improve their understanding of content learned in class;

WHEREAS experiential learning opportunities allow students to build practical skills and applied knowledge that will benefit them upon graduation;

WHEREAS a number of barriers exist to participating in experiential learning opportunities, such as lack of funding, lack of information, academic program restrictions, and external policy barriers. Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocate for increased up-front funding for students participating in local or international work programs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union ensures that funding experiential learning opportunities remains a priority of the Office of Advancement;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocate for a centralized office which will provide greater coordination and communication of experiential learning opportunities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocate for specialized support for non-traditional students so that they have equal opportunity to participate in experiential learning opportunities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocate for flexible program requirements that allow students to participate in experiential learning opportunities.

## **VII. FALL READING WEEK**

WHEREAS student mental health is a growing concern in the post-secondary education system;

WHEREAS a Fall Reading Week will create an opportunity to provide academic, wellness and social programming;

WHEREAS the benefits of a fall break will be optimized by providing students with a full week off from classes; and

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate for the creation of a Fall Reading Week.

## VIII. FOOD

WHEREAS access to food preparation resources on campus is currently limited;

WHEREAS nutrition plays a vital role in the health and wellness of students and therefore can have a can significantly impact on their academic success;

WHEREAS nutrition plays a vital role in the health and wellness of students;

WHEREAS access to a variety of healthy food and beverage options available on campus is currently limited;

WHEREAS food and beverages sold on campus do not meet the needs of students with a variety of dietary restrictions;

WHEREAS nutritional information provided for food products sold on campus is currently limited;

WHEREAS the purchase of food and beverages incurs a significant financial cost to students;

WHEREAS students living in Lister Centre are required to purchase a mandatory meal plan that can only be used to purchase food and beverages from specific food vendors on campus who accept the plan as payment;

WHEREAS the production, transportation, distribution, and/or consumption of food and beverages can have adverse social and/or environmental impacts;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University increases the availability of diverse and healthy food and beverage options;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University provides an increase of affordable food and beverage options;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University provides and improves access to food preparation resources;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University provides and improves access to water fountains and water bottle refilling stations;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University encourages the sale of organic, local, or Fair Trade certified food and

beverage options when competitively priced to reduce its adverse ecological and social impact;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University reduces the ONEcard vendor levy to promote the expansion of its ONEcard service to vendors providing more choice for students who wish to eat on campus;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University provide easily accessible nutritional information for all of its food and beverage products;

## **IX. HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

WHEREAS the health and wellness of an individual encompasses emotional, mental, physical, spiritual, and sexual health;

WHEREAS the health and wellness of students may be affected by the physical environment on the University of Alberta campuses;

WHEREAS the health and wellness of a student has a direct effect on academic and social success;

WHEREAS students are increasingly susceptible to high levels of stress due to heavy workloads;

WHEREAS there are limited fitness and physical wellness facilities on campus;

WHEREAS there is demand for increased quantity and quality of interfaith prayer and meditation space on campus;

WHEREAS high risk alcohol consumption occurs within the student population;

WHEREAS addictive behavior, including, but not limited to, addiction to computer/internet use and to cognitive-enhancing drugs can be damaging to a student's academic success;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University increase psychological and psychiatric services;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University explore new ways in which to enhance students' mental health;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University enhance physical wellness space;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University enhance sexual health awareness for students;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University increase interfaith spiritual space on campus; and

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the University encourage safe drinking practices for those who choose to consume alcohol.

## **X. INTERNATIONALIZATION**

WHEREAS the number of international students in Canada has increased by 148 percent from 2002 to 2011<sup>1</sup>;

WHEREAS the number of international students transitioning from temporary to permanent resident status increased by 16 percent from 2002 to 2011<sup>1</sup>;

WHEREAS 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;

WHEREAS the International - Differential Fee (IDF) represents a serious threat to affordability and accessibility;

WHEREAS international students have less access to merit-based and need-based aid, and do not have access to Government student loans;

WHEREAS renewable scholarships for international students are important for their financial planning and cannot be regained if lost;

WHEREAS post secondary institutions may charge international students more than they cost to educate;

WHEREAS international students should not bear the burden of an institutions' financial deficits;

WHEREAS the University of Alberta and the Students' Union recognizes the importance of international students;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta does not require educational institutions to charge -International Differential Fees (IDFs);

WHEREAS the Public Post-Secondary Institutions Tuition Fees Regulation - does not regulate International Differential fees (IDFs);

WHEREAS the International t Differential Fee limits the geographic diversity of our international students;

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WHEREAS a diverse student body and institutional internationalization is a fundamental feature of a high-quality university education;

WHEREAS an enhanced campus experience may increase engagement and retention of international students;

WHEREAS recent surveys have shown that: a) integration with domestic students, b) accessibility of on-campus housing, and c) quality of career-related programming are the top three experiences international students seek in their post-secondary experience;

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WHEREAS the transfer credit system plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of internationalization at the University of Alberta; and

WHEREAS cultural awareness and global experiences are highly sought-after attributes by potential employers.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall support accessible post-secondary education for international students at the University of Alberta;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall not support the Board of Governors of the University of Alberta increasing International Differential -Fees -

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that the University of Alberta -provide clear and transparent transfer credit processes at the faculty, Campus Alberta, national, and international levels;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate the University of Alberta to improve access to merit-based and need-based aid for international students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate the University of Alberta to restructure renewable scholarships to provide more predictability;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall lobby the Government of Alberta for regulation of the International Differential Fees (IDF) to provide predictable tuition rates for international students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall lobby the Federal Government to issue multiple-entry visas to ALL international students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that the Federal Government increase the number of permanent residencies for

undergraduate international students issued each year in the Canadian Experience Class;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that the Federal Government expand the Federal Skilled Worker Class immigration program's fast track stream eligibility to include undergraduate international students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall encourage the University of Alberta to actively foster opportunities that allow local students to interact with international students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that the University of Alberta improve housing quality and accessibility for international students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall lobby the University of Alberta to improve career-related programming and services for international students.

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS), *Statistics Canada*. Accessed on February 23, 2013. <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/pick-choisir?lang=eng&id=4770019&pattern=4770019&searchTypeByValue=1>)

## **XI. MANDATORY NON-INSTRUCTIONAL FEES**

WHEREAS the University of Alberta is a publicly-funded public institution and therefore committed to high standards of service, administrative effectiveness, and good governance in the responsible management of its financial resources;

WHEREAS services can foster a positive student experience;

WHEREAS undergraduate students are willing to pay a reasonable fee for services that benefit them;

WHEREAS mandatory non-instructional fees remain unregulated by the Government of Alberta and can therefore change at the discretion of the University;

WHEREAS mandatory non-instructional fees are above and beyond the tuition fee, which is the mandatory payment for instruction;

WHEREAS the cost of a post-secondary education includes tuition, fees, educational materials, and living expenses;

WHEREAS a high and unpredictable cost of education is a barrier to post-secondary education for some students;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocate for a predictable cost of post-secondary education, that can be reasonably anticipated year-to-year;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocate for an affordable cost of post-secondary education for all current and potential students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocate for an accessible cost of post-secondary education, especially for students facing financial and/or cultural barriers;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocate to the Government of Alberta for the regulation of all mandatory non-instructional fees;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocate to the Government of Alberta for a framework which clearly defines which fees are non-instructional and therefore outside the framework established in the Public Post-Secondary Tuition Fees Regulation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocate for a process where students provide meaningful input on which services mandatory non-instructional fees pay for;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocate for a student-approval mechanism for the implementation of any new mandatory non-instructional fees as well as for an increase to any existing mandatory non-instructional fees;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the University of Alberta Students' Union advocate for transparency and accountability as to where and how the fees levied on students are spent; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocate that students maintain representation on any body directing the general affairs and mandate of a service which is funded by a student fee.

## **XII. MERIT BASED AWARDS**

WHEREAS the cost of a university education has increased;

WHEREAS this cost increase poses a great disincentive to accessing a university education, as well as a considerable barrier to finishing a degree;

WHEREAS merit based aid is an integral part of the student finance system, without which motivated and outstanding individuals could not afford a university education;

WHEREAS the University of Alberta should not only aim to attract talented students, but demonstrate a commitment to realizing the full potential of current undergraduate students;

WHEREAS the current scholarship and bursaries applications process is inefficient and time consuming;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall lobby the University of Alberta and the Government of Alberta to increase the number and value of merit based awards granted to continuing undergraduate students in order to be consistent with the number and value of entrance awards;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall lobby the University of Alberta and the Government of Alberta to increase the relative and absolute amounts of merit based aid awards that are awarded based on the students' financial need and/or involvement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union pursue a single point of entry to the scholarship and bursaries application process.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that the University of Alberta disclose annually the ratio of need to merit based aid, and the distribution of awards between years of study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that donors support students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse skills via scholarships and bursaries.

### **XIII. NEED-BASED AWARDS**

WHEREAS the cost of a university education has increased;

WHEREAS this cost increase poses a great disincentive to accessing a university education, as well as a considerable barrier to finishing a degree;

WHEREAS financial need can be detrimental to academic and extracurricular student achievement by diverting student focus and effort to employment

WHEREAS the current need-based aid awards application process is inefficient and time consuming

WHEREAS need-based aid awards are an integral part of the student finance system, without which students in financial need could not afford a university education;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has provided more funding for merit-based awards than need-based aid in recent budgets;

WHEREAS the University of Alberta should not only aim to attract talented students, but demonstrate a commitment to supporting undergraduate students with financial needs and assist them in realizing their full potential

WHEREAS merit based aid awards target students who are less likely to have dire need of financial aid;

WHEREAS financial need can be detrimental to academic and extracurricular student achievement by diverting student focus and effort to employment;

WHEREAS the University of Alberta Students' Union recognizes that some students require part or full time employment in order to finance their education; WHEREAS students partaking in part or full time employment do not have the same opportunity for academic achievements as those who do not require employment to finance their education costs;

WHEREAS students who do not receive financial assistance for their education may be required to take out large amounts of debt.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall lobby the University of Alberta to increase the number and value of need-based aid awards granted to continuing undergraduate students in order to be consistent with the number and value of entrance awards;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that the Government of Alberta recognize the importance of need-based student financial aid;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that the University of Alberta and the Government of Alberta increase the relative and absolute amounts and number of need –based aid awards that are awarded based on the students' financial need and/or involvement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union pursue a single point of entry to the need-based aid awards application process.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that the University of Alberta disclose annually the ratio of need to merit based aid, and the distribution of awards between years of study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate that donors support students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse skills via scholarships and bursaries .

## **XIV. PUBLIC TRANSIT**

WHEREAS public transit is a common mode of transportation used by University of Alberta students that benefits the quality of life of all members in the community;

WHEREAS the U-Pass is to be implemented in the academic years consistent with the referendum conditions;

WHEREAS the post-secondary bus pass provides a more affordable public transit option for students than a regular adult pass;

WHEREAS public transit expansion would allow improved access for University of Alberta students to commute within the service area;

WHEREAS Smartcard technology would reduce the possibility for U-pass fraud and reduce the need for a U-Pass replacement fee;

WHEREAS University of Alberta students enrolled in spring and summer classes spend a significant amount of time commuting to and from campus;

WHEREAS University of Alberta students enrolled in spring and summer classes should be able to obtain a spring and/or summer U-Pass regardless of the student's full-time or part-time enrollment status;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the regional municipalities and transit services carefully monitor service demand arising from U-pass implementation, consider input from stakeholders and commit all resources necessary to maintain reliable, safe and timely service;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates for a more affordable option than a regular adult pass for part-time spring and summer students;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union negotiate a new, long- term U-Pass contract to be implemented upon the expiry of the current contract;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that the regional municipalities and transit services expand their current service systems, prioritizing the implementation of Smartcard technology, to better meet the needs of the University of Alberta students; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocate for the integration of Smartcard technology into the One Card system.

## **XV. QUALITY INSTRUCTION**

WHEREAS instructional quality is one of the most decisive factors in the quality of undergraduate education;

WHEREAS outstanding undergraduate instruction reflects positively on every aspect of the University;

WHEREAS excellence in teaching requires effective communication and interaction between and among students and instructors;

WHEREAS student evaluation of teaching provides students with a voice in their learning environment and can help instructors improve their teaching;

WHEREAS excellence in undergraduate instruction promotes continuing educational endeavours by undergraduate students into higher levels of study;

WHEREAS initiatives designed to improve teaching make positive contributions to common teaching and learning practice as well as legislation relating to the governance of teaching and learning;

WHEREAS development of a culture that promotes excellence in teaching requires funding, attention and innovation on the part of the University;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates for more activities that enhance the instructional quality for undergraduates and increased teaching professional development activities, including those that enhance communication skills;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates that instructors are required to present evidence of their current and past teaching professional development experience as part of their annual review; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union fosters conditions that promote the importance of teaching at an institutional level; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocate for increased communication between students and professors through informal mid-semester feedback; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocate for a more effective student teaching evaluation mechanism and whose results are psychometrically valid and are made readily available for students

## **XVI. RESEARCH**

WHEREAS research and teaching represent the foundation of any comprehensive higher education institution;

WHEREAS research is a valuable aspect of the University;

WHEREAS conducting research is a necessary activity that improves the reputation of the University;

WHEREAS teaching and research have a symbiotic connection within the framework of any comprehensive higher education institution;

WHEREAS university culture lends itself to celebrate the successes of research while overlooking successes in teaching;

WHEREAS indirect costs of research are necessary expenses not covered by research funding and are therefore covered by the University operating budget;

WHEREAS when the indirect cost of research competes with undergraduate education for funding, it encroaches on the quality of education delivered to undergraduates;

WHEREAS undergraduate students should be able to take advantage of the research infrastructure of the University;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall endeavour to ensure that the University views research and teaching as equally important constituent parts of the University;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall endeavour to ensure that the University of Alberta contextualizes research in a manner that maximizes the quality of higher education within the institution;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall endeavour to ensure that the University of Alberta values the totality of research undertaken within the institution;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates for more opportunities that allow undergraduate students to partake in research; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates for increased student and faculty awareness of undergraduate research opportunities at the University of Alberta.

## **XVII. SCHOLARSIPS AND BURSAIRES**

WHEREAS the cost of a university education has increased;

WHEREAS this cost increase poses a great disincentive to accessing a university education, as well as a considerable barrier to finishing a degree;

WHEREAS scholarships and bursaries are an integral part of the student finance system, without which motivated and outstanding individuals could not afford a university education;

WHEREAS the University of Alberta should not only aim to attract talented students, but demonstrate a commitment to realizing the full potential of current undergraduate students;

WHEREAS financial need can be detrimental to academic and extracurricular student achievement by diverting student focus and effort to employment;

WHEREAS the current scholarship and bursaries applications process is inefficient and time consuming;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall lobby the University of Alberta to increase the number and value of awards granted to continuing undergraduate students in order to be consistent with the number and value of entrance awards;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall lobby the University of Alberta and the Government of Alberta to increase the relative and absolute amounts of scholarships and bursaries that are awarded based on the students' financial need and/or involvement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT The Students' Union pursue a single point of entry to the scholarship and bursaries application process.

## **XVIII. SMOKE FREE ENVIRONMENT**

WHEREAS The Students' Union is committed to the health and wellness of all its employees and its members;

WHEREAS The Students' Union is committed to initiatives promoting sustainability on campus;

WHEREAS The University of Alberta is a world leading institution in health and cancer research;

WHEREAS Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) contains many known carcinogens, and poses a serious preventable health risk;<sup>34</sup>

WHEREAS cigarette butts and ETS pose a considerable hazard to the local ecosystem;<sup>56</sup>

WHEREAS the reduction of cigarette butts and litter on campus has the potential to reduce maintenance and disposal costs;<sup>9</sup>

WHEREAS the University of Alberta is subject to, provincial and municipal legislation regarding smoking but is not limited to the provisions and initiatives contained therein in restricting smoking on its campuses;

WHEREAS the University of Alberta defined campuses are: Campus Saint-Jean, Enterprise Square, North Campus, South Campus, and Augustana;

WHEREAS a campus-wide ban could potentially place members of the campus community in unsafe situations;<sup>7</sup>

WHEREAS accessible designated smoking areas are beneficial to all members of the community;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocate that the University of Alberta restrict smoking on all of its campuses to appropriate and health promoting designated smoking areas.

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<sup>3</sup> International Agency for Research on Cancer, W. H. (2004). *ARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans*. Lyon: World Health Organization.

<sup>4</sup> Kaufman, P., Griffin, K., & Cohen, J. (2010). Smoking in urban outdoor public places: Benefits and implications for public health. *Health & Place*.

<sup>5</sup> Nagle, A.L., Schofield, M.J., Redman, S., 1996. Smoking on hospital grounds and the impact of outdoor smoke-free zones. *Tobacco Control* 5, 199–204.

<sup>6</sup> Barnes, R. (2011). Regulating the disposal of cigarette butts as toxic hazardous waste. *Tobacco Control*, 145-148.

## **XIX. STUDENT LOANS**

WHEREAS education must be viewed as a public good due to the benefits it brings to the social structure and tax system;

WHEREAS there exists an opportunity cost for those individuals who choose to pursue an education and be away from a job;

WHEREAS in order for education to be viewed as affordable and accessible the costs of living and the costs of education must be addressed as separate burdens;

WHEREAS the current parental contribution requirement within the student loan system does not reflect the diversity of Albertan students;

WHEREAS the debt load of students continues to increase, with the rising cost of tuition diminishing the relative value of the living allowance;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union advocates for a financial aid system that:

- a. includes increased relative and absolute amounts of non-repayable assistance, including but not limited to grants and bursaries;
- b. is accessible to all Albertan students attending not-for-profit post-secondary institutions and addresses the real financial need;
- c. recognizes the complete overhead costs of education to the learner including, but not limited to: rent and utility costs, textbook costs, transportation costs, food, personal care, internet and computer costs;
- d. includes adjustments to all forms of financial assistance to reflect changes in market realities as they affect students;
- e. does not consider parental income as a factor for loans; and
- f. eases the growing burden of student debt to post-secondary graduates.

## **XX. STUDENT SPACE**

WHEREAS the University of Alberta lacks sufficient student space to accommodate the current student population;

WHEREAS current space planning has not sufficiently anticipated the needs of current or future students;

WHEREAS space planning in new and refurbished buildings will have significant impacts on students who make use of the buildings;

WHEREAS students and student groups require quality spaces on campus to pursue their curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular goals;

WHEREAS students require that space is available according to their own schedules;

WHEREAS students require space that is physically accessible;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that University of Alberta space allocation and building development policies should take into consideration the needs of students and student groups both present and future;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate for the construction and renovation of classroom spaces such that they reflect advances in pedagogy;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that student spaces are open sufficient hours to address student need;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that space planning account for physical accessibility and students' safety.

## XXI. STUDENT WORK PROGRAMS

WHEREAS the Albertan youth unemployment rate is nearly double the provincial average<sup>7</sup>;

WHEREAS the cost of attaining a post-secondary education has risen to a rate significantly greater than the rate of inflation<sup>8</sup>;

WHEREAS cost related to attending university stands as a serious obstacle in accessing the post-secondary education system;

WHEREAS individuals from rural, aboriginal, and lower socio-economic backgrounds are underrepresented in the post-secondary education system<sup>9</sup>;

WHEREAS private sector companies receiving a wage subsidy from a student employment program may still pay student employees the minimum wage<sup>10</sup>;

WHEREAS student employment programs should be geared towards advancing skills learned in study;

WHEREAS Alberta is one of the only provinces in Canada without a student employment program;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate for the reestablishment of a provincial student employment program and increased government funding towards federal student employment programs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate for provincial and federal student employment programs to be in operation throughout the year;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that provincial and federal government review and update private sector wage minimums in employment programs that provide government funded wage subsidies; and

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<sup>7</sup> "Youth Neither Enrolled not Employed", *Statistics Canada*

<sup>8</sup> "Paying for Higher Education", *Statistics Canada*

<sup>9</sup> Socio-economic Status and Academic Achievement Trajectories from Childhood to Adolescence, Daniel H. Care

<sup>10</sup> Albertan Minimum Wage Standards

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will advocate that government review the criteria for funding student employment wage subsidy recipients to ensure that positions funded have a positive impact on advancing student skills.

## **XXII. STUDENTS IN GOVERNANCE**

WHEREAS undergraduate students know their needs best, and

WHEREAS some University and Faculty policies already give undergraduate students and student groups representative capacity on certain committees and boards, and

WHEREAS there are over 600 representative positions filled by undergraduates at the University of Alberta, and

WHEREAS undergraduate student associations are autonomus organizations that exist to advocate for the students they represent, and

WHEREAS faculty and department support is appreciated by the Students' Union and student organizations, and

WHEREAS student representatives activities supplement the educational experiences of students, and

WHEREAS undergraduate students are required to balance their academic, personal, and professional lives with their representative activities, and

WHEREAS the undergraduate population at the University of Alberta is diverse in its makeup.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED That the Students' Union shall advocate that the University act fairly and equitably toward undergraduate student representatives and student group representatives, as they would any other faculty and administrator member of the University community, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Students' Union shall advocate for increased training and support for undergraduate student representatives, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Students' Union shall advocate for appropriate and fair academic accommodations for student representatives, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Students' Union shall advocate against the elimination of undergraduate student representative positions at any level from policy or practice, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Students' Union inform the University about its obligation to consult student representatives on academic, administrative, and operational issues, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Students' Union shall advocate for these organizations to remain autonomus organizations, free to advocate for the students they represent without the influence from department or faculty, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Students' Union encourage faculties and departments to support their student organizations, but inform them that student organizations need to be driven by the students, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Students' Union shall actively communicate to the University the value of student representatives, and student representative groups, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That the Students' Union shall act to reduce barriers to student participation in University governance, especially for under-represented groups.

## **XXIII. SUSTAINABILITY**

WHEREAS the University has long recognized the influential position of the institution in addressing issues of sustainability, including social justice and environmental management;

WHEREAS; investing in a safe, inclusive, and diverse community that is supported by social services and programming yields long-term benefits to the University;

WHEREAS the University is expanding its capacity to create its own local energy solutions with the School for Energy and the Environment;

WHEREAS integrating sustainability topics into course curriculum is a very practical way for the University to participate in global sustainability practices;

WHEREAS students who are actively engaged in sustainability initiatives and education are more likely to live, and encourage others to live, a sustainable lifestyle in the future;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall encourage the University to develop innovative solutions to environmental, economic, and social justice issues through all of its faculties and departments;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate to the University for the continued reduction of its environmental impact, and adherence to the highest standards of tolerance and inclusivity, reflective of the diversity of its student, staff, and faculty ;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union shall advocate for the inclusion of topics in sustainability, including all three pillars of society, economy, and environment, in course curriculum where appropriate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union seek to actively engage the student population in sustainability initiatives and education.

## XXIV. TUITION

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has shown an increased awareness of the importance of post-secondary education in our province;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has the duty to fund the cost of a postsecondary 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;

WHEREAS the current tuition levels and costs of obtaining a post-secondary education are contrary to the values of a public post-secondary education system;

WHEREAS it is essential that the Government of Alberta craft a policy recognizing the need to alleviate the financial burdens borne by Alberta's students in accessing the post-secondary education system;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union –shall advocate for a tuition policy that:

- a. Provides long-term, sustained base operating funding for our universities that will be protected from negative changes in our government's financial situation;
- b. Protects tuition from increasing due to fluctuations in funding grants to the university from the government;
- c. Ensures tuition levels are predictable;
- d. Has as its primary indicator of affordability the ability of students to pay without having to accrue the burden of debt;
- e. Provides for the fact that tuition is only one of the costs of pursuing a post- secondary education; and
- f. Ensures that no student will ever be denied the opportunity to pursue post- secondary education because of their inability to pay;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union –shall advocate that the Government of Alberta legislate a policy on tuition fees that:

- a. Provides strict guidance to an institution's ability to set tuition, including annual and ultimate limits on the maximum amount of tuition fees that can be levied on students;

Requires post-secondary institutions to provide to the Board of Governors of the institution, the Auditor General of Alberta and the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education a detailed and verifiably transparent public plan on how additional tuition revenues will be spent;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Students' Union will not support increasing tuition and will work towards a reduction of any tuition increase at the University of Alberta Board of Governors.