



External Policy Book

Accessibility . Accountability . Affordability

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University of Prince Edward Island Student Union

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Successes



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Policy ID: S01

Status: Success

Ratification: September 8, 2013

Success Date: February, 2020

Using Open Educational Resources In All First-year UPEI Courses

Synopsis: *The UPEI Student Unions believes that reducing the cost of textbooks is an important part of addressing the cost of an education today. With growing access to Open Educational Resources, and the general survey knowledge taught in 100 level courses, UPEI should try to use Open Educational Resources for all first year courses to reduce financial burden.*

Success: *In February 2020, the government of Prince Edward Island and the University of Prince Edward Island launched an Open Educational Resources Development Program Pilot Project of \$25,000. This makes PEI the first province east of Ontario to receive funding for open educational resources.*

Traditional educational resources, such as textbooks and academic journals, have long been known to have considerably high costs. More alarming however, is the rate at which these costs are increasing. This trend of increase in costs is echoed in Canada: textbook prices have increased at a rate of more than 3 times that of inflation since 1977.¹ Textbooks are not the only educational resources suffering from hyperinflation either: from 1986 to 2004, North American research library

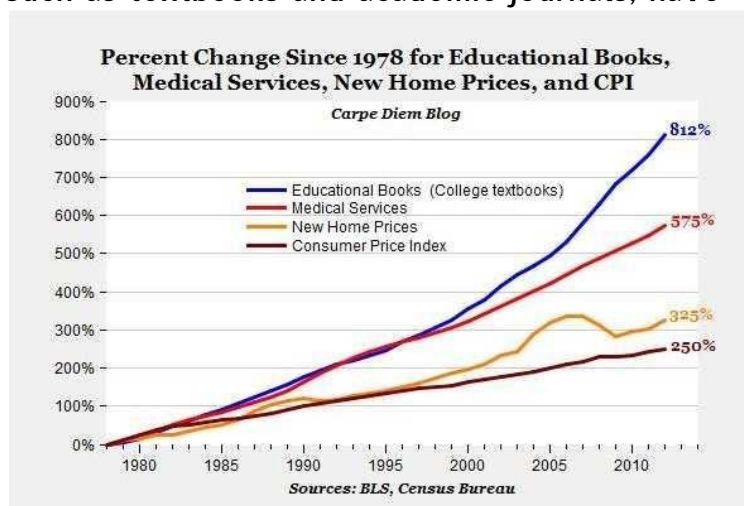


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1: US Textbook Cost Increases (AEI)

¹ "To Combat Soaring Textbook Costs" *The Globe and Mail* Avail:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/to-combat-soaring-textbook-costs-look-to-an-open-source-approach/article37477566/> “



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spending on academic journals increased by 273%.²

Open Educational Resources are teaching and learning materials that are freely available online for everyone to use, whether you are an instructor, student, or self-learner. With the advent of massive open online courses, the increasing availability of free course materials online, and an OER movement that is picking up speed, now is the time to start the conversation at the University of Prince Edward Island about open educational resources.

The UPEI Student Union believes that all first-year courses should be taught using open educational resources. The introductory nature of first-year courses, combined with higher-than-average textbook costs, makes first-year classes a priority target for the introduction of OER use on a large scale at the University of Prince Edward Island.

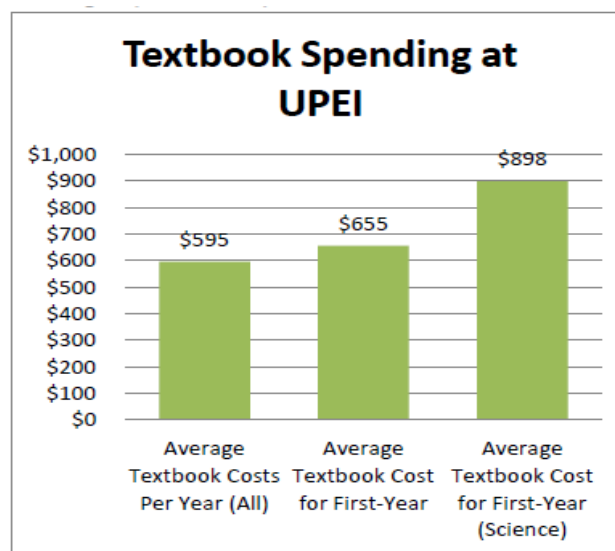
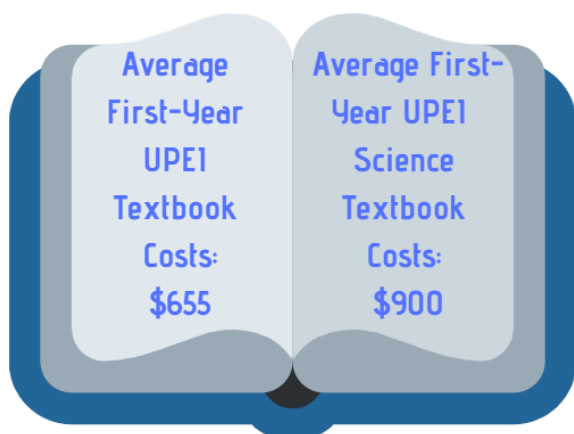


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 2: Textbook Spending at UPEI (UPEISU Data 2012)



A survey of student debt and textbook spending conducted during Education Week 2012 revealed that the average student at UPEI will spend an average of \$595 per year on textbooks, with first-year students spending above the average at \$655 for the year. First-year science students were found to be paying even more on average, among the hardest hit, having reporting expenses of almost \$900 to obtain their required books.³

² "Trends in Scholarly Communication," S. Venkadesan. Avail: <https://www.inflibnet.ac.in/caliber2009/CaliberPDF/48.pdf>

³ Internal Data: Information Collected from 336 respondents in late September, 2012.

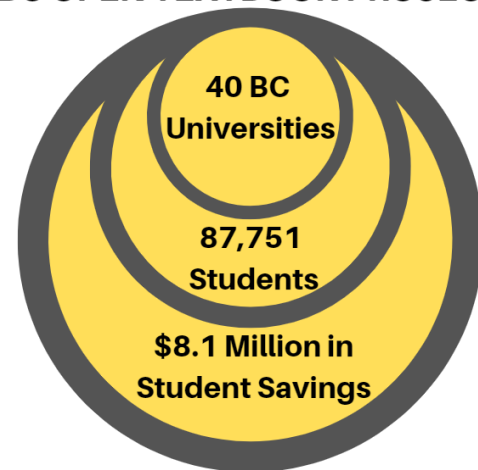


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According to a MacLean's survey from 2017, UPEI students now pay on average \$778 for textbooks each year.⁴

A successful initiative called the “Open Textbook Project” was adopted in British Columbia in 2012. The Open Textbook Project is funded by the BC Ministry of Higher Education and is managed by an organization called BCcampus. The open textbooks in BC are openly licensed using a Creative Commons license so they can be offered free of charge. Since the adoption of this government-funded initiative, BCcampus has seen their open textbooks adopted by 40 educational institutions, being used by 87,751 students, and has amounted to roughly \$8.1 million in savings for students in BC.⁵ From their success, BC has been able to aid the advancement of open educational resources in other provinces such as in Ontario with the eCampus Ontario project.

BC OPEN TEXTBOOK PROJECT



In order to make education resources available online, professors must adapt existing educational resources into an accessible online version, or they must write original resources intended for online use on an open education platform. UPEI already has this digital framework in place as the University has acquired an existing online textbook software called PressBooks, which is also used by BCcampus. A select few number of UPEI professors use this already for their courses, but many do not as converting texts for online use is a lengthy process without financial payoff as it stands now. Unless professors are being compensated for the labour they put in to making texts accessible, they will not be commonly used. The government can incentivize the adoption of online education resources by monetarily compensated professors to contribute to the accessibility of online texts, and this can be achieved by an Open Textbook Project fund.

⁴ “What Canadian University Students Can Expect to Pay for Books.” Macleans. Avail: <https://www.macleans.ca/education/most-expensive-books/>

⁵ *Open Textbook Stats*. BC Open Campus. Avail: <https://open.bccampus.ca/open-textbook-stats/>



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These textbook costs could easily be reduced by using open educational resources, such as open access journal articles or open textbooks. To accomplish such a task, as proven in British Columbia, will require significant buy-in from post-secondary education institutions and government.

The UPEI Student Union recommends that the Government of Prince Edward Island fund an Open Textbook Project to ease the cost of accessing educational resources.



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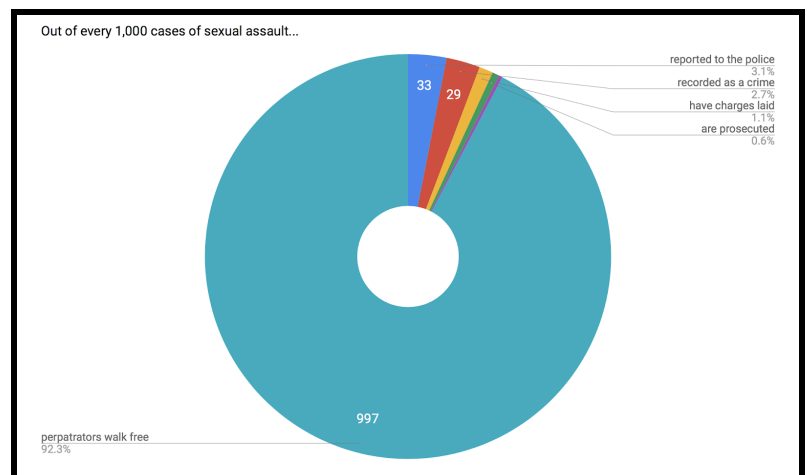
Oversight And Accountability In Addressing Sexual Violence On Campus

Success: On October 18th, 2017, the P.E.I. Standing Committee on Education and Economic Development passed a motion stating that the government would, “enact provincial legislation to ensure external oversight of sexual violence policies at its post-secondary institutions.” This was to have oversight onto the forms of justice for survivors, and to create educational programs. In July 2018, the UPEISU attending provincial consultations on the development of this oversight, and will see the official legislation Fall 2018.

While sexual violence continues to be one of the most pervasive issues faced by Canadian society, this issue is particularly prevalent on post-secondary campuses. While the number of sexual assaults that are actually reported may diminish perceptions of the significance of this issue, the University of Prince Edward Island is certainly not immune to sexual violence.

Even without being specifically prompted for feedback on issues of sexual violence on campus, a survey done by the UPEI Student Union as part of annual consultations on advocacy priorities saw a significant number of students commenting that sexual violence and support for survivors was a concern of theirs and something they hoped to see government and the university address.

This only goes to show that while cases of sexual assault may fly under the radar due to lack of data being reported by post-secondary institutions, sexual violence





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remains a great cause for concern. Sexual assault continues to be the most underreported crime in Canada, and post-secondary campuses are particularly affected. A CBC investigation examining sexual violence on campus indicated that “overall, experts say the number of students reporting sexual assault to universities and colleges is well below the national average.”⁶

Not only is the crime underreported, but post-secondary students are also particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, as 47% of all sexual assaults are seen in women aged 15 to 24.⁷ Given that the vast majority of university students are within this age range, it may come as no surprise that some surveys indicate that 1 in 5 women will experience some form of sexual assault while attending an institution of higher education.⁸

Prince Edward Island is one of only a few provinces in Canada with no legislation or other government authority mandating sexual violence policies on its post-secondary campuses. British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario have all recently enacted legislation providing guidance and oversight for post-secondary sexual violence policies, while Nova Scotia has signed a four-year Memorandum of Understanding with its colleges and universities.

Quebec also recently announced a framework for legislation to pass through the Quebec National Assembly by fall 2017, supplemented by a \$23 million dollar investment over the next five years to support its zero-tolerance stance on campus sexual violence.⁹ While the Government of Alberta does not currently have any

⁶ “Sexual assault reporting on Canadian campuses worryingly low, says experts,” *CBC News*, 6 February 2015. Accessed: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sex-assault-reporting-on-canadian-campuses-worryingly-low-say-experts-1.2948321>

⁷ “Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014,” *Statistics Canada*, 11 July 2017. Accessed: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.htm>

⁸ “Why don’t Canadian universities want to talk about sexual assault?” *MacLean’s*, 30 October 2014. Accessed: <http://www.macleans.ca/education/unirankings/why-dont-canadian-universities-want-to-talk-about-sexual-assault/>

⁹ “Quebec to invest \$23M for new ‘zero-tolerance’ campus sexual assault policy,” *CBC News*, August 21, 2017. Accessed: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-provincial-sexual-assault-policy-campus-1.4255310> .



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formal agreements in place, it has directed its post-secondary institutions to create stand-alone sexual assault policies.

These government initiatives do not just touch on the need for clear and equitable reporting frameworks for dealing with cases of sexual assault on post-secondary campuses, but also provide guidance and set standards for education and prevention programming in an effort to better educate students, provide more well-rounded supports for survivors, and stop sexual assaults before they occur.

Not only is this type of government initiative important from a social perspective for setting a zero-tolerance stance on sexual violence, but it makes sense from an economic perspective as well. Given that it is one of the most pervasive crimes in all Canadian provinces, sexual violence is one of the most costly crimes weighing in at \$4.8 billion annually, even more costly than gun violence at \$3.1 billion.¹⁰

Beyond even these considerations, government initiative on the issue of sexual violence on post-secondary campuses sends a strong and clear message. Enacting legislation would demonstrate that the Province of Prince Edward Island does not tolerate sexual violence on its campuses and that it is willing to support survivors and the community at large with the full support of government and the law.

Regardless of stand-alone sexual assault policies which may currently exist in the province, legislation provides a necessary level of accountability for post-secondary institutions. External oversight must exist in order to ensure that these policies are thorough, robust, and survivor-centric.



¹⁰ "Statistics," *Sexual Assault Centre Hamilton and Area*. Accessed: <http://sacha.ca/resources/statistics>.



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The cohesion of policies across different institutions is also a crucial consideration. It is essential that students across the province have access to the same support, treatment, and educational initiatives, regardless of which post-secondary institution in the province they choose to attend.

Should the Province of Prince Edward Island decide to move in the direction of other Canadian provinces in enacting legislation on sexual violence at its post-secondary institutions, Islanders could remain assured that the Province is prepared to take every step to protect the safety and well-being of students throughout their post-secondary careers in Prince Edward Island.

The UPEI Student Union recommends: that the Government of Prince Edward Island enact provincial legislation to ensure external oversight of sexual violence policies at its post-secondary institutions.



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Policy ID: S03

Status: Success

Ratification: September 8, 2013

Success Date: April 2018

Creating A Needs-based Provincial Student Grant Program

Synopsis: The UPEI Student Union believes that in order for a grant system to address increasing access to post-secondary, it needs to have a needs-based test. Amending the program to provide more funding to those who really need it would be a major step towards addressing financial need for post-secondary education in the province.

Success: In the 2018 PEI Provincial Budget, the Government of Prince Edward Island enhanced investments into student financial aid. Under the new “Island Advantage Bursary”, a new needs-based financial aid program was introduced. The program is targeted to low to middle income students, to provide non-repayable grants to those who need it most. The UPEISU is excited to see the increased accessibility to post-secondary education for students on PEI. Although this is a historic win for the UPEISU, we look forward to continue advocating for a flat-rate contribution model, and extending these grants to graduate students.

Most provincial governments offer non-repayable subsidies, grants, or bursaries to recipients of their student loan programs or attendees of their public institutions. At the University of Prince Edward Island, this typically takes the form of the George Coles Bursary, the Island Student Awards, and the George Coles Graduate Scholarship.

The George Coles Bursary, available to every first-time, first-entry Island student, is valued at \$2,200 for the student's first year of study¹¹. For the same cohort in the next two years, the Island Student Awards are awarded. The ISAs are valued at \$400 in the second year of study and \$600 in the third year of study¹². If the student graduates in their fourth year, they will receive the \$2000 George Coles Graduate

¹¹ “Student Financial Services: George Coles Bursary” Accessed:

<http://studentloan.pe.ca/index.php3?number=1039551&lang=E>

¹² “Island Student Award 2012-2013” (p. 2) Accessed: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/forms/pdf/2069.pdf>



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Scholarship. If the student does not graduate in their fourth year, they will instead receive the previously awarded \$600 in their fourth year, and the additional \$1400 in their graduating year¹³.george coles

These bursaries and awards are distributed only on the condition that the recipient is an Island resident, and do not discriminate based on economic status or background.

A similar program still exists in Nova Scotia, with the addition of some reduction for out-of-province students. Previously, a similar program had also existed in Ontario with a relatively high income cap (these programs will be discussed in depth later in this document). In 2016, Ontario announced a new Ontario Student Grant program, New Brunswick passed the Tuition Access Bursary, and the Government of Canada announced a 50% increase in funding for the Canada Student Grant Program for low and middle income families. Alberta also has a needs-based grant to help students in one-year certificate programs. The difference with these new programs is that they are all needs-based grants. Creating needs-based grants has a number of positive benefits. First, it ensures that students who need financial assistance the most will receive the most aid. Secondly, it reduces reduces the overall rate of student debt and lastly, it addresses the need to pay for school up front, as opposed to tax credits which reimburse students for funding their education. Tax credits have been proven by the Parliamentary Budget Officer to significantly benefit high-income students more than low-income students¹⁴.

The Nova Scotia model provides bursary money to not only Nova Scotian students, but those from other provinces in Canada as well. In Nova Scotia, the government provides a bursary to reduce tuition for Nova Scotian students in the amount of \$128.30 per course. For domestic, out-of-province students, the amount is \$26.10 per course¹⁵.This model is similar to PEI, with the addition of extending benefits of the program to students from out-of-province, which could be a valuable recruitment tool.

¹³ “Student Financial Services: George Coles Graduate Scholarship 2013-2014” Accessed:

<http://studentloan.pe.ca/index.php3?number=1041556&lang=E>

¹⁴ “Federal Spending on Post-Secondary Education” Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Accessed:

http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2016/PSE/PSE_EN.pdf

¹⁵ “Nova Scotia University Student Bursary Program” Accessed:

<http://www.msvu.ca/en/home/beamountstudent/money/tuitionandotherfees/tuitionotherfees/novascotiauniversitystudentbursaryprogram.aspx>



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Ontario has put an emphasis on needs-based grants in the past and made a further investment in 2016. For several years, Ontario provided a grant that paid 30% of a student's tuition during their years of study at post-secondary institutions in the province, provided the student was an Ontario resident. The income cap on that program was \$160,000 in combined parental income¹⁶. This program will end in 2017 and its funding will be re-allocated to the new Ontario Student Grant. Students in Ontario will now receive enough financial aid in grants to cover the full cost of their tuition if they come from a family with a combined income of less than \$50,000. Grants will still be awarded to families who make up to \$83,000, just at a reduced rate¹⁷.

Similarly, New Brunswick passed the Tuition Access Bursary (TAB) in 2016 that will provide enough money in grants to cover the cost of tuition for students with a family income of less than \$60,000¹⁸.

In Alberta, the government recently introduced a new grant for those from low-income backgrounds in one-year certificate programs which provides \$120 per month of study for those eligible¹⁹.

The Government of Canada has also made a significant investment in needs-based grants in the 2016 Budget. The Canada Student Grant Program founded in 2009 received a 50% increase in funding, bringing the grant up to \$3000 for students from low-income families, \$1200 for middle-income families, and \$1800 for part-time students.²⁰

It should be noted as well that the expansion of the Canada Student Grant Program announced by the Government of Canada in the 2016 Budget came at the expense of the Education Tax Credit and the Textbook Tax Credit. While this was a progressive decision, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer had stated that tax credits benefited students from high-income families who had the lower financial need, the program did not extend grants to graduate students. Graduate students have high financial need that is usually above and beyond what the Canada Student

¹⁶ "30% Off Ontario Tuition." Accessed: <http://www.ontario.ca/education-and-training/30-off-ontario-tuition>

¹⁷ "New Ontario Student Grant" Avail: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/new-ontario-student-grant>

¹⁸ "Tuition Access Bursary (TAB): Avail:

http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary_education_training_and_labour/promo/TAB.html

¹⁹ Student Aid Alberta webpage. Avail: <http://studentaid.alberta.ca/before-you-apply/types-of-funding/>

²⁰ Budget 2016 - Help for the Middle Class. Avail: <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2016/docs/plan/ch1-en.html>



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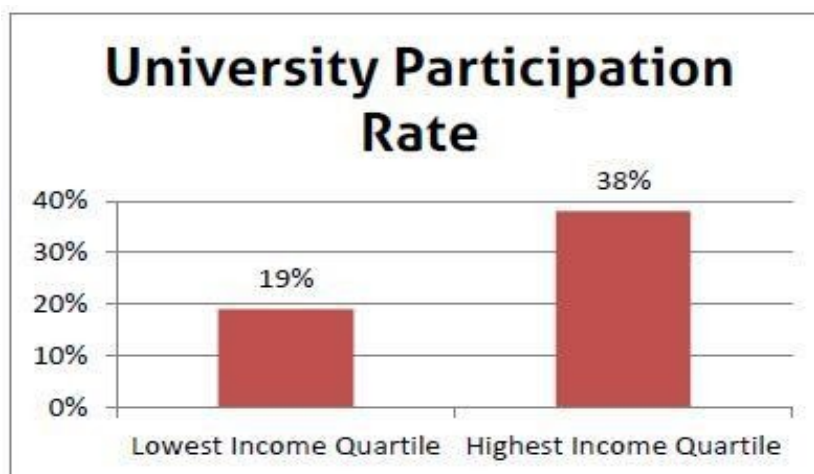
Loan Program would be able to cover. Tax credits were very important to graduate students and as a result of their removal, graduate students have been left with less financial aid. If the Province were to move forward with a needs-based grants program, it would be important for the program to extend to providing support to graduate students at UPEI.

To make up for the drop in support that families from middle and high income families may experience with a needs-based grants system, it is recommended that the Government of Prince Edward Island adopt a flat-rate contribution system similar to the Government of Canada to replace current needs-based assessments for loans²¹.

It is the opinion of the UPEI Student Union that the funding allocated towards the George Coles Bursary could be better spent by targeting the funding to those with a demonstrated need. Creating, or transforming the George Coles Bursary into, a needs-based grant would better ensure that those having trouble accessing post-secondary education have sufficient funds to pursue it.

Research has shown the link between the likelihood of attending university and family income. Those who come from a lower socioeconomic background are significantly less likely to attend university, compared to those who come from a background with more income. In fact, only 19% of those who come from the lowest income quartile will attend university, compared to 38% of those in the highest income quartile²²: those from the highest income quartile were twice as likely to attend.

Figure 1: University Participation Rates by Family Income²³



A targeted spending and support program is better at supporting those who need it, and although the George Coles Bursary and accompanying programs

Source: Labour and Income Dynamics (StatsCan)



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are good for students, the money can be better allocated. A needs-based provincial grant would be money better spent. Supporting the students who need it most could boost attendance levels among those who are traditionally underrepresented in the university environment due to difficulty in accessing education.

The UPEI Student Union recommends that the Government of Prince Edward Island either create a new program, or modify existing programs, to provide needs-based financial grants to Island students.

The UPEI Student Union recommends that the Government of Prince Edward Island replace all current needs assessments for student loans to a flat-rate contribution.

The UPEI Student Union recommends that needs-based financial grants be extended to graduate students.



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Policy ID: S04

Status: Success

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Providing Sustainable Supports For Mental Health And Well-being

Success: During a letter-writing campaign, students reached out to local MLAs and MPs for a call to action to enhance mental health supports and initiatives on campus. Specifically, the UPEISU advocated for \$25 per-student funding per year to achieve this. The 2018 Provincial Budget confirmed this ask and the UPEI campus will now see mental health services and supports in the coming years. The UPEI SU applauds this investment into student mental health and recognizes this as a substantial advocacy win.

There are a number of reasons why university students are a key demographic when looking to improve mental health and well-being in communities. University students face a number of unique challenges which put them at a greater risk of suffering from mental health issues. The majority of mental health disorders tend to surface between the ages of 18 to 24, meaning that students will most often experience their first symptoms of mental illness while at university.

What's more is that mental health issues amongst students seem to be increasing at an alarming rate. Research demonstrates that the suicide rate amongst university-aged youth has tripled since the 1950's, with men tending to be disproportionately affected by thoughts of suicide, with two times as many young men (ages 20 - 24) committing suicide as compared to young women.²⁴

Combined with the additional difficulties many students face when they find themselves distanced from their established support networks as they are living away from home for the first time, as well as the stresses of the tremendous academic and financial demands that come along with higher education, the

²⁴ "Crisis on Campus: the Untold Story of Student Suicides," *College Degree Search*. Accessed: <http://www.collegedegreesearch.net/student-suicides/> .



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necessity of funding well-rounded and substantial mental health supports for students becomes evidently clear.²⁵

Supporting mental health services is not only a social obligation of our provinces, but has proven benefits for the community at large. A report done by the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance describes the positive impacts of supporting the mental well-being of students:

“There is increasing evidence to suggest that mental wellness is closely linked with academic success, student persistence, and student retention, all of which are of tremendous benefit to the institutions and government from a financial and reputational perspective.”²⁶

A number of provinces across Canada have recognized and acted upon the need to support mental well-being on campus. The province of Alberta recently saw funding announcements of \$25.8 million over three years to support mental health services for post-secondary students across the province.²⁷ Ontario also announced in its 2017 provincial budget that it would be increasing its yearly investments in mental health services and supports for its post-secondary students by \$15 million per year.²⁸

Should the province of Prince Edward Island move in the same positive direction as other provinces across Canada, a per-student funding model would provide the most sustainable and equitable option. Such a model would ensure that funding is sustainable in that it fluctuates at the same rate as enrolment.

²⁵ Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, “Student Health: Bringing Healthy Change to Ontario’s Universities,” *Campus Mental Health*, May 2012, P. 10. Accessed:

<https://campusmentalhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Student-Health-2012.pdf> .

²⁶ Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, “Student Health: Bringing Healthy Change to Ontario’s Universities,” *Campus Mental Health*, May 2012, P. 12. Accessed:

<https://campusmentalhealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Student-Health-2012.pdf> .

²⁷ “Improving post-secondary students’ mental health,” *Alberta Government*, 20 June 2017. Accessed:

<https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=47143BE408224-AAB2-7176-D584AF992BD423D8> .

²⁸ “Ontario Boosts Mental Health Supports for People Across Province,” *Ontario*, 3 May 2017. Accessed:

<https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2017/05/ontario-boosts-mental-health-supports-for-people-across-the-province.html> .



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The UPEI Student Union recommends: That the Government of Prince Edward Island invest in a per-student funding model dedicated to supporting the enhancement of mental health and wellness supports and initiatives for post-secondary students in Prince Edward Island.

The UPEI Student Union further recommends: That the Government of Prince Edward Island engage in active consultation and collaboration with students as it examines mental health services on its post-secondary campuses.



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Policy ID: S05

Status: Success

Ratification: September 13, 2015

Success Date: April 2018

Establish A Multi-year Funding Framework That Allows UPEI To Plan Long-term

Synopsis: The UPEI Student Union believes that UPEI being aware of its finances only on a one year basis creates significant issues for its planning. This also creates a level of uncertainty for students because they can't predict how much their tuition will rise every academic year. To address the importance of long-term planning at the University, the Government should create a 4 year rolling budget for the University.

Success: The 2018 budget, announced in April, confirmed the Government of Prince Edward Island will sign onto a multi-year funding agreement with UPEI. The province has confirmed it will be doubling the annual increase in funding to a 2% increase in operating income. With this, the University can now better plan for the long-term. As we have been advocating for this since 2015, the UPEI SU recognizes this as an advocacy win from the 2018 Provincial Budget.

The rising operating costs of universities across the country are a growing area of policy concern; the University of Prince Edward Island is no exception to this issue. The UPEI Student Union recognizes the need for growth at UPEI, but also sees that there are significant challenges associated with long-term planning when the University does not know how much funding it will receive from the provincial government until the Provincial Budget is delivered in the spring. While rising operating costs are an area of concern for the administration at UPEI, they are also an area of concern for students because they are unsure of how much their tuition will rise over the course of their degree. The UPEI Student Union believes that the Government of Prince Edward Island and the University of Prince Edward Island should establish a multi-year funding agreement that allows students to effectively plan financially for their education.



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According to the University of Prince Edward Island Economic Impact Assessment, the Province contributed 34% of UPEI's overall revenue in 2013, one of the lowest rates in the country²⁹. In addition to having one of the lowest rates, the operating grant varies from year to year. In 2012, UPEI took a 3% cut to its funding. There were subsequently no changes in funding in the following 2 years³⁰. In the 2015 Budget, UPEI received an 8% increase which included funding for the new Engineering school³¹. These fluctuations in government contributions reveal that funding amounts allocated to UPEI are inconsistent. In the end, inconsistent funding makes financial planning for UPEI difficult, and it also creates a lot of financial stress for students and their families as they try to anticipate and afford the rising cost of education. In Prince Edward Island, post-secondary funding is determined by an incremental (or historical) funding

mechanism – the amounts allocated to the institutions are based on the previous year. This funding mechanism is great from an administrative perspective

because it is simple and the most logical funding framework in a small province with one university. Incremental funding does have its downsides, however; for example, it does not provide incentive for Universities to improve their performance³². From a financial perspective, it makes growth hard because the uncertainty associated with funding can cause the University to be reluctant in spending and expansion. Additionally, if funding decreases, it can put the University in a difficult position forcing them to increase tuition for students.

Although an incremental funding model is the best type of funding for a small province like Prince Edward Island, there is still room for improvement. The current model provides little certainty to students in the years after they enroll as to how much they will deposit into the University's budget. The government department responsible for higher education has a role to play in providing relevant information to students, especially as it relates to how much they will be expected to contribute to their education. The department responsible for higher education

²⁹ "The University of Prince Edward Island Economic Impact Assessment" (2014) pg. 17

³⁰ "UPEI board approves "bare bones" budget." *Academica Top Ten*. 10 May 2012. Avail: <http://academica.ca/top-ten/upei-board-approves-bare-bones-budget>

³¹ "P.E.I budget gives small increases to health, education." *CBC News*. 19 June 2015. Avail: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/p-e-i-budget-gives-small-increases-to-health-education-1.3120258>

³² "The Future Is Not What It Used To Be: Re-examining Provincial Post-Secondary Education Funds in Canada." C.D Howe Institute. Pakravan, pg. 12.



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equally has a role to play in providing the University with the necessary information to effectively plan for several years' worth of revenue and expenses.

It is the opinion of the UPEI Student Union that the Government of Prince Edward Island should create a 4 year "rolling-funding" agreement with the University of Prince Edward Island, with incremental increases each year to accommodate for rising costs, so students can reasonably estimate how much their education will cost from enrollment to the completion of their program. and so that the University can invest confidently in the future of the institution and its students.

The Student Union recommends that the Government of Prince Edward Island establish a 4 year rolling-funding agreement with public post-secondary institutions, such that students can know how much their education will cost from start to finish, and administration can effectively plan for the long-term.



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Policy ID: S06

Status: Success

Ratification: September 7, 2014

Success Date: April 2018

Freedom Of Information

Synopsis: The UPEI Student Union believes that due to the amount of tax dollars that go to the University's annual budget, the University should be subject to the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP). FOIPP provides an avenue for students to request information about their University through an open, accessible, and accountable system.

Success: In May 2018, amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act were tabled to now include post-secondary institutions, such as UPEI, Holland College, and College de l'Île, as well as municipalities. Documents such as internal reports and emails are included under this act. As of June 2018, these amendments were passed and the changes will take effect in April 2019. Students will no longer be required to pay the current university fees to access information through the Access to Information and Privacy Office. Although this was a win for UPEISU advocacy, the legislation is not retroactive, and this will be something we will continue to advocate on into the future.

Freedom of Information is an important discussion, and one which is discussed across the country. Fundamentally, freedom of information legislation is designed to allow the public access to information within public institutions, while respecting the privacy of individuals. Roughly half of UPEI's revenues are derived from government funding – money which comes from the taxpayers of Prince Edward Island and, indeed, Canada³³. It is not unreasonable to believe, as the UPEI SU does, that information about UPEI should be easily accessible to the public.

According to the PEI Information and Privacy Case Review Officer, Maria MacDonald, there are five main purposes of the *FOIPP* Act:

- “Creates a right of access to records subject to limited and specific exceptions;

³³ UPEI Operating Budget 2016-2017. Pgs. 5 & 9. Avail:
http://files.upei.ca/finance/operating_budget_2016-2017.pdf



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- Controls how public bodies collect personal information, they use it, and they disclose it;
- Allows individuals a right of access to personal information about themselves;
- Allows individuals a right to request corrections to personal information about themselves; and
- Provides for independent reviews of decisions made by public bodies.”³⁴

In 2017, UPEI implemented a new “Access to Information and Protection of Personal Information and Privacy Policy.” A new “Access to Information and Privacy Office” was also established. While these efforts prove a move in the right direction, this new policy and Office do not satisfy a number of basic accountability and accessibility measures at the heart of Access to Information principles. In regards to accountability, there are two major concerns: firstly, there is the basic principle that, regardless of UPEI’s new policy, those overseeing UPEI’s budgets themselves are still doing their own access to information rulings. Independent oversight is absolutely necessary in order to provide appropriate accountability measures when public dollars are involved. Secondly, UPEI’s new policy is not retroactive. That is to say, that the only information within the purview of this policy is that which came to being on or after May 1st, 2017.

In addition to these flaws in accountability, the exorbitant costs associated with UPEI’s Access to Information requests do not lend themselves well to an accessible system. UPEI charges an initial application fee of \$25.00, with \$40.00 per hour charged after the initial hour for preparation services such as locating and retrieving records and preparing and handling records for disclosure.³⁵³⁶ To put these numbers into context, a member of the public looking for some data in regards to the makes and models of cars driven by UPEI students paid \$166 to obtain 2017 parking permit records.³⁷ To compare these fees to Access to Information

³⁴ MacDonald, Maria. “UPEI FOI FYI: What would it mean to UPEI if it were subject to *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*?” n.d. Presentation.

³⁵ UPEI Policy: “Access to Information and Protection of Personal Information and Privacy.” Avail: <http://www.upei.ca/policy/files/policy/Access%20to%20Information%20and%20Protection%20of%20Personal%20Information%20and%20PrivacyApproved.pdf>

³⁶ “Office of the Vice-President Administration and Finance - Access to Information and Privacy Office.” UPEI Website. Avail: <http://www.upei.ca/vpaf/access-information-and-privacy-office>

³⁷ Peter Rukivina. “I Paid \$166 for Data about Parked Cars.” *Ruk.ca*. Avail: <https://ruk.ca/content/i-paid-166-data-about-parked-cars>



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requests through the Government of Prince Edward Island, there is an initial fee of \$5.00 for general Access to Information requests, with \$10 charged for every half hour following the initial two free hours.³⁸ Therefore, we see that, in effect, UPEI's policy offers less information at greater costs than government FOIPP requests, with no external oversight or accountability.

Prince Edward Island is currently the only provincial jurisdiction in Canada which does not extend its freedom of information legislation to universities³⁹⁴⁰. Other provinces have, in effect, recognized the value of ensuring access to information at public institutions such as universities and colleges – and PEI should do the same. With a budget of over \$100 million per year, it is vital that UPEI's information be accessible to students, staff, faculty, and indeed, the public.

To conceive this idea of *FOIPP* legislation extending to the university is not new. In 2017, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Karen Rose, submitted recommendations relating to the upcoming review of PEI's FOIPP legislation, in which she recommended that post-secondary educational institutions be added as public bodies under the *FOIPP Act*. Commissioner Rose stated in her report that: "While the two Island post-secondary educational institutions have recently adopted policies about access to information and protection of personal information, these policies are at the discretion of the institutions, and, further, there is no independent oversight of their processes or decisions."⁴¹

Bringing UPEI under *FOIPP* would not necessarily mean that every document passed through UPEI would become public, and this is important to note. While many fear the extension of *FOIPP* legislation on this basis, it is important to note that a portion of the legislation is also dedicated to the privacy – of individuals and of the organization, as well as third-party interests. *FOIPP* legislation is crafted such that

³⁸ "FOIPP Fees." Government of Prince Edward Island Website. Avail:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/justice-and-public-safety/foipp-fees-0>

³⁹ "Freedom of Information Expansion Delayed." CBC News – 6 May 2013. Avail:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/freedom-of-information-expansion-delayed-1.1313231>

⁴⁰ Keller, T. "New Brunswick's Information is Free!" Macleans.ca. 9 June 2008. Avail:

<http://www.macleans.ca/education/uniandcollege/new-brunswicks-information-is-free/>

⁴¹ "FOIPP Act Review - Recommendations of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner." Report to the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment - 2 October 2017. Avail:

<http://www.assembly.pe.ca/docs/oipc-FOIPP-Act-recommendations.pdf>



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the needs for both access to information and for privacy are adequately balanced, and professional and impartial oversight is provided⁴².

It is time for Prince Edward Island's government to bring a new level of transparency to post-secondary institutions in Prince Edward Island, and those institutions should welcome this transparency with open arms. Institutions receiving public funding must always be willing to be as open and accountable as possible in regards to their activities.

The UPEI Student Union recommends that the Government of Prince Edward Island amend the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* to bring public post-secondary institutions under its jurisdiction.

⁴² *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act of Prince Edward Island*. S. 3. Avail: http://www.gov.pe.ca/law/statutes/pdf/f-15_01.pdf



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Policy ID: S07

Status: Success

Ratification: January 26, 2014

Success Date: April 2018

Ensuring Availability Of Gender-neutral Washrooms

Synopsis: The UPEI Student Union believes that all students deserve the right to feel safe and accepted on campus. By providing at least one gender-neutral washroom in every building on campus, UPEI can provide students with an equitable atmosphere to meet their diverse needs.

Success: UPEI now ensures all new buildings have gender-neutral washrooms, with a number of previous gendered washrooms in existing buildings having been converted to gender-neutral. There is furthermore support from both administration and faculty.

As an institution of higher learning, it is vital that all students at the University of Prince Edward Island feel safe and accepted at all times. One of the many areas where this may not fully be the case is in our washrooms. Students, staff, or faculty who may not identify with their assigned sex at birth, or those who choose not to identify with any gender, are faced with a tough decision each time they must use a restroom at UPEI: which restroom do they use? It is the opinion of the UPEI Student Union that this issue must be addressed quickly: it is imperative that UPEI ensure the availability of gender-neutral washroom facilities in each building, and introduce appropriate signage for such washrooms.

The availability of single-stall restrooms which are open to all members of the campus community, regardless of gender, allows for greater individual privacy, and can also be equipped to be more accessible for those with special needs. And according to the UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center, the value to those who are transgender or may not identify is especially great: “[A gender-neutral washroom] eliminates the conflict between decisions based on sex and decisions based on gender, and protects them from many dangers or even simply being discovered (also called being “outed”).”⁴³

⁴³ “Neutral Restrooms – UC Davis LGBTQ Resource Center” Avail: <http://lgbcenter.ucdavis.edu/resources/gnr>



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A proposal was submitted by Professor Ann Braithwaite (Department of Women's Studies) and Treena Smith (Manager, UPEI Student Affairs) to the UPEI Space Management Committee during the Summer of 2013, requesting a minimum of one restroom per building be designated "multi-gender". According to the proposal: "For a number of people ... accessing public washrooms becomes an anxiety-provoking and potentially dangerous activity."⁴⁴ It is incumbent upon the University to provide a comfortable study environment for students. Ensuring that students do not feel judged for using a washroom designated for one gender or the other is a vital part of creating that comfortable environment for some students.

The University of Regina was one such University in 2013 to recognize the vital role that they play in this regard, and designated ten restrooms as gender-neutral, with accompanying signage.⁴⁵ According to CBC News, the switch of ten washrooms at the U of R cost the University just \$2,000.⁴⁶ A change that can be enacted so frugally, and one which can provide the environmental change necessary to create a more comfortable environment for students, should be a priority for University administration.

Education also plays a key role in the issue of embracing gender-neutral washroom facilities. It is the UPEI Student Union's hope that the University would look to the Action Committee on Sexuality and Gender Diversity to take a lead role in an education campaign designed to educate the campus community on the need for gender-inclusive washrooms on campus, as well as other issues facing those who are transgender or those who do not conform to a traditional binary gender system.

The UPEI Student Union calls on the University of Prince Edward Island to ensure the availability of at least one gender-neutral washroom in each University building, accompanied by appropriate signage as determined by the Action Committee on Sexuality and Gender Diversity.

The UPEI Student Union calls on the University of Prince Edward Island to ensure that future construction of University buildings will recognize the need for

⁴⁴ "Space Proposal: gender and campus washrooms" Submitted to UPEI Space Management Cttee. by A. Braithwaite, T. Smith.

⁴⁵ CBC News: U of R opens gender-neutral washrooms. Feb 18, 2013. Avail:
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/u-of-r-opens-gender-neutral-washrooms-1.1378509>

⁴⁶ Ibid.



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gender-neutral washroom facilities, and will incorporate such facilities into any new buildings.



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Policy ID: S08

Status: Success

Ratification: September 8, 2013

Success Date: March, 2017

Ensuring UPEI's Tobacco Use Policy Is Enforced

Synopsis: The UPEI Student Union believes that the University of Prince Edward Island should enforce regulations regarding smoking on campus for the overall benefit of student health.

The University of Prince Edward Island's Tobacco Use Policy, created in June 2007, mandates that any tobacco use take place at least 9.1 meters from a University building. In addition, the policy states that no tobacco use may occur within buildings or within University-owned or -leased vehicles.⁴⁷

It has become a recognized problem at the University of Prince Edward Island that there are those who choose to contravene UPEI's policy on tobacco use by smoking or using tobacco products within 9.1 meters of a door. This policy recommendation was adopted by the UPEI Student Union Council on September 8th, 2013 and since then, little has changed in regards to people using tobacco products within 9.1 meters of doors on campus.

The negative health effects of breathing secondhand smoke are well-known to all. According to the United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, those exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work may face a 25-30% increase in their chance of developing coronary heart disease⁴⁸. Further, the CDC says that even brief contact with secondhand smoke can temporarily increase one's risk of a heart attack⁴⁹.

All campuses in the Atlantic Region have policies in place to curb tobacco-use on their grounds, however, an increasing number of campuses have gone completely tobacco-free. There are multiple examples of this, such as Acadia University, which

⁴⁷ UPEI Tobacco Use Policy. Avail:

[http://policy.upei.ca/files/policy/Tobacco%20Use%20Policy%20\(admhrdohs0007\)_2.pdf](http://policy.upei.ca/files/policy/Tobacco%20Use%20Policy%20(admhrdohs0007)_2.pdf)

⁴⁸ Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Fact Sheet – Health effects of secondhand smoke. Avail:

http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/health_effects/

⁴⁹ Ibid.



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went completely tobacco-free in 2006⁵⁰. Memorial University announced on August 1st, 2013 that it was officially smoke free, and Saint Mary's University is also a smoke-free campus⁵¹. Saint Mary's will officially be tobacco-free as of September 1st, 2013⁵².

Given the severe nature of the public health concerns stated by the CDC, it is the view of the UPEI Student Union Academic and External Affairs Committee that no student should be exposed to secondhand smoke while attending classes at the University of Prince Edward Island.

The UPEI Student Union recommends that the University of Prince Edward Island amend existing tobacco use policies on campus to create a smoke-free campus that will ensure the safety and well-being of all students and employees at the University.

⁵⁰ Human Resources ~ Tobacco Free Initiative. Avail: <http://hr.acadiau.ca/tobacco-free-initiative.html>

⁵¹ Memorial smoke-free on August 1st. Avail: <http://www.mun.ca/marcomm/news/index.php?includefile=showitem.php&id=4036>

⁵² Counting Down the Days to a Tobacco-Free Campus. Avail: <http://www.smu.ca/newsreleases/2013/march/counting-down-the-days-to-a-tobacco-free-campus.html>



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Policy ID: S09

Status: Success

Ratification: September 13, 2015

Success Date: March 13, 2016

Ensuring Adequate Student Loan Funding Availability

Synopsis: The UPEI Student Union believes that if the cost of living rises on a yearly basis, so should the amount of student loan funds that students have access to. There hasn't been an increase to weekly maximums in over a decade, and this is an entirely unsustainable practice.

Success: On February 23, 2016 the government of Prince Edward Island published their press release announcing changes to the student financial aid program. Beginning in the 2016-17 academic year, the weekly maximum student loans available to students will increase from \$165 to \$175 per week. This amount will also be indexed to the consumer price index to increase with inflation annually.⁵³

It is plain to all that the student financial assistance programs available to students have done much to ensure that students are able to access education. Student loans play a key role in ensuring that students can ensure they are able to pay for both the costs of education and living. While the student loans program is clearly key to post-secondary education for Islanders, does the program account for scalability and growth?

PEI's student loans program is run in tandem with the Canada Student Loans Program, and the province provides \$165 per week and the federal government provides \$210 per week of assistance to full-time students, respectively⁵⁴. These amounts can combine to provide up to \$12,175 in funding for a 34-week study period

⁵³

<http://www.gov.pe.ca/index.php3/publications/premier/law/mvr/publications/law/newsroom/newsroom/newroom/index.php3?number=news&newsnumber=10639&dept=&lang=E>

⁵⁴ Government of Prince Edward Island. "Focus on Your Future: Prince Edward Island Student Financial Assistance Guide." 2013-2014. P. 7.



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⁵⁵. While it is not known how recently PEI's weekly limit was raised, the CSLP maximum assistance level was most recently changed in the 2004 Federal Budget⁵⁶.

Since 2002, it is estimated by the UPEI SU that tuition costs alone have increased by approximately 50%⁵⁷, with inflation according to CPI having increased roughly 28% over the same time period⁵⁸. Tuition is not set to level out at this point, either. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives predicts that tuition will continue to outpace inflation and be a cost-driver for students attending post-secondary education⁵⁹. It is incumbent upon governments, both provincial and federal, to continue to ensure that our student financial assistance programs keep pace with the ever-increasing costs of obtaining an education. It is an unfortunate reality that as of 2015-2016, 41% of Canadian students who received financial aid had assessed need in excess of what the government was permitted to disburse. Furthermore, that number is projected to increase to 51% by 2020⁶⁰. Of students with debt in 2010, 59% had to rely on other forms of borrowing in addition to government student loans to make ends meet⁶¹. Unfortunately, private borrowing brings with it far less support than government borrowing; students can be subject to exorbitant interest rates, may have to make payments while in-study, and may require a co-signer – a difficulty that would disqualify many from low-income backgrounds.

The funding provided by the two student loans programs is acceptable for many students, but there are those who may fall through the cracks due to personal circumstance, which often is unaccounted for in the program's stringent and tightly controlled application process.

In a 2009 report, the Educational Policy Institute examined the impact that provincial needs assessment processes could have on applicant's loans. This allows

⁵⁵ Ibid. P. 8.

⁵⁶ Raaflaub, T. Library of Parliament. "Canada Student Loans Program." 2008. Avail: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/lop/researchpublications/prb0343-e.htm>

⁵⁷ UPEI Academic Calendar 2002-2004; Current Student Statement 2014-2015

⁵⁸ Statistics Canada. Consumer Price Index, historical summary, by province or territory. Avail: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/econ150a-eng.htm>

⁵⁹ Macdonald, David, and Erika Shaker. "Eduflation and the High Cost of Learning." P. 16. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

⁶⁰ Table 33, Impact of Loan Limit on Loans Issued, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Actuarial Report on the Canada Student Loans Program. Office of the Chief Actuary, 2012..

⁶¹ CASA et al. "Canadian Student Survey: Next Steps: Upper-Year Canadian PSE Students' Plans and Debt." March 2010.



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us an interesting look into the situation for many students – especially those who come from non-traditional or more vulnerable backgrounds. The EPI report found that, indeed, students who came from a non-traditional student background were being shortchanged by the student loans system. When it came to independent⁶² students living away from home, over 20% of student loan recipients reported unmet need. For married students, the figure was similar, but at least 30% of single parent students who received aid reported it to not be enough⁶³. Fundamentally, our student loans program is a social program – and shouldn't social programs be structured to help those who need it most? If our program cannot address the needs of the most vulnerable, we know problems exist.

Further, we know that increasing access to loan funding by raising maximum assistance levels has a variety of desirable effects. According to ESDC information, increasing the maximum assistance levels would have three main effects: (1) The portion of the population who were graduates of PSE would increase by a couple of percentage points; (2) Gross Domestic Product would increase slightly and; (3) the measure of income inequality would decrease⁶⁴. One cannot deny that each of the three ancillary effects are positive for society in Canada.

The UPEI Student Union recognizes that while for many students, adequate student loan funding is available, there are those who fall through the cracks of the system. These students may have to pursue other financing options, such as private bank loans or credit cards, or they may not attend post-secondary education at all. The UPEI SU seeks to ensure a fair and adequate student loans program for all, and as such recommends inflation indexation as a tool to ensure the availability of student aid continues to grow as other costs do.

⁶² In this document, an 'independent' student is a student who has spent at least four years out of high school or who has worked full-time for two years.

⁶³ Educational Policy Institute. "Examination of the Impact of the Provincial Needs Assessment Process for Student Financial Assistance." 2009. P. 104.

⁶⁴ HRSDC, Gov't of Canada. "Summative Evaluation of the Canada Student Loans Program" 2011.



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Policy ID: S10

Status: Success

Ratification: September 8, 2013

Success Date: April 5, 2015

Expansion Of The Eligibility Requirements For The Graduate Mentorship Program

Synopsis: The UPEI Student Union believes that the Graduate Mentorship Program eligibility should be expanded so that all graduates from UPEI can benefit from the program, not just island students. Allowing this to be retention and a recruitment tool will be allowing the province to address the growing demographic concerns of the province.

The *Graduate Mentorship Program* is a program introduced in April 2012 by the government of Prince Edward Island⁶⁵ that is “designed to encourage employers to hire post-secondary graduates and provide a valuable work experience and mentorship opportunity in their field of study.”⁶⁶

“Research indicates that graduates are finding it difficult to secure a career in their field of study, and private sector employers are challenged to match qualified candidates with job vacancies,” said Minister Allen Roach (Innovation & Advanced Learning) at the program’s launch in 2012⁶⁷.

“The new Graduate Mentorship program, which targets individuals with a post-secondary degree or diploma, will provide graduates with a work experience in the private sector related to their education and career aspirations in Prince Edward Island.”⁶⁸

At the launch, Minister Roach also indicated that the program may prevent the ‘brain-drain’ of educated young Islanders from the province. Currently, the program

⁶⁵ Government of PEI News Release (12 April 2012): “Graduate Mentorship program to provide work experience for recent graduates”

⁶⁶ Graduate Mentorship Program Information Sheet. Skills PEI 2013.

⁶⁷ Government of PEI News Release (12 April 2012): “Graduate Mentorship program to provide work experience for recent graduates”

⁶⁸ Ibid.



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is only open to Island residents – those that reside on PEI before the beginning of their education.

It is the opinion of the UPEISU that the Graduate Mentorship Program is a very effective retention tool, but that the program should be expanded to include all graduates of post-secondary institutions on PEI. In this way, those youth who have chosen to come to PEI for their education are incentivized to remain on the Island. Those who choose to come to PEI and make a temporary home here deserve support to stay, should they so choose. One of the most effective ways to encourage retention is to provide employment support.

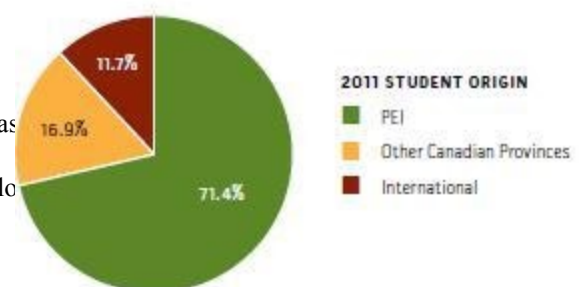
Youth unemployment on PEI during the fourth quarter of 2012 was 18.5% - compared to an all-ages average on PEI of 11.4%⁶⁹. Nationally, the youth unemployment rate was double that of the all-ages average in March 2013⁷⁰. With youth unemployment at these high levels, government must assist youth in obtaining meaningful experience and employment

According to a report authored by Martin Schwerdtfeger, a senior economist with TD Economics:

“Being unemployed at a young age can have a long-lasting impact on an individual’s career prospects. Economic research indicates that a period of unemployment at the time of entry into the labour market is associated with persistently lower wages many years thereafter.”⁷¹

This phenomenon, known as ‘wage scarring’ is well documented. The same TD Economics report concluded that the bout of youth unemployment created during the recent recession will cost Canadian youth \$23.1 billion over the next eighteen years - \$12.4 billion of which will be due to lost wages in the future (wage scarring)⁷². With these numbers in mind, one can see that bouts of youth unemployment are undeniably damaging to the economy – and will continue to be for years to come.

In the analysis of this issue, it is also important to note the changing demographics



⁶⁹ Labour Market Bulletin: Prince Edward Island (Q4 2012) Release

⁷⁰ StatsCan: Labour Force Survey – March 2013

⁷¹ TD Economics: “Assessing the long-term cost of youth unemployment”

⁷² Ibid. (p. 4)



of UPEI. According to UPEI President Abd-el-Aziz, PEI

high school graduate numbers are expected to drop by 22% over the next 14 years⁷³. UPEI can expect, in the future, to see fewer Island students, and increasingly more students from off-island.

As of 2011, almost 30% of students come from out-of-province⁷⁴.

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1: UPEI population mix, 2011 (UPEI By The Numbers)

A trend recently observed and confirmed by an MPHEC report shows that international student enrollment is skyrocketing: international student enrollment increased by 259.4% from 2001-2002 to 2011-2012. PEI leads the Maritimes in this regard. 35% of our international students come from China, and 22% are from the USA⁷⁵.

ENROLMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS		Enrolment 2011-2012	Change over		
			1 year	5 years	10 years
New Brunswick	Total	2,325	13.0%	20.6%	56.0%
	Undergraduate	1,786	14.6%	15.2%	43.8%
	Graduate	539	8.2%	43.0%	117.3%
Nova Scotia	Total	5,863	15.7%	49.9%	150.0%
	Undergraduate	4,825	16.9%	51.2%	166.9%
	Graduate	1,038	10.7%	44.2%	93.3%
Prince Edward Island	Total	496	9.7%	94.5%	259.4%
	Undergraduate	458	9.8%	102.7%	281.7%
	Graduate	38	8.6%	31.0%	111.1%
Maritimes	Total	8,684	14.6%	42.5%	118.6%
	Undergraduate	7,069	15.8%	42.3%	123.0%
	Graduate	1,615	9.8%	43.4%	101.1%

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 2: International Student Enrollment in the Maritimes (MPHEC)

The *Prince Edward Island Settlement Strategy*, authored in November 2010 by the Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning, highlights the government's desire for the recruitment and retention of skilled immigrants.

According to the *Strategy*, a survey of Holland College's international student population indicated that 62% of those surveyed would stay on PEI if they could find meaningful employment, and it is not unreasonable to believe that a similar or

⁷³ Abd-el-Aziz: Board of Governors Public Budget Presentation. 9 May 2013.

⁷⁴ UPEI: By the Numbers. Information sheet. Avail: upei.ca/bythenumbers

⁷⁵ MPHEC Annual Digest 2011-2012



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even-higher percentage of UPEI international students would feel the same⁷⁶. A recent survey

conducted by Corporate Research Associates, and commissioned by the Association of Atlantic Universities, further emphasizes that international students are ready and willing to help with our growing skills gap:

“33% of respondents ranked a “desire to live in Canada after graduation” as the single most important reason for their decision to attend a Canadian university.”⁷⁷

“76% of respondents were interested in applying for permanent residency through the federal government’s Canadian Experience Class (CEC) immigration stream.”⁷⁸

An application for permanent residency through the CEC requires at least one year of full-time, skilled work⁷⁹. The

Graduate Mentorship Program, if

expanded, could provide international graduates with the experience needed to obtain permanent residency through the CEC. The opportunity to become a permanent resident will be an attractive incentive for international graduates to stay and work on PEI, and it’s one that will enable PEI to combat the coming skills shortage.

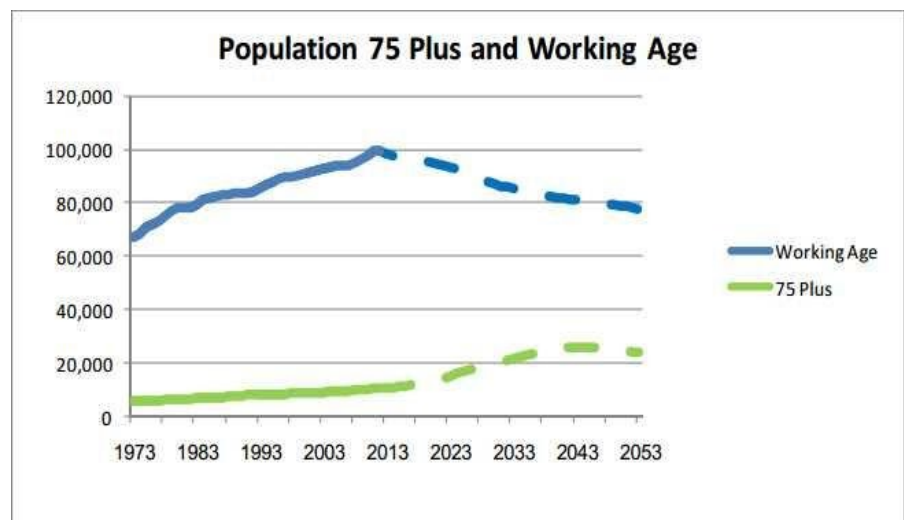


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 3: Population Projections by Age for PEI

⁷⁶ Prince Edward Island Settlement Strategy. November 2010. (p. 51)

⁷⁷ AAU Report: “Immigration and Universities in Atlantic Canada: A Marriage Made in Heaven”

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Determine your eligibility – Canadian Experience Class. Avail:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/cec/apply-who.asp>



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As UPEI's international student population has and continues to balloon, government should take advantage of the opportunity to retain skilled young immigrants by implementing effective retention strategies.

As noted previously, the PEI public school system is slated to see a drop in Island graduates over the next 14 years. In response, UPEI is increasing recruitment efforts domestically out-of-province, and is identifying new markets to

target (ex. In Ontario), in a greater effort to make up for the projected enrollment shortfall in the coming years. As recruitment efforts change, UPEI's student population will diversify even further to include a larger proportion of domestic, out-of-province students.

But it is not only the Island school system which is slated to see a drop in population over the next years – the entire Island is. In fact, according to the Government of Prince Edward Island's population projections, the Island's natural increase rate (births minus deaths) will become negative by 2016. Further, the number of working-age people is slated to decrease while those age seventy-five and over are slated to increase⁸⁰.

As the Island moves into a state of stagnant and even negative growth, immigration and inter-provincial migration will play an increasingly large role in ensuring that the Island economy is diverse, sustainable, and productive.

The Island will clearly benefit further from these students who, if encouraged through retention efforts, may stay here beyond graduation from their program of study. It is increasingly important, as shown, to ensure a diversified and robust economy on Prince Edward Island. Going forward, it will be vital for government to support those youth who wish to stay here post-graduation, to ensure that they are able to effectively contribute to the Island economy.

The UPEI Student Union recommends that the government of Prince Edward Island expand the eligibility requirements of the Graduate Mentorship Program to include those who are not official residents of Prince Edward Island, but who have graduated from Island post-secondary institutions, so as to encourage retention and provide valuable work experience for graduates.

⁸⁰ Prince Edward Island Population Projections 2013-2053. April 11, 2013.



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Policy ID: S13

Status: Success

Ratified on: May 2020

Success Date: May 4th 2020

Investment In A Post-secondary Research and Innovation Fund

Success: on the 4th of May 2020, the university announced a \$75,000 award grant from the government of PEI as a COVID-19 student support fund. This was administered through the scholarships department to students and a faculty member.

Principle: Research is a key component of post-secondary education. All postsecondary students, undergraduate or graduate, regardless of their field of study, should have access to research funding opportunities.

Concern: There are extremely limited research opportunities for postsecondary students in Prince Edward Island, none of which are provincially funded. This implies that undergraduate students are unfamiliar with research, thereby being ill-prepared to embark on graduate studies or to enter the labour market. Graduate students, on the other hand, have insufficient access to resources over the duration of their studies.

Recommendation: The Government of Prince Edward Island developed a Post-Secondary Research and Innovation Fund.

Supporting evidence:

UPEI currently ranks 41st out of 50 universities when it comes to research, and this lag can be directly attributed to the very limited pickings in terms of research funding to its students⁸¹. On the undergraduate level, research has consistently been directly linked to student engagement and success⁸². Undergraduate research funding at UPEI is however only available via the NSERC Undergraduate Science Research Awards, the UPEI Science

⁸¹ <https://researchinfosource.com/top-50-research-universities/2018/list>

⁸² Fechheimer M, Webber K, Kleiber PB. How well do undergraduate research programs promote engagement and success of students?. CBE Life Sci Educ. 2011;10(2):156–163. doi:10.1187/cbe.10-10-0130



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Undergraduate Research Awards, or the UPEI Engineering Undergraduate Research Awards. These three awards offer on average a combined 25 grants for research to students per year⁸³. This lack of options has two major implications: 1. There is very strong competition every year for students of these faculties to have access to research funding. 2. There is no research funding allocated to other faculties, which comprise over 60% of undergraduate students.

Students are underprepared as to what research entails, thereby not obtaining a complete university education, and are less competitive when applying to graduate programs due to their lack of prior experience.

At the graduate level, students are eligible for very limited funding provincially. Indeed, most provincial grants are dedicated towards the obtention of a first degree or diploma, thus excluding graduate students by default.

In PEI, the only faculty recipient of dedicated funding is the Atlantic Veterinary College, as part of an interprovincial agreement within the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC)⁸⁴. This funding is dedicated to the functioning of the AVC, from day-to-day operations to research. The Government of Prince Edward Island introduced a “Graduate and Post-Doctoral Fellowship” Program to support innovative research on Industry-relevant projects⁸⁵. This program, while promising, had several shortcomings. Firstly, its scope being restricted to very specific fields within graduate research made it inaccessible to those pursuing research in fields outside of Bioscience, Information & Communication Technology, Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing. Secondly, the program only supported research with commercialization potential, thereby excluding those whose focus is not industry. Thirdly, and most importantly, there has not been a call

⁸³ Leslie Cudmore. UPEI Research Services.

⁸⁴<http://www.mphec.ca/funding/Veterinary.aspx>

⁸⁵ Government of PEI. <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/innovation-pe/graduate-students-and-post-doctoral-fellowship>



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for applications in over two years as of June 2019⁸⁶. This program is thus inadequate in fostering research for graduate students.

As a result, Prince Edward Island is currently one of only two provinces to effectively not have dedicated provincial funding towards furthering student research.

The Government of British Columbia announced in 2018 the investment of \$12 million into a Graduate Scholarship Fund that would support 800 merit-based awards of \$15,000 for students pursuing Master's or Doctorates. The Government of Manitoba hosts a similar program in partnership with numerous institutions such as the University of Manitoba¹⁸ and the University of Winnipeg¹⁹. These Manitoba Graduate Scholarships entitle research-based graduate students to \$15,000 over a period of 12 months. The Province of Saskatchewan operates the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship program via a fund-matching model for post-secondary institutions⁸⁷.

Here, the province matches the monies raised by the University for scholarships that may be made available for innovative research pursued by students in Undergraduate or Graduate levels⁸⁸. The Ontario Student Assistance Program furthermore offers the Ontario Graduate Scholarships, where eligible students may receive \$5000 per consecutive term for up to 6 consecutive terms over a 2-year period⁸⁹ to undertake research. In this program, the province pays two-thirds of the cost of the scholarship and the institution matches the remaining third⁹⁰.

⁸⁶ Phone call with Innovation PEI. June 27, 2019.

⁸⁷ <http://publications.gov.sk.ca/documents/139/79351-Saskatchewan%20Innovation%20and%20Opportunity%20Scholarship%20Administrative%20Guidelines%202018.pdf>

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ <https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/A-ZListofAid/PRDR019245.html>

⁹⁰ <https://gradstudents.carleton.ca/awards-and-funding/external-awards/ogs/>



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Other provinces collaborate with or fund research and innovation agencies that administer scholarships to students undertaking research at post-secondary institutions. The Alberta Innovates agency, for instance, funds Graduate Student Scholarships for students in the fields of Information and Communications Technology, Nanotechnology and Health⁹¹. Les Fonds de Recherche du Québec (The Québec Research Funds), funded by the Government of Québec, provide scholarships to students undertaking research in three areas: Health⁹², Society and Culture⁹³, and Nature and Technology⁹⁴.

We recommend the Province of Prince Edward Island create a post-secondary research fund to support students in their research endeavours and ensure they are up to par with other students from across Canada.

⁹¹ <https://albertainnovates.ca/funding-post-secondary-investments/>

⁹² <http://www.frqs.gouv.qc.ca/en/bourses-et-subventions>

⁹³ <http://www.frqsc.gouv.qc.ca/en/bourses-et-subventions>

⁹⁴ <http://www.frqnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/bourses-et-subventions>



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PEI Research Fund Pilot Project

Breakdown of costed proposal ask

Graduate Research Scholarships: These would be grants available to students starting or continuing a full-time Master's or Doctorate Program at UPEI. It is not meant to replace any stipends or other financial assistance already received by the students. Graduate students undertaking research are subjected to long hours whereby they are often unable to pursue employment alongside their studies. These research grants aim to facilitate focus on research by alleviating financial strain on students.

Grant Amount: \$5,000

Number of recipients: 6 for the Academic Year

Duration: An academic term

Criteria: Full-time graduate students not having already received this grant in the same Academic Year.

Undergraduate Summer Research Scholarship

As of now, only students in the faculties of science and engineering have access to research funding over the summer. These grants, which can be internal Undergraduate Research Awards, or NSERC Undergraduate Science Research Awards, are extremely competitive and exclude students from all other faculties at UPEI.

Undergraduate Summer Research Scholarships would provide students with research opportunities at the undergraduate level, providing them with an immersion in their field of interest and making them more competitive when it comes to graduate program applications. It would also increase accessibility to education by ensuring students do not have to choose between advancing their academic pursuits and employment.

Grant Amount: \$5,000

Number of recipients: 4 per summer

Duration: 12 weeks over the summer



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Criteria: Full-time third-or fourth-year undergraduate students from any faculty at UPEI, who have been approved to carry out research under the supervision of a UPEI Faculty member.

Undergraduate Research Awards: These would be awards allocated to students pursuing research during the Fall or Winter semesters for credit. These can be in the form of Directed Studies courses, Honours Research, or other upper level research courses.

As of now, there is limited or no assistance available to students who choose to pursue research as part of their academic endeavours. Considering these courses require significant amounts of time and energy to undertake, these scholarships would ensure compensation of resources put in.

Grant Amount: \$3,125

Duration: 12 weeks of part-time research

Number of recipients: 8 per year

Criteria: Full-time undergraduate students from any faculty at UPEI, who are undertaking research courses.

Who?

We recommend these grants be administered by UPEI Research Services as the department is equipped with an understanding of the programs and courses. They also already have systems in place for grant administration and application evaluation.

How?

Students would apply by submitting a resume, description of the research being undertaken, as well as a letter of support from their supervisor.

The UPEISU sees the value of investing into research and innovation in terms of enabling students obtain a deeper understanding of their fields of study. This is an investment with enormous payback in terms of economic growth and the development of a qualified, skilled workforce.



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Active Policies



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Policy ID: A01

Ratified on: October 6, 2019

To be reviewed on: October 6, 2022

Increasing Experiential Education Opportunities

Principles: Experiential Education is an instrumental component of post-secondary education to which all post-secondary students should have access prior to joining the labour market.

Unpaid interns should have access to protections and support to ensure they can derive maximum value from the internship.

Government and the private sector should collaborate to ensure that students have access to experiential education opportunities and there is a trained workforce.

The Issue:

The twenty-first century economy has required students to attend post-secondary education at a higher rate than ever before. Students are accumulating student debt at record rates, while simultaneously facing discrimination in the labour market. PEI's youth unemployment rate stood at 10.7% in September 2018, slightly lower than the national youth unemployment rate of 11%, but above PEI's general unemployment rate of 8.7%.⁹⁵

There is an identifiable group in OECD countries, Canada included, that have been called the Poorly Integrated New Entrants or PINES. This group of young people are educated and qualified enough to gain employment, but find difficulty integrating into the labour force. They slip between temporary jobs and unemployment, even when the economy is showing signs of growth.⁹⁶ Prince Edward Island is no exception to this phenomenon.

⁹⁵ Yarr, Kevin. CBC PEI. "P.E.I. Unemployment Rate Below 10% for 5 Straight Months." Oct 9, 2018.

Avail:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-job-numbers-september-2018-1.4855686>

⁹⁶ Bell, D. & Benes, K. Transitioning Graduates to Work: Improving the Labour Market Success of Poorly Integrated New Entrants (PINES) in Canada



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Experiential learning can be described as education through experiences that support students in applying their knowledge and conceptual understanding to real-world problems and situations. The classroom can be a place where experiential learning happens, but when students get to leave the classroom for opportunities such as internships, co-op placements, clinical experiences, research, and service-learning projects, the learning becomes more powerful.⁹⁷ This also helps to address the skills gap that currently exists with PINEs.

One way in which students attempt to gain experience while studying is through internships. Many of these are, unfortunately, unpaid. Unpaid interns are not provided with as high quality of an experience as paid interns. Employment outcomes are higher for those who work in paid internships. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers in the US, only 37% of unpaid interns receive a job offer following their Bachelor's degree, compared to 63% of paid interns.⁹⁸ There is currently nothing in the labour code specifically protecting young people from the problems that can arise with unpaid internships.

Creation of a Provincial Experiential Learning Fund

Principle: Experiential Education is an instrumental component of post-secondary education to which all post-secondary students should have access prior to joining the labour market.

Concern: There is currently insufficient provincial support to expand experiential opportunities and incorporate them in post-secondary education on Prince Edward Island.

Recommendation: The Government of Prince Edward Island create an Experiential Learning Fund to create co-op and internship opportunities for post-secondary students.

Supporting Evidence:

⁹⁷ Experiential Learning Defined. University of Texas Faculty Innovation Centre. Access: <https://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/teaching/engagement/experiential-learning/defined>

⁹⁸ National Association of Colleges and Employers. Class of 2013 Student Survey. Accessed: <http://www.nacweb.org/s05292013/paid-unpaid-interns-job-offer.aspx>



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As of 2018, PEI's youth unemployment rate stood at 10.7%, slightly lower than the national youth unemployment rate of 11%, but above PEI's general unemployment rate of 8.7%. This higher unemployment rate may be explained by the difficulty faced by PINEs in integrating the workforce.

There exists a perception that youth with post-secondary degrees, while educated, are not labour market ready, leading to a gap of over three months between the completion of a degree and the obtention of a first job⁹⁹.

Experiential learning is an effective means of addressing youth unemployment and underemployment and preparing youth for the labour market¹⁰⁰. Yet, less than half of youth have access to programs with built-in experiential learning in Canada¹⁰¹.

Experiential Learning is prioritised by numerous provinces in Canada. In 2018, the Government of New Brunswick announced the creation of a five million dollar Student Experiential Learning Investment that included the establishment of a Student Experiential Learning Fund¹⁰². This Fund, while providing students with skills, also aims at reducing financial barriers to education, as students will have access to jobs.

Thus, we recommend that the Government of Prince Edward Island bridge the gap between post-secondary education and the workforce by establishing an Experiential Learning Fund to expand co-op and internship opportunities.

The protection of Unpaid Interns on PEI

Principle: Unpaid interns should have access to protections and support to ensure they can derive maximum value from the internship.

⁹⁹ HUMA, Evidence, 30 November 2017, 1535 (Rachel Wernick, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development [ESDC]).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Funding Announced for NB Student Experiential Learning. NBSA.
<https://www.unbsu.ca/news/2018/experientialfunding>. June 14, 2018.



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Concern: Unpaid Interns do not have access to the same protections as paid interns in PEI, thereby putting them at risk of exploitation.

Recommendation: The Government of Prince Edward Island take steps to build protections for unpaid interns in PEI. Unpaid interns should be protected under a six-point system like they are in Ontario.

Supporting Evidence:

Unpaid interns are not provided with as high quality of an experience as paid interns. Employment outcomes are higher for those who work in paid internships. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers in the US, only 37% of unpaid interns receive a job offer following their Bachelor's degree, compared to 63% of paid interns.¹⁰³

There is currently nothing in the labour code specifically protecting young people from the problems that can arise with unpaid internships. A six-point test exists in Ontario which underlines the conditions under which an intern should be remunerated. The criteria are as follows:

- 1) The training is similar to that which is given in vocational learning;
- 2) The training is for the benefit of the individual;
- 3) The person providing the training derives little, if any, benefit from the activity of the individual while they are being trained;
- 4) The individual does not displace employees of the person providing the training;
- 5) The individual is not accorded a right to become an employee of the person providing the training;
- 6) The individual is advised that they will receive no remuneration for the time they spend in training¹⁰⁴

In order to better protect youth who undergo unpaid internships, we recommend the Province of Prince Edward Island ensure that unpaid interns are protected on

¹⁰³ National Association of Colleges and Employers. Class of 2013 Student Survey. Accessed:

<http://www.nacweb.org/s05292013/paid-unpaid-interns-job-offer.aspx>

¹⁰⁴ Canadian Intern Association. What is the law? Access: <http://www.internassociation.ca/what-is-the-law/>



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PEI. We further recommend that the six-part test be mandated to determine whether or not an intern should receive remuneration.

Partnerships between Government and the Private Sector for Experiential Opportunities

Principle: Government and the private sector should collaborate to ensure that students have access to experiential education opportunities and there is a trained workforce.

Concern: There is no incentive for the private sector to increase its commitment towards a skilled workforce, thereby creating an employer training gap.

Recommendation: The Government of Prince Edward Island introduce a Prince Edward Island Training Tax to incentivize the private sector to contribute in the training of our workforce.

Supporting evidence:

Canada is currently experiencing an “employer training gap” and is falling behind other OECD countries. Currently, Canadian employers pay 64 cents for every dollar American employers spend on training. Meanwhile, Canadian spending on training has declined by about 40%.¹⁰⁵

Quebec is already taking steps to address the PINEs issue by bringing the private sector back into the picture. In Quebec, companies are required to spend 1% of their total payroll on training such as formal courses, apprenticeships, salaries to interns, and other workforce development programs. Those companies that refuse to pay 1% on training pay a 1% tax that goes into a Workforce Skills Development and

¹⁰⁵ Munro, Daniel, Conference Board of Canada, Developing Skills: Where are Canada's Employers? March 20, 2014. Access: http://www.conferenceboard.ca/topics/education/commentaries/14-03-20/developing_skills_where_are_ca_nada_s_employers.aspx



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Recognition Fund.¹⁰⁶ If a company pays a portion of the 1%, they pay only the difference. Quebec ensures this tax does not apply to small businesses.

Prince Edward Island should introduce a PEI Training Tax so that the private sector would be increasingly committed to helping young students become labour market ready.

¹⁰⁶ Editeur Officiel du Quebec, An Act to Promote Workforce Skills Development and Recognition, updated Dec 2015. Access:
http://www2.publicationsdquebec.gouv.gc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/D_8_3/D8_3_A.html



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Policy ID: A02

Ratified on: April 15, 2020

To be reviewed on: April 15, 2023

Student Affordable Housing

Principles

All students should have secure, affordable and accessible housing over the course of their studies.

Housing is a fundamental human right, and should not be a barrier to students' access to education.

Students represent a considerable percentage of renters on Prince Edward Island, especially in Charlottetown.

The Issue

The Housing Data and Trends 2017 report states, "Stable, safe, adequate housing is a fundamental human need, and provides a foundation from which Islanders can achieve success in education, employment, community participation, and health".¹⁰⁷ Accessibility to affordable housing is essential for students when pursuing post secondary education. An inadequate supply of affordable housing presents barriers for many students in their efforts to attend and succeed in postsecondary education.

In the 2017 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Rental Market Report for Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown had an all time low vacancy rate of 0.9%,¹⁰⁸ and in some cases, as low as 0.5%.¹⁰⁹ This was a major shift from 2014, when the vacancy rate in Charlottetown was 7.9%.¹¹⁰ Despite the substantial increase in population, only 100 apartments were built in 2016-17.¹¹¹ In 2018-19, things only

¹⁰⁷ The Province of Prince Edward Island. Report. Housing Data and Trends, Poverty Reduction Action Plan Background. Charlottetown, PE, 2018..

¹⁰⁸ Canada. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Rental Market Report: Prince Edward Island Highlights 2017*. CMHC, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Canada. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Rental Market Report: Prince Edward Island Highlights 2014*. CMHC, 2014.

¹¹¹ The Province of Prince Edward Island. Report. Housing Data and Trends, Poverty Reduction Action Plan Background. Charlottetown, PE, 2018.



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worsened: the vacancy rate dropped to 0.2% in Charlottetown, and 0.3% for PEI overall.

Population growth and inadequate housing development are not the only factors causing a low vacancy rate. The rising popularity of online rental companies like Airbnb has affected housing supply; former long-term rental properties have shifted to seasonal or short-term rentals. This is because, during the months of May-September, property owners like to take advantage of high temporary demand from tourists. From 2015-2016, Airbnb rental units in Charlottetown increased by double, from 154 to 300 units.¹¹² Concurrently, the vacancy rate in Charlottetown decreased from 4.2% to 1.7%.¹¹³ In 2018, 442 housing units in Charlottetown were available for short term rental via Airbnb.¹¹⁴ The rapid increase of short-term rentals affects students as the academic calendar no longer operates September-April, coinciding with the short term rental season like it once did. Since 2003 there has been a 49.6% increase in enrolment of summer courses, therefore an increase of students requiring housing within proximity to the University, not just in the months of September-April.¹¹⁵

In July 2018, a UPEI Student Union survey gathered information on their housing situations, if they were being affected by the 0.9% vacancy rate, and how. From this the UPEI Student Union found that, on average, students were paying 67% of their income, pre tax, towards housing.¹¹⁶ Similarly, in their 2018 *Youth Housing Report*, Charlottetown - Youth Matters found that, on average, 65% of students spent over 30% of their income towards housing.¹¹⁷ As defined in the 2018 Provincial Housing Action Plan and CMHC, "housing is considered affordable if shelter costs account for less than 30% of before-tax household income".¹¹⁸

¹¹² Fraser, Sara. "Airbnb Takes Flight in P.E.I. as Popularity of Rental Site Doubles." CBC PEI. May 30, 2016.

¹¹³ Canada. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Rental Market Report: Charlottetown CA 2016*. CMHC, 2016.

¹¹⁴ Neatby, Stu. "Airbnb Listings up 40 per Cent in 2018." *The Guardian*, November 06, 2018.

¹¹⁵ Headcounts in Summer Sessions, Historical Trend" Yuqin Gong

¹¹⁶ *UPEI Student Union Housing Survey Results*. Report. Student Union, University of Prince Edward Island. Charlottetown, PE, 2018

¹¹⁷ *Youth Housing Report*. Report. Charlottetown Youth Matters. Charlottetown, PE, 2018.

¹¹⁸ "About Affordable Housing in Canada." Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. May 31, 2018.



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Students are in a precarious position financially. According to the 2018 *Demographics of Low Income* report, 11.7% of youth on PEI had low income, which is the highest for any demographic¹¹⁹. This percentage is considerably higher in Charlottetown, where 17.8% of youth are in low income. Within this report, student status is recognized as a leading cause to the percentage of youth who have a low income. Most students rely on part-time shift work to pay for their bills, which makes budgeting difficult due to the uneven distribution of shifts from month to month.

With the low vacancy rate of 0.2% in Charlottetown¹²⁰, students face a lack of choice in housing thereby subjecting them to unaffordable housing just to have a roof over their heads. Housing has been identified as the second highest expense for students after tuition, thus playing a considerable role in their financial situation.

Thus, in an extremely undersupplied housing market, students are being left to live in substandard conditions, or pay unreasonable amounts for a roof over their heads.

The Role of the Provincial Government

Housing is generally viewed as a shared responsibility between Municipal, Provincial and Federal Governments. Provincially, the government of PEI released in 2018 a 5-year Provincial Housing Action Plan¹²¹, which identifies increased numbers of students as stakeholders within the housing market.

In addition, the province provides housing assistance for those in low income, with currently two programs existing. the Senior Assistance Program and the Family Housing Assistance Program. The latter operates on a needs-based level and covers upto 80% of the market rate for rent for eligible families, as long as the individuals contribute 25% of their income to housing¹²². As of now, none of these two programs are geared towards the unique needs of students.

¹¹⁹ Government of Prince Edward Island. *Demographics of Low Income*. May 17, 2019.

¹²⁰ Canada. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Rental Market Report: Charlottetown CA 2018*. CMHC, 2018.

¹²¹ Housing Action Plan for Prince Edward Island. 2018.

¹²² Government of Prince Edward Island. *Housing Assistance*.

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/family-and-human-services/housing-assistance>
Accessed in July 2019



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The 2019 Liberal Platform and the 2019 Progressive Conservative Platform both mention rent supplements, or mobile rental vouchers, the latter directly citing “island students” as a target group for the implementation of those^{123,124}. The 2019-20 PEI Provincial Operating Budget included a \$2.2 million investment into rent supplements¹²⁵.

The UPEISU aims at ensuring students are not falling prey to an increasingly expensive, and limited housing market. While there have been promises made, and some research done with regards to student affordable housing, it is imperative that action be taken as well.

Creating Student-Dedicated Affordable Housing

Principle: All students should have secure, affordable and accessible housing over the course of their studies.

Housing is a fundamental human right, and should not be a barrier to students’ access to education.

Concern: Over the past few years, the number of students enrolled year-round in courses has increased, while the number of housing accommodations has decreased.

Recommendation: That the Government of Prince Edward Island, the City of Charlottetown, and UPEI collaborate to create student-dedicated affordable housing.

Supporting Evidence:

In July 2018, a UPEI Student Union survey gathered information on their housing situations, if they were being affected by the 0.9% vacancy rate, and how. From this the UPEI Student Union found that, on average, students were paying 67% of their income, pre tax, towards housing.¹²⁶ Similarly, in their 2018 *Youth Housing Report*,

¹²³ PEI liberal Platform. “*PEI is working*”. Accessed in July 2019

¹²⁴ PEI Progressive Conservative Platform. “*It’s About People*” Accessed in July 2019.

¹²⁵ Government of Prince Edward Island. *PEI Provincial Budget 2019-20*. Accessed in July 2019

¹²⁶ *UPEI Student Union Housing Survey Results*. Report. Student Union, University of Prince Edward Island. Charlottetown, PE, 2018



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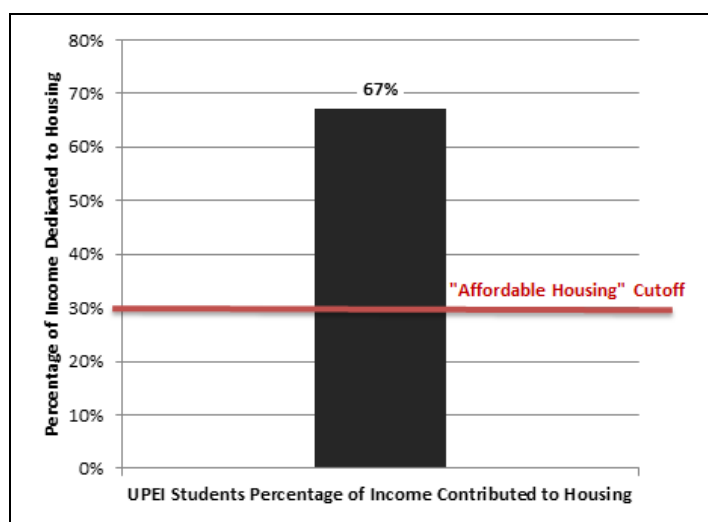
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Charlottetown - Youth Matters found that, on average, 65% of students spent over 30% of their income towards housing.¹²⁷ As defined in the 2018 Provincial Housing Action Plan and CMHC, “housing is considered affordable if shelter costs account for less than 30% of before-tax household income”.¹²⁸

Students experience stress on their mental health from housing constraints in two ways. The first source of stress related to the financial burden associated with spending approximately 67% of their wages on housing, with the procurement of wages coming at the expense of study time for work time, thus hindering their academic efforts. The second source pertained to the challenging nature of finding



a residence with a 0.9% vacancy rate. Approximately 66% of students said that the current vacancy rate affected their ability to move housing when they wanted. The CMHA Citizen's for Mental Health project concluded that “to improve the mental health of all, governments must ensure access to safe, affordable and appropriate housing as individual circumstances necessitate”.¹²⁹

Inaccessible housing is a barrier to education. To break this barrier, student-specific solutions are needed. Student-dedicated affordable housing is a solution which has been proven to have positive effects not just for students but for the community as a whole.

The lack of affordable housing is not just an issue faced by present students at UPEI, but for those graduating as well. When students were asked if they planned on staying in PEI after graduating, 45% of students living away from home said they intended on leaving PEI; of those respondents, 46% said they would stay if the

¹²⁷ *Youth Housing Report*. Report. Charlottetown Youth Matters. Charlottetown, PE, 2018.

¹²⁸ "About Affordable Housing in Canada." Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. May 31, 2018.

¹²⁹ Ibid



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housing situation were different.¹³⁰ Additionally, 55% of students living with their parent/guardian said they intended to leave PEI after their studies, of these respondents; 41% said they would stay if the housing situation were different.¹³¹

“Student housing should be considered as a distinct and important factor in shaping healthy, affordable communities.”¹³² As essential, however economically vulnerable, members of the Charlottetown community, adequate action must be taken now to provide student specific solutions to address the dire need for affordable and available housing.

Therefore, the UPEI Student Union recommends that the Government of Prince Edward Island, the City of Charlottetown, and UPEI collaborate to create student-dedicated affordable housing.

Including Post-Secondary Students in the PEI Rent Supplement Program

Principle: All students should have secure, affordable and accessible housing over the course of their studies.

Concern: The cost of housing has consistently increased over the past few years, thereby requiring students to spend larger proportions of their income on housing.

Recommendation: That post-secondary students, as a group with low income, be included in the PEI Rent Supplement Program.

Supporting evidence:

In 2018, according to a UPEI Student Union survey, UPEI students reported paying an average of \$538 on rent, which represented over 67% of the average monthly income of a student¹³³. The Charlottetown Youth Matters *Youth Housing Report* furthermore found on average, 65% of students spent over 30% of their income

¹³⁰ *UPEI Student Union Housing Survey Results*. Report. Student Union, University of Prince Edward Island. Charlottetown, PE, 2018

¹³¹ Ibid

¹³² *Housing Data and Trends*. Report. The Province of Prince Edward Island. PE, 2018.

¹³³ UPEISU Housing Survey. Summer 2018.



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towards housing¹³⁴. This is over twice the 30% threshold established by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the proportion of one's income to be spent on affordable housing.

The 2019 Liberal Platform and the 2019 Progressive Conservative Platform both mention rent supplements, or mobile rental vouchers, the latter directly citing “island students” as a target group for the implementation of those^{135,136}. The 2019-20 PEI Provincial Operating Budget includes a \$2.2 million investment into rent supplements¹³⁷.

As of now, there exist two housing assistance programs on PEI that incorporate rent supplements: the Senior Assistance Program and the Family Housing Assistance Program. The latter operates on a needs-based level and covers up to 80% of the market rate for rent for eligible families, as long as the individuals contribute 25% of their income to housing¹³⁸. This focus on families automatically excludes most students. Despite the mention of island students on the platform, they are thus not eligible for housing assistance in most cases.

Numerous provinces have rent supplement programs that students are eligible for: Alberta has “Direct to Tenant Rent Supplements” where subsidies are determined by the difference between 30% of the household's income and market rent up to a maximum subsidy¹³⁹. Ontario has a similar program with the “Short-Term Rent Supplement Program”. Within the Maritimes, New Brunswick's Rent Supplement Assistance Program is available to students who occupy “crowded or inadequate dwelling” that costs less than 30% of their income while adequate housing would require more than 30% of their income, or to those who “pay 30% or more of their income for shelter and an adequate and suitable dwelling available in their market area would consume 30% or more of their income”¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁴ Youth Housing Report. *Charlottetown Youth Matters*. 2018.

¹³⁵ PEI liberal Platform. “*PEI is working*”. Accessed in July 2019

¹³⁶ PEI Progressive Conservative Platform. “*It's About People*” Accessed in July 2019.

¹³⁷ Government of Prince Edward Island. *PEI Provincial Budget 2019-20*. Accessed in July 2019

¹³⁸ Government of Prince Edward Island. *Housing Assistance*.

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/family-and-human-services/housing-assistance>
Accessed in July 2019

¹³⁹ Alberta.ca. *Affordable Housing Programs*. <https://www.alberta.ca/affordable-housing-programs.aspx>.
Accessed in July 2019

¹⁴⁰ Government of New Brunswick. *Rent Supplement Assistant Program*. Accessed in July 2019.



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Students are in an especially precarious position financially. According to the 2018 *Demographics of Low Income* report, which is the Poverty Reduction Action Plan Background, 11.7% of youth on PEI had low income, which is the highest for any demographic¹⁴¹. This percentage is considerably higher in Charlottetown, where 17.8% of youth are in low income. Within this report, student status is recognized as a leading cause to the percentage of youth who have a low income. Most students rely on part-time shift work to pay for their bills, which makes budgeting difficult due to the uneven distribution of shifts from month to month.

With the low vacancy rate of 0.2% in Charlottetown¹⁴², students face a lack of choice in housing thereby subjecting them to unaffordable housing just to have a roof over their heads. Housing has been identified as the second highest expense for students after tuition, thus playing a considerable role in their financial situation. 54% of the 2018 UPEISU Housing Survey respondents stated that the cost of housing directly impacted the full-time status of their studies, with 41% stating their academic ability has been affected¹⁴³. Subsequently, students' mental health is negatively impacted.

Rent supplements directly address the barrier of housing unaffordability for students. Students, as a group with low income, should be included in the PEI Rent Supplement Program

Regulating Short-Term Rentals on PEI

Principle: All students should have secure, affordable and accessible housing over the course of their studies.

Students represent a considerable percentage of renters on Prince Edward Island, especially in Charlottetown.

Concern: Over the past few years, the number of students enrolled year-round in courses has increased, while the number of housing accommodations has decreased sharply, especially from May to September.

¹⁴¹ Government of Prince Edward Island. *Demographics of Low Income*. May 17, 2019.

¹⁴² Canada. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *Rental Market Report: Charlottetown CA 2018*. CMHC, 2018.

¹⁴³ UPEISU Housing Survey. Summer 2018.



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Recommendation: That short-term rentals be regulated to lift pressure off the rental market and make housing more accessible for students.

Supporting Evidence:

The increase in short-term rentals available from May to October has significantly impacted UPEI students' options for housing. The traditional model of students attending class exclusively from September to April is outdated. Numerous programs have different start dates: the Bachelor of Education program starts in May; the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program starts in Early August; graduate students may start their studies over the summer. Student housing options should evolve to reflect students' year-round need for housing.

In Canada, post secondary students take on average five to six years to finish their undergraduate degree, which traditionally took four years¹⁴⁴. One factor that has influenced this is the increasing cost of post-secondary education, and students taking on part-time or full-time work in addition to their studies. Over the last five years alone, tuition at UPEI has increased by approximately 15%. The Student Union's *Housing Survey* in July 2018 identified that 61% of students work part-time throughout the year, and 7.1% work full-time.

Over 53% of students also stated that the cost of housing was affecting their ability to pursue full-time studies. Because of this, students are now spreading their course-load over the Fall, Winter, and Summer semesters. According to the *Demographics of Low Income* report, youth aged 18-24 were most likely to have low income, quantified as 11.7% of PEI youth. The percentage of youth in low income is considerably higher in Charlottetown, where 17.8% of youth are in low income. Within this report, student status is recognized as a leading cause to the percentage of youth who have a low income.

In Charlottetown, over the past five years, the vacancy rate has decreased from 8.7% to 0.2%. The number of short-term rentals, on the other hand, increased drastically to cover over 2% of the Charlottetown rental market¹⁴⁵. This is quantified as over 440 listings¹⁴⁶. This is particularly significant as the summer months are

¹⁴⁴ MPHEC Time-to-degree. 2018. http://www.mphec.ca/media/168583/Time_to_degree_2018.pdf

¹⁴⁵ Campbell, Kerry. "1 in 50 private dwellings in Charlottetown listed on Airbnb". *CBC*. Apr 30, 2019

¹⁴⁶ Neatby, Stu. "Airbnb listings up 40 per cent in 2018". *The Guardian*. Nov 06, 2018.



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when the short-term rental market is most active. Since 2004 there has been a 53.3% increase in enrolment of summer courses¹⁴⁷. In Summer 2019, approximately 47% of the total student body was enrolled in summer courses.

Comparing enrollment from the past two years, the number of students taking summer courses has jumped from 2061 in 2018 to 2216 in 2019. In this time period, the number of online courses offered decreased by 2 while the number of on-campus courses offered increased by 3. This would be expected to lead to a decrease in the number of students in online courses, and an increase to those in on-campus courses. Student enrollment, however, shows 125 more students enrolled in online courses in 2019 than 2018. The number of students taking on-campus courses, on the other hand, only increased by 28. Therefore, despite students having an increased appetite for summer courses, there is a preference for online courses for which they do not need to be present on campus, or live in Charlottetown.

UPEI Summer Courses			
	2018	2019	
Number of "On-Campus" Courses	274	277	+3
Number of "Online" Courses	40	38	-2
Total Number of Summer Courses	314	315	+1

UPEI Summer Students			
	2018	2019	
Students in "On-Campus" Courses	1466	1494	+28
Students in "Online" Courses	595	722	+127
Total Number of Student in Summer Courses	2061	2216	+155

It

was

concluded that students were negatively impacted by the housing climate in three ways: financial, academic, and mental health.

¹⁴⁷ Headcounts in Summer Sessions, Historical Trend" Yuqin Gong



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All evidence thus suggests that the low vacancy rates are negatively impacting post-seconts on PEI. Regulating short-term rentals would lift pressure off the re



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Policy: A03

Ratified on: April 13, 2020

To be reviewed on: April 13, 2023

Student Financial Aid

Principles

Upfront, non-repayable grants are the most effective and financially sustainable way to decrease financial barriers to post-secondary education.

Finances should not be a barrier to students' pursuit of post-secondary education in Prince Edward Island.

Parental contributions should not be assumed assets to a student's post-secondary education.

Post-secondary students should have access to financial aid regardless of their field or level of study.

Students should not have to take on insurmountable amounts of debt in order to access post-secondary education.

Tuition costs should be predictable and reasonable for students pursuing a degree.

The Issue

Post-secondary education is imperative for better life outcomes for individuals. Men having attained a Bachelor's degree earn on average 50% more than high school graduates in PEI¹⁴⁸. Comparing those with a college diploma, a similar trend is seen, with men having attended college earning 25% more than their high school graduate counterparts¹⁴⁹. For women, the comparison is even more obvious, women with a Bachelor's degree earn 74% more, and those with a college diploma earn 25% more than women who are high school graduates.

¹⁴⁸ *Does education pay? A comparison of earnings by level of education in Canada and its provinces and territories.* Census in Brief. November 29, 2017.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid



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From a structurally holistic point of view, post-secondary education serves to ensure the presence of a skilled workforce. Numerous industries rely on members with post-secondary education to evolve and progress further as technological and societal advances are made.

In the 2019-20 academic year, over 1,300 students have been assessed for provincial student loans¹⁵⁰. This shows that finances are a definite barrier in the access of post-secondary education. Of these students, over 800 were expected to receive financial contributions to their education from their parents¹⁵¹. This places undue stress on students from low- and middle-income families to meet their needs, as parents often cannot, or do not want to contribute to post-secondary education. This is exemplified by the fact that on average, only 1% of a household's income is dedicated to tuition fees in PEI¹⁵². This percentage has seen a sharp drop from 2009, when this average was 5.8%¹⁵³. This is part of a broader pattern as the contributions have consistently dropped over the decades.

Debt is a major concern for students, as can be seen by responses to a 2018 UPEISU survey where the average student debt was calculated to be \$22, 264¹⁵⁴. This is much higher from the Canadian average of \$13,456¹⁵⁵. Debt disproportionately affects low- and middle-income students, who are more likely to be debt-averse as well, thereby leading to a gap of 31% in post-secondary participation between the highest and lowest income quintiles in Canada¹⁵⁶.

A healthy economy requires interactions of the labour market with services and goods. Student loans prevent this interaction as they do not allow for sufficient time for borrowers to gain financial stability before beginning repayment. Indeed, 46% of graduates delay purchasing a home due to debt¹⁵⁷. This shows that students are not set up for success after their studies, thus leading to poor economic outcomes.

¹⁵⁰ PEI Student Financial Services. Email Correspondence January 2020.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Survey of household spending: Statistics Canada (2016)

¹⁵³ Survey of household spending (Table 2): Statistics Canada. (2009)

¹⁵⁴ UPEISU Housing Survey. Summer 2018.

¹⁵⁵ CSLP Program Statistical Review 2016 to 2017.

¹⁵⁶ Postsecondary Enrolment by Parental Income (StansCan 2017)

¹⁵⁷ Three in Four (77%) Canadian Graduates Under 40 Regret Taking on Student Debt
<https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/BDO-student-debt-2017-09-18>



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Student financial aid, to be effective, should go hand-in-hand with tuition predictability. Since 2005, tuition in the province of British Columbia has been capped at 2% per annum for domestic students¹⁵⁸. While this is a progressive measure, international students should not be made to compensate for limitations on domestic tuition. Indeed, over the year, the gap between domestic and international tuition rates has increased such that international students pay four times as much as domestic students for the same education¹⁵⁹.

Student financial aid should be progressive, anticipating the overall costs of education, not just tuition. According to a 2017 Macleans survey, an average UPEI student spends on average \$778 on textbooks per year¹⁶⁰. These costs can also include rent, miscellaneous fees, laboratory fees, and general sustenance. It is imperative that financial aid be holistic in its approach to post-secondary education to ensure students are being supported throughout their studies.

The Role of the Provincial Government

The provincial government plays a central role in the administration of post-secondary education in Prince Edward Island. Indeed, post-secondary institutions obtained a combined \$89 million in funding from the provincial government in the 2019-20 fiscal year¹⁶¹. The province further spent an additional \$9.9 million in student financial aid, be it in terms of upfront non-repayable grants, or student loans¹⁶².

In 2018, the provincial government announced a number of investments into post-secondary education that totalled \$3.3 million¹⁶³. This included an amendment to the provincial debt reduction program that provided students with \$3,500 in grants per year of study, as long as students resided in PEI within 3 years

¹⁵⁸ Gov't of BC. "Education Costs." Avail:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/tuition-limit-policy><http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/tuition/>

¹⁵⁹ Statistics Canada. Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study. 2018. Raw data.

¹⁶⁰ "What Canadian University Students Can Expect to Pay for Books." Macleans. Avail:

<https://www.macleans.ca/education/most-expensive-books/>

¹⁶¹ PEI Provincial Budget. 2019-20.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Budget Address 2018. Government of Prince Edward Island.



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post-graduation. It furthermore introduced the Island Advantage: a suite of upfront, non-repayable grants broken into the George Coles and Needs-Based Bursary.

The UPEISU aspires to promote access to post-secondary education for all students on PEI, regardless of socioeconomic status. While there have been advancements in the realm of PSE on PEI, more work can be done to ensure all students who are qualified to attend post-secondary do not face financial barriers in doing so.

Extending Needs-Based Provincial Grants to Graduate Students

Principle: *Post-secondary students should have access to financial aid regardless of their field or level of study.*

Upfront, non-repayable grants are the most effective and financially sustainable way to decrease financial barriers to post-secondary education.

Concern: *There are currently no needs-based grants available for graduate students at the provincial level within PEI.*

Recommendation: *That the Island Advantage- Needs-Based Bursary be expanded to include graduate students*

Supporting evidence:

There are currently over 500 graduate students enrolled at UPEI¹⁶⁴, with this number expected to double by 2023¹⁶⁵. The current suite of upfront non-repayable grants of PEI, the Island Advantage, is only available to first-time, first-entry island students, thus automatically excluding graduate students.

A number of undergraduate students across Canada choose not to pursue graduate studies after their undergraduate degree due to debt. Research, which is typically undertaken primarily by graduate students, is one of the hallmarks of a quality post-secondary education. Lack of support for students looking to pursue graduate

¹⁶⁴ https://files.upei.ca/president/upei_by_the_numbers_2019.pdf

¹⁶⁵ https://files.upei.ca/publications/upei_strategic_plan_2018-2023.pdf



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studies on the island is one of the reasons why UPEI currently lags in research in Canada¹⁶⁶.

In addition, graduate students' employment options are quite limited as a result of stringent requirements of their programs, especially if they are thesis-based. These programs are essential for the development of new and novel techniques that may be applicable to industries, but also to societal understandings. Thus, supporting them is vital to competitiveness in terms of industry and education.

Students enrolled in course-based graduate programs are typically young, having recently completed an undergraduate degree and still paying off debt, or entry-level professionals looking to further their careers. Thus, this is a group that is already in a financially precarious position, and should be fostered to ensure an educated, qualified workforce.

The Canada Student Grant Program accounts for graduate students, with those pursuing doctoral studies being able to access non-repayable aid for 400 weeks¹⁶⁷. Saskatchewan and New Brunswick have also adopted this model, extending grants to doctoral students^{168,169}. Quebec provides bursaries to graduate students for the expected length of their study, plus 15 months, thereby having a holistic view of graduate education that allows for unanticipated circumstances¹⁷⁰.

It is imperative for PEI to be competitive and progressive with regards to graduate studies, and expand the Island Advantage- Needs-Based Bursary to graduate students.

Tuition Regulation in Prince Edward Island

Principle: *Tuition costs should be predictable and reasonable for students pursuing a degree.*

Concern: *Tuition on PEI has increased at a rate twice that of inflation, which is unsustainable and puts students in a vulnerable position.*

¹⁶⁶ <https://researchinfosource.com/top-50-research-universities/2018/list>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/education/student-aid/grants-loans.html>

¹⁶⁸ <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/student-loans/apply-for-a-student-loan>

¹⁶⁹ https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/services/services_renderer.200790.New_Brunswick_Bursary.html

¹⁷⁰ <http://www.afe.gouv.qc.ca/en/loans-and-bursariesfull-time-studies/assessment/eligibility-period/>



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International tuition is often used as a way to counter increased financial strains on an institution without increasing domestic tuition.

Recommendations: *That the Government of Prince Edward Island implement a tuition cap for all public post-secondary institutions, such that no institution may raise tuition by more than the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index each year.*

That the Government of Prince Edward Island align domestic and international tuition so that each adjust by the same percent each year.

Supporting evidence:

At UPEI, tuition has increased by 32% since 2006, while inflation for the Province during the same period increased by 19.5%. While growth is needed, tuition increases must be kept reasonable and should balance the needs of the University and students.

Most provinces across the country have introduced measures to regulate tuition increases. Ontario, had, between 2012 and 2016 a four-year framework in place which caps tuition increases to an average of three per cent per year. Inflation has averaged two per cent per year over the past ten years.¹⁷¹ This framework was extended for two more years in December 2016.¹⁷²

Here in the Atlantic provinces, tuition increases are limited in Nova Scotia, where the government has instituted a tuition cap of 3% per year.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ “New Tuition Framework Reduces the Cap on Tuition Increases.” Government of Ontario. March 2013. Avail: <http://news.ontario.ca/tcu/en/2013/03/new-tuition-framework-reduces-the-cap-on-tuition-increases.html>

¹⁷² “Ontario Continues to Cap University and College Tuition Fees.” Government of Ontario. December 2016. Avail: <https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2016/12/ontario-continues-to-cap-university-and-college-tuition-fees.html>

¹⁷³ NS to cap tuition fees at 3%. Academica Group. Avail: <http://www.academica.ca/top10/stories/12071>



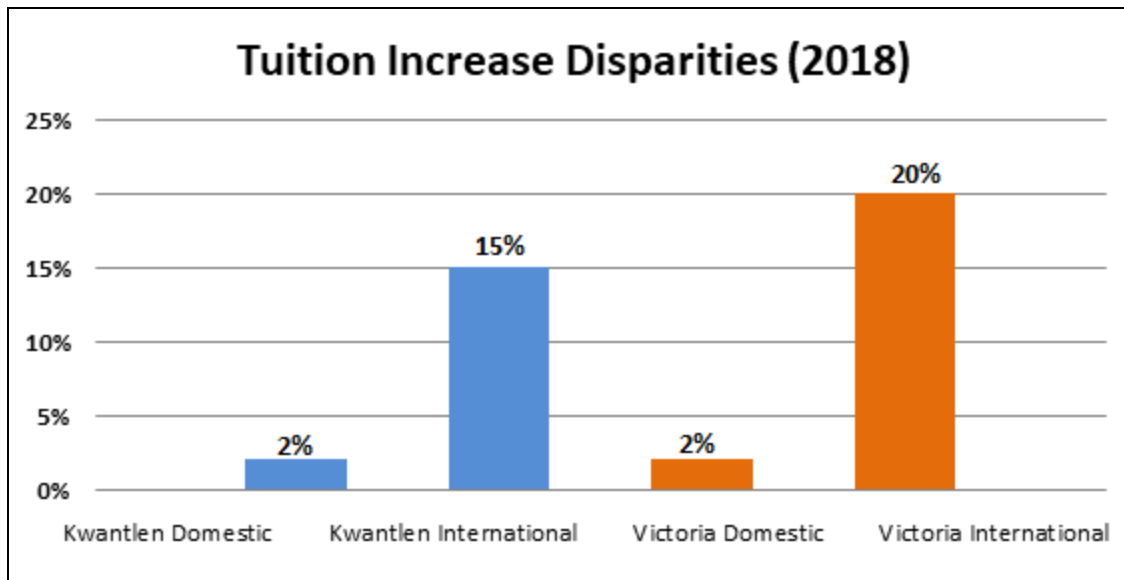
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Since 2005, tuition increases in British Columbia have been capped at a maximum of 2% per annum.¹⁷⁴ While this is a progressive measure, it has had unintended effects on international student fees.



It is to be expected that tuition fees for domestic and international students be different, reflecting the fact that before arriving, international students do not pay taxes into the Canadian system; however the proportional disparity between what these two groups of students are paying for tuition has been growing significantly. Canadian citizens pay on average \$6,500 per year on tuition for an undergraduate degree, whereas international students pay \$25,000 per year.¹⁷⁵ On average, international students are paying approximately 3.8 times more than domestic students. That being said, it has become commonplace for tuition to rise disproportionately more for international students than domestic students. In the past two decades, domestic tuition has risen on average 2% more than inflation.¹⁷⁶ However for international students it has doubled between 2010-2017, rising by 4%

¹⁷⁴ Gov't of BC. "Education Costs." Avail:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/post-secondary-education/institution-resources-administration/tuition-limit-policy><http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/tuition/>

¹⁷⁵ Usher, A., (2018). The State of Post-Secondary Education in Canada, 2018. Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associates.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.



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more than inflation every year.¹⁷⁷ In 2006-2007 international students paid close to \$9,000 more, or 3.04 times the tuition fees domestic student paid.¹⁷⁸ Comparatively, in 2017-2018 international students paid on average \$20,321, or nearly *four* times more on tuition than domestic students.¹⁷⁹

In the Spring of 2018, Kwantlen Polytechnic University saw a dramatic increase to new international student tuition rates with a 15% increase.¹⁸⁰ In comparison, domestic student tuition rates are capped at 2% in BC. For returning international students, tuition will be increasing by 7.5% for Fall 2018, and 6.98% for Fall 2019.¹⁸¹ For Fall semester 2018 at Kwantlen, international students will be paying \$9,870 in comparison to \$2,000 for domestic students.¹⁸² The University of Victoria saw an even more dramatic change, with a 20% increase to new international student tuition Fall 2018. Additionally, the institution is proposing an additional 15% increase for new international students for the 2019-2020 academic year.¹⁸³ Domestic students attending University of Victoria will only be facing a two per cent student fee increase, reflecting the capped provincial rate.

The increase to international student fees has replaced the decrease in government support that universities had been previously receiving. In 2006, international student fees were less than \$1 billion total, equal to 19% of all fees collected at Canadian Universities, and 4% total revenues.¹⁸⁴ However in 2016-2017, these numbers had risen to \$2.75 billion, making up for 35% all fees collected, which contributed 9.3% of total revenue.¹⁸⁵ From 2009-2015, government support to universities fell by roughly 1.6 billion in real terms, while concurrently, international student fees rose by \$1.5 billion.¹⁸⁶ That is to say, while universities

¹⁷⁷ Usher, A., (2018). *The State of Post-Secondary Education in Canada, 2018*. Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associates.

¹⁷⁸ Statistics Canada. Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study. 2018. Raw data.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Xu, Xiao. "B.C. Universities Impose Steep Tuition Increases for Foreign Students." *The Globe and Mail*, April 22, 2018.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Usher, A., (2018). *The State of Post-Secondary Education in Canada, 2018*. Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associates.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.



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may be losing government support, this loss is being almost seamlessly offset by revenues collected from increased international student fees.

An economic dependency and increasing international student population can make universities more economically vulnerable due to unpredictability of international student enrollment from geopolitical factors. For example, in August 2018 Canadian post secondary institutions saw a loss of approximately 7000 Saudi students, after an unexpected international dispute, less than one month before classes began.¹⁸⁷ Offsetting costs through international student fees leads to an unjust proportional disparity in domestic versus international student tuition, and cannot be considered an economically sustainable approach for the longevity of a university.

In March 2018, the Government of Prince Edward Island confirmed to create a multi year funding agreement with UPEI. Multi-year funding and tuition regulation go hand and hand, in a way which guarantees tuition predictability for students, however protects services available at the university by offsetting operating costs via the multi-year funding.

Prince Edward Island is one of the few provinces left to not have limits in place on tuition increases. Other provinces have found suitable models that work for students, institutions, and governments, and keep tuition costs predictable and manageable for students.

It is the opinion of the UPEI Student Union that the Government of Prince Edward Island should implement a maximum limit on tuition increases, to both domestic and international, at public post-secondary institutions, indexed to the Consumer Price Index.

Implementing a Provincial Student Debt Cap

Principle: *Finances should not be a barrier to students' pursuit of post-secondary education in Prince Edward Island.*

Students should not have to take on insurmountable amounts of debt in order to access post-secondary education.

¹⁸⁷ Baker, Sinead. "Thousands of Saudi Arabian students have to leave Canada because their governments are fighting". *Business Insider*. August 26, 2018.



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Concern: *Students are taking on excessive amounts of debt in order to be able to afford post-secondary education. High debt rates foster unfavourable repayment rates which increase the risk of defaulting and having a poor credit rating in students.*

Recommendation: *That the Government of Prince Edward Island implement a cap on student debt, with debt above a certain threshold being automatically forgiven.*

Supporting Evidence:

A student assessed at maximum need for four consecutive years in Prince Edward Island would have student debt totaling \$58,312. As per a 2018 UPEISU survey, UPEI students owe on average \$22,264 in debt¹⁸⁸. Unfortunately, those who are likely to incur the highest amount of debt in PEI are the ones who come from low income backgrounds. If we examine post-secondary attendance for 19 year-olds by income quartile, only 47% of people from the lowest income quartile are attending, while 79% from the highest income quartile are attending post-secondary¹⁸⁹.

Debt aversion is one of the causal factors for low-income students' lower university participation rate. Low-income families, racialized communities, and single parents are more likely to have a negative view of student debt, viewing it as a liability rather than an investment¹⁹⁰.

Post-secondary education, however, is an investment. Comparing income by level of education attained, people with a Bachelor's Degree earn around 50% more than those with a high school diploma¹⁹¹. Government should thus ensure this is an investment that everyone feels comfortable making, regardless of income. Recognizing the debt aversion of low-income families as a barrier to post-secondary education leads the way to remedying the present situation.

¹⁸⁸ UPEISU Housing Survey. Summer 2018.

¹⁸⁹ Frenette, Marc. *Postsecondary Enrolment by Parental Income: Recent National and Provincial Trends*. Economic Insights. April 10, 2017.

¹⁹⁰ Callender, Claire & Jon Jackson. "Fear of Debt and Higher Education Participation." London South Bank University, November 2004

¹⁹¹ *Does education pay? A comparison of earnings by level of education in Canada and its provinces and territories*. Census in Brief. November 29, 2017.



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A student debt cap automatically forgives debt past a certain threshold. This has already been implemented in some provinces. For example, in the 2011-2012 budget, the government of Nova Scotia implemented a debt cap of \$28,560 so that students requiring more assistance than this ceiling would not reach a level of debt deemed too high by government¹⁹². Ontario, similarly implemented the “Ontario Student Opportunity Grant” for the 2016-17 Academic year. The debt was capped, for that year, at \$7,500 for two-term academic years, or \$11,500 for three-term academic years¹⁹³. Any loans that are incurred beyond these caps were forgiven by the Province immediately.

Given the high average student debt in Prince Edward Island, it is likely that there are many people in the Province incurring debt loads from the student loan program that are much higher than the caps that are being set out by Nova Scotia and Ontario. If the Province wants to increase accessibility to post-secondary, it needs to recognize the debt aversion of lower income families and respond by finding ways to reduce debt loads. Implementing a debt cap would certainly send the message that post-secondary is accessible for everyone, especially to those who need it most.

Exempting Parental Income as an Asset for Student Needs Assessments

Principle: *Parental contributions should not be assumed assets to a student's post-secondary education.*

Concern: *Parents from low- and middle- income families are expected to contribute to their child's post-secondary education. This is unrealistic in the current economy.*

Recommendation: *That the Government of Prince Edward Island no longer consider or assume parental income when carrying out student loan needs-based assessments.*

Supporting evidence:

¹⁹² “Backgrounder: Student Debt Cap. CBC. Apr 6, 2011. Avail:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/backgrounder-student-debt-cap-1.1024684>

¹⁹³ “Pay back your OSAP”. Government of Ontario. Avail: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/pay-back-osap>



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As of now, the Province of Prince Edward Island includes parental income as an asset for provincial student loan needs assessments. This is poor practice as it makes 3 major assumptions:

1. That parents value post-secondary education as an investment and are willing to contribute to that investment.
2. That parents are willing to contribute to their child's education and still consider them to be their dependent.
3. That parents are able to afford contributions to post-secondary education.

Assuming that parents value post-secondary education is dangerous as it paves the way to systematic differences in educational attainment based on parents' educational backgrounds. Only 20.7% of young men and 34.5% of young women will participate in university if their parent(s) had an education which ended with high school or less¹⁹⁴. Those with parent(s) who had a college level education attained a university education at a rate of 26.7% for men and 45.7% for women. Students whose parent(s) attained a Bachelor's degree had an attainment rate of 53.8% for men and 71.5% for women¹⁹⁵. Parental contributions depend on the value given, and cannot be taken for granted.

Whether or not parents value post-secondary education, they contribute much less to post-secondary education than in the past. In 1965, parents contributed 29.4% of their child's student income. By 2002, that had dropped to just 15%. In addition, family loans have dropped to 1.95% of a child's student income¹⁹⁶. Furthermore, as of 2009, the average household on Prince Edward Island was only contributing 5.8% of their household expenditures to tuition fees¹⁹⁷. As of 2016, the average PEI household contributed less than 1% of their household expenditures to tuition¹⁹⁸.

The third point in particular, expecting parents to afford to help pay for tuition, is damaging. This manifests itself in university participation differences between income brackets: 47.1% for the lowest quintile versus 78.7% in the highest quintile¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁴ Access and Barriers to Postsecondary Education. CSSHE (2015) (p. 235)

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶ The More Things Change...: Undergraduate Student Living Standards After 40 Years of the Canada Student Loans Program. (2004) (p. 11)

¹⁹⁷ Survey of household spending (Table 2): Statistics Canada. (2009)

¹⁹⁸ Survey of household spending: Statistics Canada (2016)

¹⁹⁹ Postsecondary Enrolment by Parental Income (StansCan 2017)



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Much better practice exists in Alberta, where parental contributions to post-secondary education are input on a voluntary basis as opposed to being assumed²⁰⁰. This provides a much clearer assessment of the needs and contributions to the student's education, and ensures that students are receiving the aid they require. The Canada Student Loans Program has, as of 2015, scaled back the expected parental contribution, thereby recognising the decreased contributions of parents.

Not being eligible for government loans leads to students resorting to private loans to finance their education, which have higher interest rates, and place students in vulnerable positions. Therefore, we recommend that the Government of Prince Edward Island no longer assume parental contributions in student loan needs assessments.

Extending the Grace Period for Student Loans to up to 30 Months

Principle: *Finances should not be a barrier to students' pursuit of post-secondary education in Prince Edward Island.*

Students should not have to take on insurmountable amounts of debt in order to access post-secondary education.

Concern: *Students are expected to find employment and start repaying their student loans shortly after graduation. This leads to undue pressure and considerable financial strain on students.*

Recommendation: *That the grace period for provincial student loan repayment be extended to up to 30 months as long as the income level is less than \$30,000 per annum.*

Supporting evidence:

²⁰⁰ Alberta Student Aid. <https://studentaid.alberta.ca/before-you-apply/what-you-contribute/>. Accessed October 2019



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As it stands, provincial student loan repayment in Prince Edward Island is expected to start 12 months after no longer having full-time student status, regardless of the income at that point in time²⁰¹.

The Federal Government, currently offers a Repayment Assistance Plan for young graduates currently making less than \$25,000 per year²⁰². Similar assistance programs are offered in Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia and Newfoundland and Labrador on provincial student loan repayment. The usage of these programs has increased significantly throughout the country, reaching 36.3% in Ontario for provincial loan repayment in 2018²⁰³. This implies that there is a considerable barrier in student loan repayment. This barrier is further compounded when considering the rising costs of living.

The PEI Poverty Reduction Action Plan identifies student loan payment as a barrier for islanders to leave poverty, which is particularly significant when considering the high rates of poverty among youth in PEI. 11.7% of youth aged 18-24 are estimated to be in low income, with Charlottetown specifically having a youth poverty rate of 17.8%²⁰⁴. When considering that a significant proportion of graduating students fit within this age range, it is undeniable that student loans play a part in this statistic.

Considering the average graduate only finds a first job three to six months after graduation in Canada, expecting student loan repayment to begin as soon as 12 months after full-time status puts students in a precarious position whereby they are unable to find financial stability before making additional payments. Furthermore, research shows that students may switch from a full-time to part-time course load due to financial constraints²⁰⁵. With the current set-up of the provincial

²⁰¹ Government of PEI. Provincial Student Loan Repayment.

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/workforce-and-advanced-learning/provincial-student-loan-repayment>

²⁰² Government of Canada. Federal Budget 2016-17.

<https://www.budget.gc.ca/2016/docs/plan/budget2016-en.pdf>

²⁰³ OSAP. 2018 OSAP default rates and repayment assistance usage rates.

<https://osap.gov.on.ca/OSAPPortal/en/PlanYourEducation/ChooseaCareerSchoolProgram/PRDR020089.html>

²⁰⁴ Government of Prince Edward Island. Demographics of Low Income. May 2018.

²⁰⁵ UPEISU Housing Survey. Summer 2018.



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loan repayment, these students would find themselves making student loan repayments after a year, thereby being pushed deeper into poverty.

Therefore, looking at PEI's unique situation in terms of income and provincial student loan setup, we recommend that provincial student loan borrowers be given a grace period of up to 30 months before starting repayment, provided they make less than \$30,000 in income per year.

Expanding the Island Advantage- Needs-Based Bursary by 40%

Principle: *Finances should not be a barrier to students' pursuit of post-secondary education in Prince Edward Island.*

Upfront, non-repayable grants are the most effective and financially sustainable way to decrease financial barriers to post-secondary education.

Concern: *Student financial aid is not reaching those who most require it most to access post-secondary education.*

Recommendation: *That the Island Advantage- Needs-Based Bursary be expanded by 40%.*

Supporting Evidence:

On average, students graduating from post-secondary education incur between \$15,300 and \$33,000 in debt²⁰⁶, which is a significant burden. Upfront non-repayable grants play a direct role in reducing student debt throughout post-secondary education, thereby allowing young graduates to gain financial stability and interact with the economy.

In Prince Edward Island, there are currently two forms of upfront non-repayable grants for students under the Island Advantage suite of grants: George Coles and the Needs-Based Bursary. Under the George Coles Bursary, first-time post-secondary students have access to grants at a flat rate of \$2,200 per year for

²⁰⁶ Statistics Canada. 2015.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710003601&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=3.1>



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the first three years of study²⁰⁷. This is then followed by \$2,200 in the George Coles Graduate Scholarship for the fourth year of study should the student graduate, or \$1,100 in the fourth year of study as part of the bursary and the remaining \$1,100 as the graduate scholarship upon graduation²⁰⁸. The George Coles grants are currently present as blanket grants for all first-time post-secondary students, and do not vary according to need.

In addition to the George Coles Bursary, the Island Advantage includes a Needs-Based Bursary²⁰⁹. This grant, introduced in 2018, is a more progressive approach to student financial aid. It covers a portion of tuition for students from low- and middle-income backgrounds, based on financial need. It is also not limited to a number of years, when it comes to eligibility, but is rather based on the student's need while enrolled in full-time study²¹⁰.

As of now the Needs-Based Bursary is capped at \$2,942, or the cap for the Canada Student Grants. Combined with the George Coles Bursary and the Canada Student Grants, there is a cap implemented every year on the amount of support a student can receive at maximum need. For 2019-20, this amount is \$6,270 for UPEI students²¹¹. While this accounts for most of tuition, it does not cover other academic costs such as textbooks, instructional and laboratory fees and other expenses.

There still remains major gaps in participation in post-secondary education provincially and nationally due to socioeconomic background. In fact, Canada's highest income quintile is accessing post-secondary at 78.7% and the lowest quintile participation is at 47.1%²¹².

²⁰⁷ Island Advantage - George Coles Bursary

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-and-lifelong-learning/island-advantage-george-coles-bursary>

²⁰⁸ Island Advantage- George Coles Graduate Scholarship

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-and-lifelong-learning/island-advantage-george-coles-graduate-scholarship>

²⁰⁹ Island Advantage - Needs-Based Bursary

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-and-lifelong-learning/island-advantage-needs-based-bursary>

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-626-x/11-626-x2017070-eng.htm>



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In February 2020, the Federal Government committed to increasing the Canada Student Grant by 40%²¹³, to ensure upfront support to the growing needs of low & middle income students.

Following the leadership of the federal government to scale the Canada Student Grant to modern needs, the Government of Prince Edward Island should match increases to the Island Advantage by 40%.

²¹³ <https://openparliament.ca/debates/2020/2/21/irek-kusmierczyk-3/>



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Policy ID: A04

Ratified on: April 19, 2020

To be reviewed on: April 19, 2023

University Accountability And Responsibility

Principles

Students should receive credit for the completion of any course undertaken at UPEI.

Students are enrolled in courses at UPEI year-round.

UPEI's academic calendar should reflect the needs of its student body.

Students should have the opportunity to offer their perspective on issues and changes that affect them within the university.

Student feedback should be taken seriously and acted upon to reflect their needs and experiences at UPEI.

Internal scholarship competitions at the university should reflect the student body and its needs.

The Issue

While different levels of government each play a role within post-secondary education, the University remains the direct point of contact of students, and affects a huge part of their experience throughout their studies. There are thus several issues that fall under University jurisdiction that should be addressed in order to ensure this experience is as positive as possible.

International students' enrollment at UPEI has been steadily increasing over the past few years, reaching almost 30% in 2019²¹⁴. International students unable to prove they have sufficient competency to be successful in an academic program at UPEI are required to enroll in the English Academic Preparation Program (EAP). This

²¹⁴ UPEI by the Numbers. 2019.



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program is positive as it sets them up for success within their academic journey. That being said, these students are made to pay full tuition and fees associated with being an International student at UPEI, but are not granted credit for the completion of this program. On the flip side, domestic students learning a non-primary language at UPEI earn credit for it, thereby leading to a differential value being granted to the same act of learning a new language.

The distribution of internal or sponsor-funded scholarships however does not reflect the diversity of the UPEI student population, with numerous scholarships being restricted to students originally from PEI or who have graduated from a PEI high school ²¹⁵.

Over the past few years, students have moved away from a traditional model of completing an undergraduate degree within four years, being in class from September to April and taking the months of May to September off. There is significant evidence of increased demands for summer classes. As of now, there are only limited offerings for summer classes, and the list of summer classes is only available in January, while the Fall-Winter timetable is released in the Spring. Thus, a student planning to stagger their classes over 12-months may find themselves unable to do so as the only classes offered over the summer might have been one they have already taken.

Due to the small student body size, as well as budgetary strains, some classes at UPEI are only offered every two or three years. Course offerings, understandably, constitute a considerable portion of the university's expenditure. Students must however not be penalised due to financial considerations. Should departments be required to cut back course offerings due to funding issues, they have a duty to engage with students to ensure courses for which there would be much uptake are not the ones being removed or delayed.

From the 2004-2005 academic year to the 2019-20 academic year, the amount in mandatory UPEI ancillary and auxiliary fees increased by 132%²¹⁶. Comparatively, inflation over that same period was 29%²¹⁷. According to the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, UPEI charged around \$650 in ancillary fees in 2018-19

²¹⁵ UPEI Scholarships and Awards. <https://www.upei.ca/scholarships-and-awards/displayscholarships>

²¹⁶ UPEI 2004-2005 Academic Calendar. UPEI Calendar 2019-2020.

²¹⁷ Inflation Calculator. Bank of Canada.



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²¹⁸. In Nova Scotia, the highest ancillary fees were charged at the University of King's College with an amount of \$1,369; and within New Brunswick, these were at Mount Allison University, with \$688 per year²¹⁹. As of now, there is very limited opportunity for students to provide feedback on these increases.

One way to ensure the education provided to students is up to par is by Student Opinion on Teaching Surveys (SOTS). As of now, these surveys are required to be completed in person, and the qualitative part of this review may stay confidential should the professor request it, leading to a lack of accountability and transparency when it comes to pedagogy.

Providing Credit for the Completion of the English Academic Preparation Program

Principle: Students should receive credit for the completion of any course undertaken at UPEI.

Concern: International students may often be required to enroll in the English Academic Preparation Program while attending UPEI. This represents a significant financial and time investment, for which they do not receive credit.

Recommendation: That the University of Prince Edward Island begin granting credit to International students for the completion of the English Academic Preparation Program

Supporting Evidence:

International students pay on average 4.5 times as much as Canadian students to attend post-secondary institutions in Canada²²⁰. At UPEI, the cost per year for was around \$14,500 in tuition and fees for a student enrolled in a full course load²²¹. This is the double of the cost to a domestic student in a similar course load.

International students unable to prove they have sufficient competency to be successful in an academic program at UPEI are required to enroll in the English

²¹⁸ http://www.mphec.ca/media/171317/Table-C_Tuition-ancillary-and-residence-fee-data-2018-19.pdf

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Statistics Canada. Tuition fees for degree programs, 2019/2020.

²²¹ UPEI Tuition and Fees.



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Academic Preparation Program (EAP). This program is positive as it sets them up for success within their academic journey. That being said, these students are made to pay full tuition and fees associated with being an International student at UPEI, but are not granted credit for the completion of this program. On the flip side, domestic students learning a non-primary language at UPEI earn credit for it, thereby leading to a differential value being granted to the same act of learning a new language.

There are numerous advantages to offering credit for completion of the EAP program:

1. Students would take EAP classes as seriously as academic courses. As of now, students may take a limited number of courses based on their level of progression within the EAP program. These courses tend to be given priority over their english competency due to their credit value, thus leading to less effort put into learning english effectively.
2. Recruitment could be further boosted as EAP would no longer merely be a hurdle to an academic pathway, but rather be integrated into the process. Furthermore, there is no statistical difference between the average grades of domestic students, non-EAP international students, or EAP international students²²², thus showing these students are capable of keeping up with coursework.
3. Taking part in a course that is for credit is motivating and challenging. It provides a reality check for the level of English required, and immerses International students in the community of being a “regular” student. This in turn encourages engagement and retention²²³.

Over the past 6 years, the International student population at UPEI has increased from 598²²⁴ to 1411²²⁵, more than doubling in size. The university is growing more reliant on these students for enrollment. Other universities have already set up credit systems in place for the completion of an english requirement. The University of Ottawa does offer credit for the completion of English language courses for those students who take English as an additional language. In fact, the same applies

²²² Gong, Yuqin. UPEI 2010-2014 Cohort Study.

²²³ Gillan, Cathy. “Rationale for awarding credit upon completion of EAP” September 4, 2009.

²²⁴ UPEI by the Numbers. 2013.

²²⁵ UPEI by the Numbers. 2019.



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for French in the program.²²⁶ Similarly, upon completion of EAP 5 and EAP 6 at Saint Mary's University, students can receive up to 6 transfer credit hours.²²⁷

To ensure that international students learning a new language are being treated fairly, and that UPEI is staying competitive, the UPEISU recommends that UPEI grant credit to international students for the completion of the EAP program.

Adopting a 12-month Course Calendar

Principle: Students are enrolled in courses at UPEI year-round.

UPEI's academic calendar should reflect the needs of its student body.

Concern: An increasing number of students are enrolled in courses year-round, but as of now the university functions mostly on an eight-month calendar.

Recommendation: That the University of Prince Edward Island adopt a 12-month course calendar that allows students to plan their courses for a full year at a time.

Supporting Evidence:

Over the past few years, students have moved away from a traditional model of completing an undergraduate degree within four years, being in class from September to April and taking the months of May to September off. Within the Maritimes, students take on average 4.8 years to complete a degree²²⁸. At the University of Prince Edward Island only 33% of students who start in Arts, Business, Science, and Nursing manage to graduate within the standard four years²²⁹. This is partially due to students spreading their course load over more years, as well as over all 12 months off the year in order to better afford the increasing costs of post-secondary education. Indeed, at UPEI, 61% of students work part-time

²²⁶ English as a second language. University of Ottawa.

<http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/info/regist/calendars/courses/ESL.html>

²²⁷ English for Academic Purposes, Saint Mary's University.

<https://www.smu.ca/international/tlc/eap.html>

²²⁸ MPHEC. Time-to-degree.

<http://www.mphec.ca/research/maritimeuniversitystatistics/timetodegree.aspx>

²²⁹ "Graduation Rate by Faculty" Yuqin Gong



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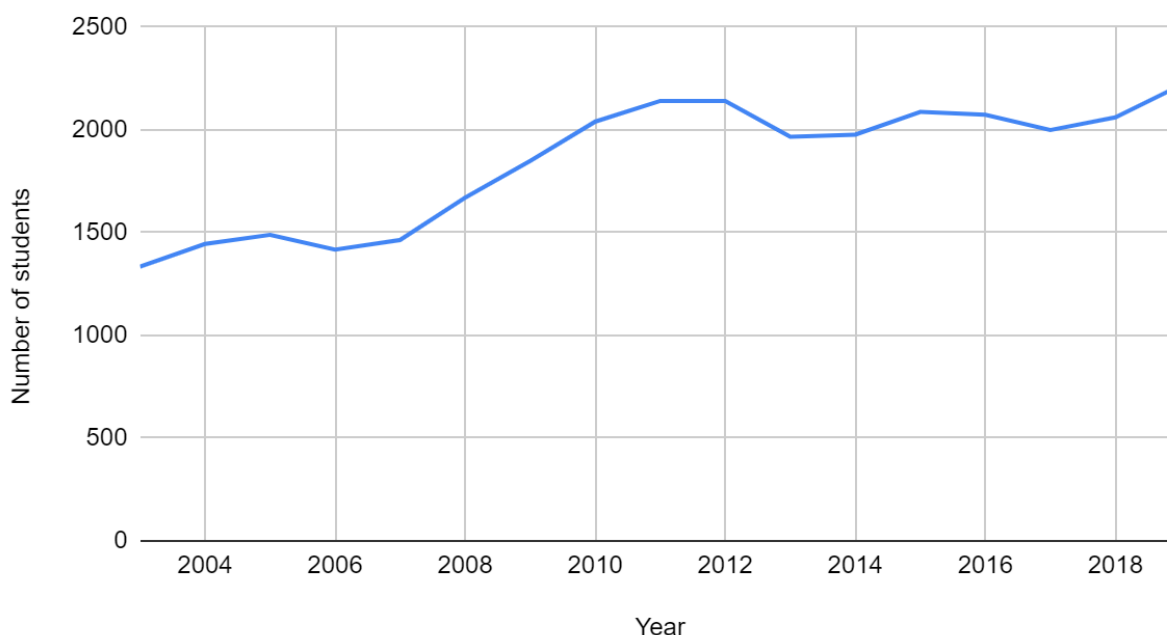
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throughout the year²³⁰, and the number of students enrolled in summer classes has increased by 49.6% since 2003²³¹.

Number of students vs. Year



Number of students enrolled in summer classes from 2003 to 2019.

Thus, there is significant evidence of increased demands for summer classes. As of now, there are only limited offerings for summer classes, and the list of summer classes is only available in January, while the Fall-Winter timetable is released in the Spring. Thus, a student planning to stagger their classes over 12-months may find themselves unable to do so as the only classes offered over the summer might have been one they have already taken.

To better support students, and offer a more progressive approach to university, we thus recommend that the University of Prince Edward Island move to a 12-month course calendar, thus allowing students to plan their year more effectively.

²³⁰ UPEISU Housing Survey. July 2018.

²³¹ Headcounts in Summer Sessions, Historical Trend. Yuqin Gong.



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Student Consultations on Course Offerings

Principle: UPEI's academic calendar should reflect the needs of its student body.

Students should have the opportunity to offer their perspective on issues and changes that affect them within the university.

Student feedback should be taken seriously and acted upon to reflect their needs and experiences at UPEI.

Concern: Due to enrollment and fiscal constraints, some courses are not offered on an annual basis. As of now, the frequency or timing of these offerings are not determined after consultations with students, thereby leading to difficulties in planning and degree completion.

Recommendation: That academic departments include students within the course selection process via consultations every fiscal year.

Supporting Evidence:

Due to the small student body size, as well as budgetary strains, some classes at UPEI are only offered every two or three years. Course offerings, understandably, constitute a considerable portion of the university's expenditure. Students must however not be penalised due to financial considerations.

Should departments be required to cut back course offerings due to funding issues, they have a duty to engage with students to ensure courses for which there would be much uptake are not the ones being removed or delayed. While there is generally some student representation on departmental meetings, more extensive consultation is required.

A number of models could be used, for example:

- A survey, similar to the Student Opinion of Teaching Survey, administered on a departmental basis;
- Utilization of student representatives to gather information on which courses are needed for the next year;



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- For smaller departments, a departmental meeting to which all students are invited;

The UPEI Student Union believes that using consultative models to choose course offerings could also encourage student engagement within academic departments. When students have some measure of control over what will be taught in their program, they may be more willing to engage with others in their department, creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment.

The UPEI Student Union recommends that the University of Prince Edward Island encourage its academic departments to engage in consultative processes with students for the purposes of academic planning for course offerings.

Student Consultations on Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees

Principle: Students should have the opportunity to offer their perspective on issues and changes that affect them within the university.

Student feedback should be taken seriously and acted upon to reflect their needs and experiences at UPEI.

Concern: Students are most affected by increases to fees in University, and are not provided with the opportunity to provide feedback with regards to increases or changes to these prior to their application every year.

Recommendation: That the Comptroller's Office, in conjunction with the UPEI Budget Committee, consult with the university community, including the UPEISU Executive Committee, prior to its submission to the Board of Governors' Finance and Audit Committee, with this consultation including proposed increases to ancillary fees.

Supporting Evidence:

Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees, also known as ancillary or auxiliary fees, are fees which are charged to students which are either necessary or essential to the completion of a course or program (auxiliary) or related to areas of the University



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which are non-academic in nature (ancillary)²³². The UPEI SU supports a consultative approach to ensure that mandatory non-instructional fees remain reasonable for students.

From the 2004-2005 academic year to the 2019-20 academic year, the amount in mandatory UPEI ancillary and auxiliary fees increased by 132%²³³. Comparatively, inflation over that same period was 29%²³⁴. According to the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, UPEI charged around \$650 in ancillary fees in 2018-19²³⁵. In Nova Scotia, the highest ancillary fees were charged at the University of King's College with an amount of \$1,369; and within New Brunswick, these were at Mount Allison University, with \$688 per year²³⁶.

Ontario has had requirements in place regarding mandatory non-instructional fees since 1994. Since then, fees have been in direct control of students either through referenda or through student unions' or associations' established practices²³⁷. Some Canadian campuses have extensive student consultation and approval processes in place, such as at Ryerson University. Here, ancillary fees must be voted on by students in a referendum. Other campuses, such as York University, operate on a committee structure – a committee composed of students and administrators reviews fees. If consensus cannot be achieved on a new fee, then a student referendum must be held²³⁸.

Many express concern that students have no appetite for any fee increases whatsoever. However, data from the Council of Alberta University Students proves this incorrect. At their member associations/schools, where fees which were subject to referendum faced an increase, students voted to approve these increases over 70% of the time²³⁹. Students are not necessarily averse to paying more – as long as there is demonstrable value and sound rationale for the fee.

²³² StudentsNS. "Briefing Note: Ancillary Fees and Consultations." 20 March 2013.

²³³ UPEI 2004-2005 Academic Calendar. UPEI Calendar 2019-2020.

²³⁴ Inflation Calculator. Bank of Canada.

²³⁵ http://www.mphec.ca/media/171317/Table-C_Tuition-ancillary-and-residence-fee-data-2018-19.pdf

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. "Ancillary Fees" Briefing Note.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Council of Alberta University Students. "Responsible, Accountable, Predictable: Why the use of referenda for increasing mandatory fees balances the needs of stakeholders." September 2010. Avail online: http://www.caus.net/docs/10-09_fees.pdf



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UPEI's budget process is an extensive one. Beginning in October and culminating in May, where the Board of Governors ostensibly votes to approve the budget, there is clearly ample opportunity for consultation²⁴⁰. It is the hope of the UPEI SU that the University will choose to embrace a consultative budgeting process, and include those who are most affected by the University's budget decisions: students.

Thus, the UPEISU recommends that the Comptroller's Office, in conjunction with the UPEI Budget Committee, consult with the university community, including the UPEISU Executive Committee, prior to its submission to the Board of Governors' Finance and Audit Committee, with this consultation including proposed increases to ancillary fees.

Professorial Accountability and Review at UPEI

Principle: Students should have the opportunity to offer their perspective on issues and changes that affect them within the university.

Student feedback should be taken seriously and acted upon to reflect their needs and experiences at UPEI.

Concern: Student feedback on professorial review may stay confidential should the professor desire so, thereby not leading to an accurate image of the pedagogy. Furthermore, student feedback is requested in person, which does not provide an environment fostering well-thought out responses

Recommendation: That student commentary on Student Opinion on Teaching Surveys be available to Department Chairs, Deans, Departmental Review Committees and University Review Committees.

That UPEI and the UPEI Faculty Association implement an online system to conduct Student Opinion of Teaching Surveys.

That the UPEI Faculty Association and UPEI provide professors with campus wide standard midpoint course evaluations.

Supporting Evidence:

²⁴⁰ UPEI website. "Budgets | Finance | UPEI" Accessed 10 March 2020. Avail: <http://www.upei.ca/finance/comptroller/budgets>



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Student Opinion on Teaching Surveys (SOTS) allow students to provide feedback to a professor in regards to their teaching ability, areas of improvement, and areas of excellence, at the end of their course. These surveys, which are common across Canada, are a vital measure of professorial performance. The SOTS consists of two parts: questions on which professors receive a numerical indicator of their performance, and questions on which professors receive written commentary from students.

As of now, if a faculty member so chooses, written commentary from the SOTS can remain confidential. It may not be accessed by the Chair or Dean for review purposes, and it may not be shared with the Department Review Committee (DRC) or University Review Committee (URC) in instances of review for tenure or promotion²⁴¹. Second, the URC which reviews tenure and promotion for professors does not have a student representative²⁴². Thus, negative comments made by students towards a professor's pedagogy may remain confidential under the prerogative of the faculty member.

A 2018 UPEI Student Union survey sought feedback on the SOTS process from students. When asked "I feel like, more often than not my professors make changes to their teaching and course structure based on student feedback from course evaluations", only 16.73% agreed with this statement.²⁴³ When students were asked if they believed that someone else besides the professor, such as the dean or chair, should be able to view students' comments about the professors' teaching, 90.3% of students stated that they supported this belief.²⁴⁴ However when students were asked if they were aware that professors had the choice to share or not share the written commentary, 81% were not aware.²⁴⁵

Universities across Canada, such as McGill²⁴⁶, have transitioned to an online version of these surveys. With the opportunity to not only answer the surveys in the

²⁴¹ UPEI-UPEIFA Collective Agreement Exp. June 30, 2020. Article E1.3.1. P. 59

²⁴² UPEI-UPEIFA Collective Agreement Exp. June 30, 2020. Article E2.7.3 P. 73

²⁴³ Internal Data: Information Collected from 295 respondents in January, 2018.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ McGill University. "Historical Background." Mercury Course Evaluations. Accessed: <https://www.mcgill.ca/mercury/about/history>.



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classroom, but as well off campus, students are given greater access to the surveys, as compared to exclusively in the classroom. A survey conducted at Western University reported that for the summer semester 2016, 53.8% of students filled out the survey from off campus ²⁴⁷.

From using an online feedback system, students are allotted more time to provide their feedback on the surveys. Because of this, students have the opportunity to write more well thought out answers, specifically in the commentary section. For example, at the University of South Florida, 76% of students wrote commentary responses online as opposed to only 50% commentary responses from paper surveys.²⁴⁸ When asked if there was ever a time that they did not fill out written commentary on a course evaluation, 58.36% of UPEI students who answered stated yes.²⁴⁹ Written commentary is the most important element of course evaluations, as it contextualizes student's numerical responses, and empowers students to have their input valued and taken into consideration on the course and professors performance.

An online survey system enhances not only the overall facilitation of the surveys, but as well has a positive environmental effect. From a report during the 2016-2017 academic year at McGill University, it was estimated that approximately 480,000 sheets of paper were saved by using an online course evaluation system, as opposed to paper based²⁵⁰. Since their transition to exclusively online course evaluations in 2011, it is concluded that in 2018 3,360,000 pieces of paper have been saved.

During consultations, UPEI students were asked what they thought the most effective time to distribute course evaluations was. Students responded with 70.26% stating that "both midway through the course and again at the end of the

²⁴⁷ *Western University Student Questionnaire on Courses and Teaching Information Session (Fall 2016).*

By John Doerksen, Carac Allison, and Ken Meadows. Accessed:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEwWfkP57Ik&t=480s>.

²⁴⁸ Ojmarrh Mitchell & Melissa Morales (2018) The effect of switching to mandatory online course assessments on response rates and course ratings, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43:4, 629-639.

²⁴⁹ Internal Data: Information Collected from 295 respondents in January, 2018.

²⁵⁰ McGill University. "Historical Background." *Mercury Course Evaluations*. Accessed: <https://www.mcgill.ca/mercury/about/history>.



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course”, would be most effective.²⁵¹ From a 2006 study by Wickramasinghe, S., & Timpson, W., a fluid mechanics engineering course implemented midway course evaluations. The study concluded that after two years, on average, from midpoint to the end of the course, the sum of overall favourable responses went up by 10%.²⁵² Currently, because UPEI SOTS are exclusively utilized at the end of the semester, students cannot see improvements upon the things they comment on in their survey. Midway course evaluations however, provide students the opportunity to shape the path of their course, and see their feedback implemented during the second half of their course. This has been noted by Wickramasinghe, S., & Timpson, W to create an “improved learning environment,” and for students to have a more “responsible attitude while reflecting” on the course evaluation.²⁵³

The UPEI Student Union calls on the UPEI Faculty Association and the University of Prince Edward Island to work towards a collective agreement which makes student commentary on the SOTS freely available to the Department Chair, Faculty/School Dean, and the DRC and URC when applicable, when negotiations begin for the next collective agreement. The UPEISU further recommends that the UPEI Faculty Association and the University of Prince Edward Island implement an online system to conduct SOTS, and provide professors with campus wide standard midpoint course evaluations.

Increasing Investment in Scholarships for Off-Island Students

Principle: Internal scholarship competitions at the university should reflect the student body and its needs.

Concern: Despite recruitment being increasingly focused on out-of-province students, a number of internal UPEI scholarships are restricted to Island students, thereby meaning that financial assistance is not available to those who need it most.

Recommendation: That the University of Prince Edward Island encourage donors who sponsor scholarships or awards not to restrict their awards to only Island residents or graduates from Island high schools.

²⁵¹ Internal Data: Information Collected from 295 respondents in January, 2018.

²⁵² Wickramasinghe, S., & Timpson, W. (2006). Mid-Semester Student Feedback Enhances Student Learning. *Education For Chemical Engineers*, 1126-133.

²⁵³ Ibid



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Supporting Evidence:

UPEI was constituted, as of Fall 2019, of 51.1% domestic islander students, 28.9% international students, and 20% domestic out of province students. The focus on recruiting international and out of province students stems from a predicted decrease in Island high school graduates over the next few years²⁵⁴. In 2017 and 2018, only 58% of the degrees being handed were granted to Prince Edward Island residents²⁵⁵. This percentage is expected to decrease over the next few years to reflect the increase in external recruitment over the past few years.

The distribution of scholarships however does not reflect this diversity of population, with numerous scholarships being restricted to students originally from PEI or who have graduated from a PEI high school²⁵⁶.

The UPEI Student Union recognizes that many awards are funded by private donors. However, the University could and should do more to educate donors on choosing criteria and the importance of UPEI's changing demographics. Further, the University must ensure that its internally-funded scholarships are equitable in terms of geographic origin.

The UPEISU believes in fairness in scholarship eligibility and criteria. In a University that is facing a rapidly changing dynamic in terms of population, it is only fair that all students, inclusive of those not originally from Prince Edward Island, have the same opportunities.

The UPEI Student Union recommends that the University of Prince Edward Island encourage donors who sponsor scholarships or awards not to restrict their awards to only Island residents or graduates of island high schools.

²⁵⁴ Number of PEI high school graduates slated to drop 22% over the next 14 years. President Alaa Abd-el-Aziz, public presentation to UPEI Board of Governors. 9 May 2013.

²⁵⁵ MPHEC Credentials Granted. <http://www.mphec.ca/research/credentialsgranted.aspx>

²⁵⁶ UPEI Scholarships and Awards. <https://www.upei.ca/scholarships-and-awards/displayscholarships>



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Expanding The Graduate Mentorship Program To International Students: A Plan For International Student Retention

Principle

All international students should have resources available to pursue a career on Prince Edward Island.

Concern

There are no programs that tackle long-term work opportunities, aid in retention or facilitate access to employment for international students.

Recommendation

The UPEI Student Union Recommends the Province of Prince Edward Island expand eligibility of the Graduate Mentorship Program to include international students to aid in retaining students and facilitate employment opportunities.

Supporting Evidence:

The Graduate Mentorship Program was introduced in 2012 by the Government of Prince Edward Island.²⁵⁷ The goal of the program is to “encourage employers to hire post-secondary graduates and provide valuable work experience and mentorship opportunities in their field of study”.²⁵⁸

In 2015, the UPEI Student Union advocated to the Provincial Government to include international students in the Program.²⁵⁹ As a result, the eligibility criteria was expanded that year to reflect those concerns.

²⁵⁷ Government of Prince Edward Island. 2012. *Graduate Mentorship program to provide work experience for recent graduates*. <http://www.gov.pe.ca/webarchive/index.php?number=news&dept=&newsnumber=8320&lang=E>

²⁵⁸ Skills PEI. *Graduate Mentorship Information Sheet*.

[http://skillspei.com/uploads/Program_PDFs/ENG/2018/Grad%20Mentor_Program%20\(June%202019\).EN.pdf](http://skillspei.com/uploads/Program_PDFs/ENG/2018/Grad%20Mentor_Program%20(June%202019).EN.pdf)

²⁵⁹ UPEISU External Policy Book. 2013. Policy S10.



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The number of graduates accessing the Program following the 2015 expansion drastically increased.²⁶⁰ It went from a total of 325 individuals between 2012 and 2016 to 875 individuals from 2016 to 2019.²⁶¹ Such data is demonstrated in Figure 1 below. In June 2019, the Program criteria changed back to limit eligibility to Canadian citizens and permanent residents, excluding international students.²⁶²

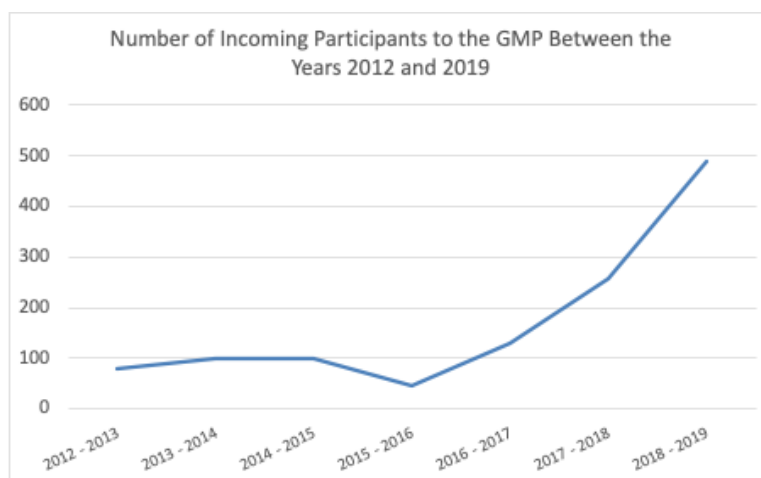


Figure 1: The growth of the number of incoming participants into the GMP.

Statistics Canada identified the unemployment rate of persons between the age of 15 and 24 in PEI as 14%. The unemployment rate of persons 15 years of age and over was 10.8%.²⁶³ The statistics show an alarming decline of the number of Islanders in the workforce, specifically in the age range of 15-24.

The Canadian Bureau for International Education stated in a 2018 study that “the ability to retain international students as permanent residents and skilled workers is especially critical for regions with a declining labour force.”²⁶⁴ The ideal strategy

²⁶⁰ Harding, G. 2016. CBC News. *International students will be part of P.E.I. mentorship program.*

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/international-students-mentorship-program-1.3533492>

²⁶¹ Davis, T. 2019. CBC News. *P.E.I. Liberals promise more jobs for young Islanders.*

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-liberals-youth-jobs-promise-election-1.5092378>

²⁶² Skills PEI. 2019. *Graduate Mentorship Information Sheet.*

[http://skillspei.com/uploads/Program_PDFs/ENG/2018/Grad%20Mentor_Program%20\(June%202019\).EN.pdf](http://skillspei.com/uploads/Program_PDFs/ENG/2018/Grad%20Mentor_Program%20(June%202019).EN.pdf)

²⁶³ Statistics Canada. April 2020. *Labour Force Survey.*

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200508/t004a-eng.htm>

²⁶⁴ Esses, V., Sutter, A., Ortiz, A., Luo, N., Cui, J., Deacon, L. Canadian Bureau for International Education. *Retaining International Students in Canada Post-Graduation: Understanding the Motivations and Drivers of the Decision to Stay.* June 2018. <https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Intl-students-post-graduation-RiB-8-EN-1.pdf>



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for such retention, according to the CBIE, is providing international students with employment.

According to a UPEI Student Union survey, 76.7 % of international students stated they would stay in PEI if they had career opportunities. 65% of those who said they would leave PEI, cited a “lack of career opportunities” as their reason.²⁶⁵ Only 33% of domestic out-of-province students showed interest in staying in PEI post-graduation.

The Government of PEI published a Population Action Plan to “recruit, retain, and repatriate” persons to the Island from 2017 to 2022.²⁶⁶ The identified concerns were the larger aging population, a decrease in the number of Island high-school graduates, and a negative natural growth. These concerns were also extended to the Island’s labour force. Initial remedies tackled recruitment, but retention remains an issue. The Population Action Plan proposed the following solutions:

1. Introduce incentives and programs to post-secondary graduates to stay on the Island after graduating.
2. Strengthen retention efforts for “post-secondary graduates - including international students.”
3. Continue to connect employers with young job seekers.

The Graduate Mentorship Program is an existing solution. Expanding its eligibility to include international students is crucial to help rebuild PEI’s economy, especially after the effects of COVID-19. International students are a young, skilled workforce that is eager for an opportunity to join the Island’s labour market and community.

The UPEI Student Union Recommends the Province of Prince Edward Island expand eligibility of the Graduate Mentorship Program to include international students to aid in retaining students and facilitate employment opportunities.

²⁶⁵ UPEISU Students’ Current and Future Residency Survey. June 2020.

²⁶⁶ Government of Prince Edward Island. *Recruit, Retain, Repatriate: A population Action Plan for Prince Edward Island*. 2017. https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/pei_population-action-plan_2017.pdf