



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR BC CHAIRPERSON

I'd like to welcome you to a new school year!

For more than 45 years, students in BC have worked collaboratively towards the common goal of an affordable and accessible education system that is inclusive of all learners. We know that the cost of tuition is too high and that students are expected to take on too much debt in order to enter post-secondary; this is why we work together. Our work with students' unions across BC allows us to amplify student voices and advocate for the removal of barriers to ensure everyone has the opportunity to get an education.

The BC Federation of Students has members across the province, who bring a diverse perspective to the table when talking about student issues - that is why we are so strong. Our work has brought us many victories over the years. Because of student action, we got a cap on domestic tuition fee increases, the elimination of interest on provincial and federal student loans and the creation of the BC Access Grant.

This year will be no different, we will continue to fight for more public funding to BC's post-secondary institutions and a reduction in fees, and we will make sure that students are at the table to represent the unique student experience. Students are the future of British Columbia, we will be the ones teaching in schools and working in hospitals and in the trades. We need to be set up for success so that no one is left behind. Together we can make sure that's possible.

I hope your school year is filled with many achievements and great opportunities to connect with each other on campus. You are not alone. Your students' union and the Federation will always be there to support you with issues you might be facing. Because in the end, we are stronger together.

Melissa Chirino, Chairperson

STUDENT LEADER



(604) 733-1880



wearebcstudents.ca



**British Columbia
Federation of Students**



@theBCFS

ABOUT THE FEDERATION

Amplifying student voices since 1975

In 1975, students across British Columbia saw the need to work together with a single, united movement in order to be an effective force for provincial and national change. Today, the British Columbia Federation of Students brings together over 170,000 students from fourteen universities, colleges, and institutes across British Columbia.

The Federation provides a venue for students to effectively communicate, collaborate, organize, and mobilize to advocate for collective interests locally, provincially, and nationally. The Federation also provides valuable services for individual members and member local students' unions.

Our Founding Principles

**DEMOCRATIC
AND
CO-OPERATIVE**

**SHARE IDEAS
AND
EXPERIENCE**

**EFFECTIVE
DISTRIBUTION
OF
RESOURCES**

**BRING
STUDENTS
TOGETHER
FOR
CHANGE**

**PROVIDE
SERVICES
THAT
MEET NEEDS
AND
BUILD
COMMUNITY**

**ADVOCATE
FOR
STUDENTS'
NEEDS**

**TO ACHIEVE A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
SYSTEM THAT IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL, WHICH IS OF
HIGH QUALITY, WHICH IS NATIONALLY PLANNED
AND WHICH RECOGNIZES THE LEGITIMACY OF
STUDENT REPRESENTATION AND THE VALIDITY
OF STUDENT RIGHTS.**

WHAT WE DO FOR STUDENTS

RUN CAMPAIGNS

TO MAKE POST-
SECONDARY MORE
AFFORDABLE AND
ACCESSIBLE

PROVIDE SERVICES

TO MEET STUDENTS'
UNIQUE NEEDS
AND TO SAVE
STUDENTS MONEY

LOBBY FOR CHANGE

WE VOICE
STUDENTS'
CONCERNS TO
GOVERNMENT



MEET YOUR REPRESENTATIVES!

Each of the Federation's member local unions elects one student member to be their representative on the Federation's Executive Committee – and be the voice for students at their institution.

The Federation's 4 At-Large Directors, Chairperson, Indigenous Caucus Chairperson and Secretary-Treasurer are elected annually.

Visit wearebcstudents.ca/executive_committee to meet them.

THIS IS YOUR STUDENT MOVEMENT

Advocating for Students' Issues

A Brief Introduction to the BC Federation of Students

All positive changes to public education in the last century have come from people working together to fight for something better. When it comes to building better communities and better public services, we are stronger when we work together than when we are working alone. Governments—both provincial and national—are often reluctant to implement policies that benefit students and their families. However, a chorus of voices calling for a common goal is a powerful tool to bring about change. Working together through the Federation gives students across BC, and across the country, a united voice and influence on public policy.

Working together and pooling resources also helps students get better, ethically-oriented services for less. Through economies of scale, the Federation helps to save both individual students and member local students' unions money through programs like the Deals App - our student discount program, the orientation and promotional materials service, and the BC Student Health Consortium.

Democratic Decision Making

Regardless of the region or size, each member local students' union has an equal voice at the table to set the agenda for the provincial student movement.

The Federation is run by an Executive Committee that includes one representative from every member local students' union. The Executive Committee meets at least five times per year to discuss and direct the operations of the organisation.

The Federation holds two general membership meetings each year to review, debate, and set campaigns, services, and policies of the organisation. Each students' union selects delegates to represent students at their institution in the decision making of the general meetings.



RECENT VICTORIES

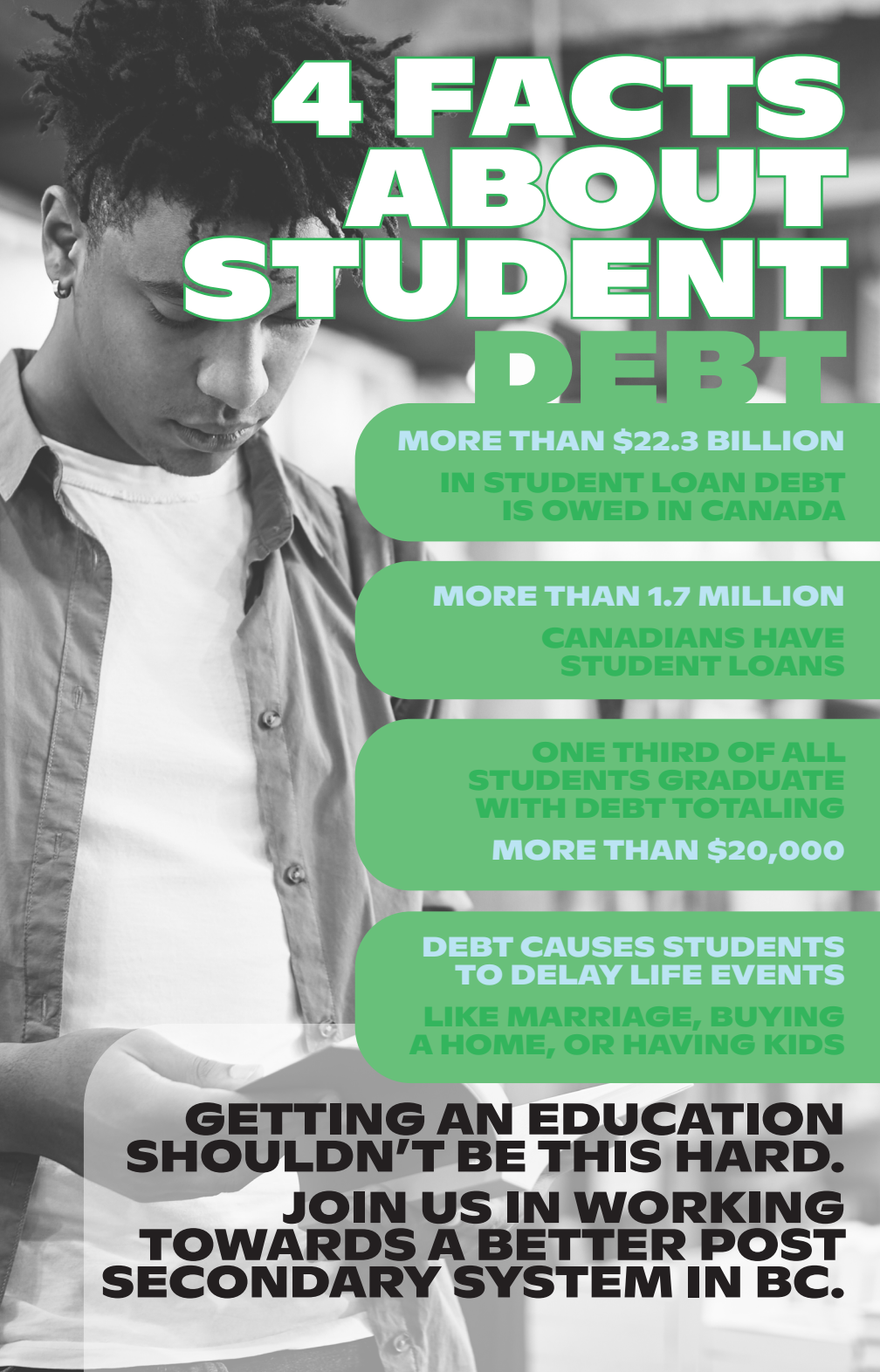
IT'S TIME TO
KNOCK OUT
INTEREST
ON STUDENT
LOANS!



BRITISH COLUMBIA FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

**BY WORKING
TOGETHER,
STUDENTS
AND THE
FEDERATION
HAVE A LOT
TO BE PROUD
OF AND
HAVE WON
SOME MAJOR
VICTORIES,
INCLUDING:**

- 2005** — BC's tuition fee cap (ongoing)
- 2008** — \$800 million in new federal funding for post-secondary education
- 2008** — Canada's 1st national system of grants for low- and middle-income students
- 2011** — introduction of a U-Pass for lower mainland students
- 2017** — reduction of interest on BC student loans
- 2017** — the elimination of tuition fees on adult basic education courses
- 2018** — \$250,000 in new funding for open education resources
- 2019** — the elimination of interest on BC student loans
- 2019** — \$3.26 million in new funding for open education resources
- 2020** — \$41 million in new funding for the BC Access Grant
- 2022** — temporary elimination of 20 hour/week work limits on international students
- 2023** — the elimination of interest on federal student loans
- 2023** — increase to the Canada Student Grant

A black and white photograph of a young person with dreadlocks, looking down at a document they are holding. The person is wearing a light-colored t-shirt under a button-down shirt. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting.

4 FACTS ABOUT STUDENT DEBT

**MORE THAN \$22.3 BILLION
IN STUDENT LOAN DEBT
IS OWED IN CANADA**

**MORE THAN 1.7 MILLION
CANADIANS HAVE
STUDENT LOANS**

**ONE THIRD OF ALL
STUDENTS GRADUATE
WITH DEBT TOTALING
MORE THAN \$20,000**

**DEBT CAUSES STUDENTS
TO DELAY LIFE EVENTS
LIKE MARRIAGE, BUYING
A HOME, OR HAVING KIDS**

**GETTING AN EDUCATION
SHOULDN'T BE THIS HARD.
JOIN US IN WORKING
TOWARDS A BETTER POST
SECONDARY SYSTEM IN BC.**

CAMPAIGNS & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Our Federation voices students' concerns to government, while conducting in-depth research to support policy recommendations. Lobbying and accurate research are only effective in influencing government decision-making when students are actively engaged in campaigns, through activities such as letter-writing, signing petitions, attending mass rallies or protests, and social media actions.

The funding issues, unmanageable tuition fee increases and unaffordability of being a student are intertwined and deeply concerning. The Federation and your students' union will continue to advocate to make education more accessible to all learners in BC, in particular those from rural communities, low-income backgrounds and international students.

Scan the QR code to learn more about our ongoing advocacy efforts and to join our calls for the government to prioritize reducing the cost of obtaining an education in BC.

Scan Me



Fees & Funding

For more than two decades, the proportion of government funding to BC's public post-secondary institutions has declined, while tuition fees have increased to make up for these funding gaps. Today, our province's post-secondary system is in the midst of a funding crisis, with the cost of obtaining an education being unfairly downloaded on students and their families.

It is widely known that investing in post-secondary education benefits the economy, labour force and society and will benefit everyone living in British Columbia. The Federation is calling on the provincial government to urgently invest new annual funding to support the operation of BC's institutions, freeze and progressively reduce tuition fees, commit additional funds to non-repayable financial aid and introduce a 2% cap on international student tuition fees to create equity amongst all students studying in the province.

British Columbians and those who study in our province can no longer be expected to pay the price for years of inconsistent funding.

Rising Tuition Fees

Tuition fees in BC have increased by over 125% since 2001. The high costs of living, food, and other expenses like internet and gas, has made being a student increasingly unaffordable in our province. Tuition fees are one of the main barriers that keep young people from low-income families – who are disproportionately Indigenous, students of colour, trans students, students with disabilities and students raised in single-parent homes – and mature students looking to re-skill out of the classroom.

In the early 2000s, BC had the second-lowest tuition fees in Canada but that changed after decades of government funding cuts that resulted in the doubling of tuition fees. High tuition fees force students to take on massive loads of debt, drop down from full-time to part-time studies, or work multiple jobs just to get by. What's the solution? Freezing and then progressively reducing tuition fees would take the incredible financial strain off students and be a step in the direction of affordable education. To reduce tuition fees, it is essential that the government commit to making BC's public post-secondary education system a priority and providing additional annual funds to institutions across the province.

ADVOCATING FOR STUDENTS

The Funding Crisis

While students pay more for school, the government pays less. The proportion of public funding to BC colleges and universities has dropped to 43.6% of total operating revenue, down from more than 80% in the 1980s and more than 90% in the 1970s. This means that institutions are being forced to rely on revenue from students to make up for funding cuts from the government. Today, tuition fee revenue has increased by over 300% since 2002, reaching 47.6% of institution's revenue and surpassing the proportion of government funding. Students are hit by a lack of funding for college and universities by more than just high tuition fees. Funding cuts also mean long wait lists for counselors and on campus supports, outdated equipment and cuts in program offerings for students.

In April 2022 the provincial government announced it would be undertaking a funding review of BC's public post-secondary institutions. Over the years, students in BC have been actively campaigning for a funding review to address the current shortfalls; however, without an investment of new annual funding the crisis our post-secondary system and students face will continue.

Student Debt

Student debt in BC has risen 88% since 1999, and the average student loan balance upon graduation is over \$30,000. A recent study

showed that student debt holds young people back not only professionally, but also in other important ways: because of rising debt, recent graduates in Canada are delaying major life events like getting married, buying a home, or starting a family.

Recent student led victories including the elimination of interest on provincial student loans in 2019, the introduction of the BC Access Grant – an up-front, needs-based grant program – and the 2022 announcement of the elimination of interest on Federal student loans were steps in the right direction; but more needs to be done to make education accessible.

Students not only struggle to pay their tuition fees, but face huge challenges finding affordable housing, covering the cost of groceries, gas and other costs associated with day-to-day life. The 2023 BC budget introduced the doubling of student loan maximums and increasing the income level required for repayment to begin, but allowing a student to take on more debt is not a solution to creating an accessible and equitable education system that will meet the future needs of our province. Students are tomorrow's nurses, early childhood educators and trades people but the education required to fill these jobs is increasingly unaffordable. **Together we can fight for better.**

Fairness for International Students

“*Tuition fees for international students are up to 5 times as much as tuition fees for domestic students.*”

While all students in Canada have faced dramatic fee increases over the last decade, tuition fees for international students have become particularly burdensome in recent years. Average tuition fees for international students can be as much as five times the already high fees paid by domestic students.

International students make up a substantial portion of the enrollment at BC's public universities and colleges, and institutions have come to rely on them as a revenue stream to make up for government funding shortfalls.

Pressure on institutions to rely on international student tuition fees is significant; tuition fees for international students in BC have increased 538% since 1991, and are now on average more than \$25,400 per year. The disparity between fees paid by international and domestic students is huge: while international students make up approximately 20% of overall enrolment in BC universities, their fees make up 48% of tuition fee revenues. To make matters worse, international tuition fee increases are not regulated like domestic tuition fees, which can only increase to a maximum of 2% each year, and as a result can increase by any amount at any time.

Beyond the cost of education, international students often face a lack of adequate services, such as advisors, counselors, and financial and other supports if they find themselves in difficult situations.

International students are major contributors not only to our institutional communities (and budgets), but also to our off-campus communities and BC's economy. Fairness and predictability for international students is necessary to ensure BC remains a desirable destination to study for students from around the world and to create equity for all learners studying in the province.



MORE ABOUT OUR ADVOCACY

Reconciliation Through Education

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created to investigate and respond to the serious effects residential schools had, and continue to have, on survivors and their families. Running from 2008 to 2015, the Commission held national events and heard accounts from survivors. The TRC then gathered their findings and put them into a report that included a list of calls to action for federal and provincial governments to implement in order to begin addressing the damage the legacy of residential schools, including the regressive politics that led to their creation and maintenance, had on the Indigenous population in Canada. The 94 calls to action in the TRC's report address issues around health, child welfare, education, and the preservation of language and culture. These recommendations are aimed at closing the disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations for post-secondary education focus on providing necessary funding to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in the classroom. Education needs to be a top priority in the federal and provincial reconciliation framework. Investing in Indigenous education is a necessary step towards reconciliation and provides a pathway to stronger economic stability and reducing income inequality.

There continues to be a large gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners attaining a post-secondary degree. Using 2015 graduate numbers, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) found that another 78,000 Indigenous graduates are required to close the attainment gap, which would require an increase of 80.6% of current funding. This gap is due to years of piecemeal funding increases and a cap of only 2% in funding increases that have allowed the program's funds to be far lower than necessitated. For the 2022-23 fiscal period, the AFN has identified a conservative estimate of \$7.27 billion over five years to address the backlog of students waiting to access the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP). This would ensure that cohorts graduating secondary school in this fiscal year will be able to access the program now.

To learn more, visit:

wearebcstudents.ca/reconciliation_through_education

Open Education Resources

Open Education Resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain, which permits their free use and re-purposing by others. These resources commonly include textbooks and open access journals but can also include other materials used for learning and research like course materials, modules, videos, tests, software, and more.

The cost of textbooks and course materials has long been a financial challenge for students. Constantly changing versions of textbooks and skyrocketing prices have put many textbooks beyond the reach of students.

In 2012 the BC government created the Open Textbook Project, and provided \$2 million to fund the development of open education resources. Since then, students in BC have saved over \$34 million thanks to instructors adopting OER materials for their classes.

Talk to your instructor about using OER in your class! If you want to get involved in the movement to fight high textbook prices with high-quality, low-cost alternatives, contact your students' union.

The Federation advocates in numerous other ways to improve the lives of students and ensure their needs are being met while they are in school. This includes:

- calling for increased supports for trades students such as returning apprenticeship counsellors back to campuses, and lobbying the government to develop a student-centred completion strategy for trades;
- working with member local students' unions to encourage institutions to provide no-cost menstrual products in all washrooms on campus and pushing the government to develop policy requiring the provision of no-cost menstrual products on campuses; and
- developing materials to support on-campus conversations around consent, equity and other social justice issues.

Through the Federation and in coalition with other groups, students in BC also advocate for affordable childcare, climate action, Indigenous rights, fair wages, student and worker solidarity, food security and more.

To learn more about our campaign work visit:
wearebestudents.ca/campaigns



MEMBER SERVICES

The Federation offers a number of programs and services to meet the unique needs of students, and to help students and member local students' unions save money.

***Student Discounts
– The Deals App***

Save money at restaurants, retail stores, gyms, hotels, on flights, internet and phone plans, and at local businesses in your community.

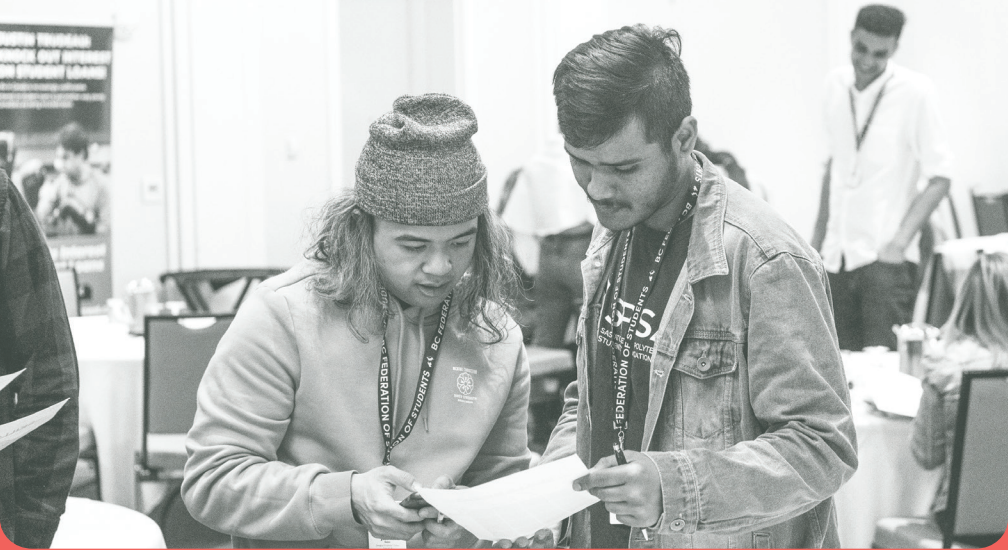
Being a student is increasingly unaffordable; not only are we coping with high tuition fees and textbooks costs, the rising costs of rent, transit, food, and gas prices continue to squeeze our budgets.

The Federation runs a province-wide student discount program – the Deals App – to help save members like yourself money.

Scan Me



Together with member local students' unions, the Federation partners with businesses all over the province to offer student discounts in stores and online. The best part is that you can access them right from your phone; download the app for free and get access to instant savings at hundreds of businesses across British Columbia.



Members' Handbook & Dayplanner

Many students' unions produce and distribute day planners (like this one!) to their members. Not only does it save students from having to buy their own, but they also contain important information about your student representatives, resources and services available to you, and campaigns and advocacy work you can get involved in through your students' union. Be sure to check out your students' union's section of this handbook to learn more.

The Federation's members' handbook service began in 1993 as a means of producing dayplanners for members at small students' unions who could not, on their own, produce such a service. Today the Federation coordinates the production of 13 versions of the handbook – which are locally-produced on recycled paper in a unionized facility – and member locals of all sizes benefit from economies of scale. Not only does this service provide a superior product for members, but it saves money that is passed back to you in the form of improved or expanded services and events on campus.

BC Student Health Consortium

The rising costs of prescription drugs, health procedures, and dental services that are not covered by provincial health plans have an enormous impact on students' budgets. The BC Student Health Consortium – the Federation's health and dental insurance service – was created by students for students and exists to secure lower rates and better coverage for eligible members using the collective expertise and purchasing power of member local unions.

Working with not-for-profit insurance provider GreenShield, the Federation supports member local students' unions with the design, negotiation, promotion, and administration of their members' health and dental plan and to drive progressive change among those offering student health and dental benefits.

These plans provide you with coverage for prescription drugs, dental care, counselling, gender affirming health care, legal assistance services, life insurance, and more, as well as discounts on dental visit co-pays and prescription glasses and contacts.

Ethical & Sustainable Promotional Materials

Since 2006, the Federation has coordinated the purchase of ethically and sustainably sourced materials for campuses across the province. These materials include water bottles made from 100% post-consumer recycled plastics, union-made pens, and ethically sourced apparel and tote bags. By purchasing these products collectively through the Federation, students' unions are able to make your membership dues go farther and help to make campuses more sustainable and sweatshop-free.

The Campus Mobile App

Designed for students, Ready Education connects campuses and creates communities by providing an online platform to share information about events, clubs, services, and advocacy work happening on- and off-campus. Through a partnership with the Federation, the app is provided to member local students' unions at a heavily discounted rate and can be customized by students' unions to meet their members' needs. The app can be used to share apartments for rent, buy or sell used textbooks, or simply to connect with other students in your community. Among other benefits, this partnership allows the app to be made available to campus clubs for event promotion, member sign-up, and ongoing communication with club membership.

Ask your students' union if they have a campus app, or search for it wherever you download your apps!

Skills Development Symposium

Being a students' union director can be a daunting task. There is so much to learn when you are first elected and start on the board of directors! From legal responsibilities, to overseeing students' union finances, engaging your members, talking to the media, and working with your staff, it's a lot to wrap your head around.

To help students' union directors and staff be the most successful they can be and fulfill their roles in advocating for the needs of students on your campus, the Federation holds an annual province-wide conference to host a variety of skill-building workshops.

The Skills Development Symposium consists of workshops and seminars that provide elected representatives with a broad range of skills required to effectively operate a students' union. The Symposium also provides participants with an opportunity to make connections and develop relationships with student leaders from across the province. The Symposium is fully subsidized by the Federation for one participant from each member local union, and partially subsidized for up to eleven more. This allows students' unions to spend just a little bit of money to ensure staff and directors have the training they need to be the most effective on your campus.