

A MESSAGE FROM your BCFS CHAIRPERSON

Dear members,

For more than 50 years, members of the BC Federation of Students (BCFS)—just like you—have been relentlessly advocating for accessible, equitable, and affordable public post-secondary education. Your students' union is among the 15 students' unions that make up the BCFS—170,000 students working collectively for change.

Together, we fight for a better system: more public funding for institutions, fair treatment for international students, and increased funding to provincial grants. Your students' union is part of a collective voice that fights for better education. We are a voice that cannot be silenced.

Right now, our system is under pressure. Chronic underfunding and over-reliance on tuition fees are leading to program cuts, service reductions, staff and faculty layoffs, and long course waitlists. Students are bearing the consequences, facing higher costs and delayed graduation. That's not acceptable, and that's why our work matters.

Change doesn't happen on its own. Now more than ever, we must work together to continue to fight to improve our post-secondary experience. Together, we can achieve an equitable, affordable, and accessible post-secondary education system, one step at a time. Join the movement: get engaged with your students' union, run for your Board of Directors, and do not be afraid to let your voice be heard!

We are stronger together.

In solidarity,

Debi Herrera Lira,
Chairperson, BC Federation of Students



STAY IN TOUCH



wearebcstudents.ca



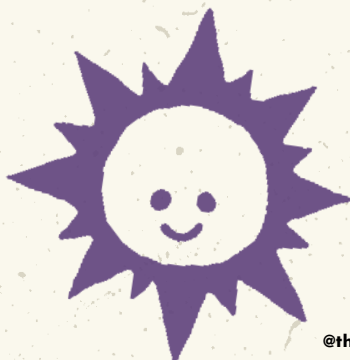
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@theBCFS



ABOUT THE FEDERATION

In 1975, students across British Columbia saw the need to work together as a single, united movement in order to be an effective force for provincial and national change. Today, the Federation brings together over 170,000 students from 14 universities, colleges, and institutes across BC.

The Federation gives students a space to effectively collaborate, organise, and mobilise 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 & COOPERATIVE

BRING STUDENTS TOGETHER FOR CHANGE

PROVIDE SERVICES THAT MEET STUDENT NEEDS & BUILD COMMUNITY

SHARE IDEAS & EXPERIENCE

EFFECTIVELY DISTRIBUTE RESOURCES

ADVOCATE FOR STUDENTS' NEEDS

**ACHIEVE AN ACCESSIBLE, HIGH QUALITY POST-SECONDARY
EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT RECOGNIZES THE LEGITIMACY
OF STUDENT REPRESENTATION & STUDENT RIGHTS**

WHAT WE DO FOR STUDENTS

Run Campaigns

to make post-secondary education more affordable and accessible

Provide Services

to meet students' unique needs and save students money

Lobby for Change

on behalf of students to all levels of government

Connect Students

across the province to create community and build solidarity



MEET Your
REPS

Meet your student representatives!

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

The Federation's Chairperson, Secretary-Treasurer, Indigenous Caucus Chairperson, and four Directors at Large are elected annually at our Annual General Meeting.

your STUDENT MOVEMENT

An Introduction to the BC Federation of Students

When it comes to making positive changes to public education, we are stronger when we work together than when we are working alone. Governments—both provincial and federal—are often reluctant to implement policies that benefit students. 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 a united voice and influence on public policy.

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

Democratic Decision Making

Regardless of 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 Committee meets at least four times per year to discuss and direct the operations of the organisation.

The Federation also holds one general membership meeting every year to review, debate, and determine the campaigns, services, and policies of the organisation.



RECENT



2005

BC's tuition fee cap introduced (students still benefit from this policy today). And international students gain ability to work off-campus

2008

\$800 million in new federal funding for post-secondary education

2008

Canada's first national system of grants for low- and middle-income students

2011

Introduction of U-Pass BC (and discounted transit rates) for lower mainland students



VICTORIES



2017

Reduction of interest on BC student loans

2017

Elimination of tuition fees on Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English Language Learning (ELL) programs

2018

\$250,000 in new funding for open education resources

2019

\$3.26 million in new funding for open education resources

Elimination of interest on BC student loans



2020

\$41 million in new funding for the BC Access Grant

2022



Temporary elimination of off-campus work limits for international students

2023

Increase to the Canada Student Grant
Elimination of interest on federal student loans

TUITION PRICES SUCK. COURSE WAITLISTS SUCK. STAFF LAYOFFS SUCK.

Public funding for post-secondary education in BC has dropped from 68% in 2000, to just 40% today. You're paying the price through increased tuition fees.

It's time for the BC government to step up, reinvest in our campuses, and properly fund post-secondary education.



CUTS SUCK **FIX** EDUCATION

TELL THE BC
GOVERNMENT TO FIX
EDUCATION NOW

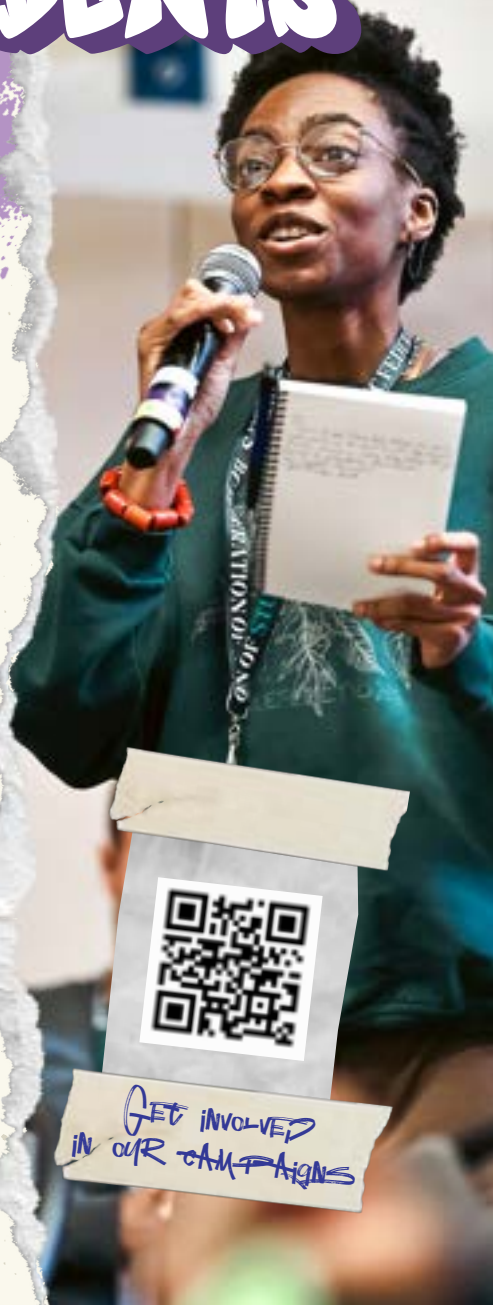


ADVOCATING FOR STUDENTS' ISSUES

The BC Federation of Students fights for a post-secondary system that puts students first. We bring your concerns to government, back them up with research, and organise campaigns to push for change. Whether it's speaking up to protect the 2% cap on annual tuition fee increases, fighting for fairness for international students, or ensuring the voices of Indigenous students, first-time learners, and those from historically marginalized backgrounds are heard, we will never shy away from pushing for a system that actually works for students.

With institutions running major deficits and tuition fees continuing to rise, students are feeling the pressure on campus every day. Programs are being cut. Staff are being laid off. Waitlists for courses and counselling are growing. And campuses and learning centres in rural communities are closing.

That's why we're advocating for an education system that is affordable, inclusive, accessible and responsive to student needs – because right now it isn't. Whether it's through protests, petitions, social media actions, or speaking directly with decision-makers, our movement is powered by students like you.



GET INVOLVED
IN OUR CAMPAIGNS

CAMPAIGNS & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The Consequences of Underfunding Education

It's no secret that post-secondary institutions across BC are in a financial crisis. What's often overlooked is that students saw this coming. For years, we warned the government that relying on international student tuition fees to fund public education was unfair and unsustainable. In 2024, that warning became reality when federal caps on international study permits exposed just how fragile the system is.

Now, students are paying the price. On every campus, the issues look the same:

- program cuts
- staff layoffs
- growing waitlists
- delayed graduations
- reduced services
- campus closures
- outdated infrastructure
- increasing tuition fees

These aren't random, and they aren't inevitable. They are the result of years of government underfunding.

Students Are Calling for Change

Students across BC are calling on the provincial government to step up and fix the problem. That means:

- funding the system properly to stop cuts and stabilise campuses
- protecting affordability by maintaining the 2% tuition cap
- reducing reliance on tuition fees as a primary revenue source
- investing in a system that is accessible, equitable, and sustainable

In the 1980s, the provincial government funded more than 75% of college and university operating costs. Today, that support has dropped to just 40% — forcing institutions to rely on students to make up the difference. Since 2002, tuition fee revenue has increased by over 300%, reaching 47.6% of institutions' revenue and surpassing the proportion of government funding. Students are paying more so the government can pay less.

Restoring public funding to at least 75% would take pressure off students, stabilise campuses, and protect post-secondary education as a public good.

Cuts Suck. Fix Education.

Cuts Suck. Fix Education. is a student-led campaign exposing the real impact of underfunding on post-secondary campuses across BC. As institutions face growing financial pressure, students are tracking the consequences in real time — documenting program cuts, staff layoffs, service reductions, and campus closures happening across the province. In the 2025-26 academic year alone, we saw nearly 200 programs cut, almost 50 support services reduced, 13 campus closures announced, and more than 1,300 staff and faculty laid off.

This campaign makes one thing clear: these are not abstract budget decisions. They are lived experiences. They mean students waiting longer to graduate because required courses are full or cancelled. They mean paying more in tuition for fewer classes and less support. They mean losing access to academic advisors, counselling, Elders, and community spaces that are critical to student success. In some communities, they mean losing access to post-secondary education altogether.

Through collective advocacy, students are taking matters into their own hands — last year, students across BC sent more than 3,000 postcards directly to the provincial government. Each postcard included a photo of the sender as a reminder that behind every cut is a real student, facing real consequences.

Nearly every public college and university in BC is projected to run a deficit this year. Suspended intakes are becoming more common — like the students who applied to VCC's nursing program, only to learn the entire Fall 2026 cohort was cancelled due to a lack of operating funds. These decisions are closing doors before students even get in. At the same time, the provincial government has launched a sector-wide review — but has refused to commit any new funding. Instead, the focus is on finding “efficiencies” and new revenue sources, which could mean higher tuition fees, more cuts, or even institutional mergers.

Cuts Suck. Fix Education. demands real investment to protect affordability and defend access to public post-secondary education.

We need to stand together and make it clear: the solution isn't more cuts — it's restoring public funding.

Scan the QR code to track the latest cuts across the province.



LEARN MORE

Fairness for International Students



While tuition has increased for all students in Canada, international students are facing the most extreme and unfair costs. In BC, international tuition can be up to five times higher than what domestic students pay, often exceeding \$25,000 per year, with little to no regulation on how much it can increase.

This isn't accidental. Years of government underfunding have pushed institutions to rely on international students as a primary revenue source. In 2024, international students made up roughly 20% of enrolment but accounted for nearly half of all tuition fee revenue. Since 1991, international tuition fees in BC have increased by more than 500%.

At the same time, international students face additional and growing barriers on campus and beyond. Many experience racism and exclusion, while the very departments and supports meant to assist them, including international education departments, are being cut or scaled back. Federal policy changes, including constantly changing IRCC rules and work-hour restrictions, have created instability and uncertainty, making it harder for students to plan their studies and support themselves in Canada.

Despite paying significantly more, international students are often left with fewer supports, limited access to services like advising and counselling, and less stability in an already challenging system.

BC needs a system that is fair, predictable, and properly funded, where international students are supported, not exploited. International students are major contributors not only to our institutional communities, but also to our off-campus communities and BC's economy. Expanding the tuition limit policy to include international tuition fees would create equity for international students and ensure BC remains a desirable destination to study for students from around the world.



Open Education Resources

Open Educational Resources (OER) are free, openly licensed teaching and learning materials that anyone can use, share, and adapt. They include textbooks and journals, but also course modules, videos, assignments, software, and more.

The cost of textbooks and course materials has been a long-standing barrier for students. Prices keep rising, new editions are released frequently, and many students are forced to go without required materials because they are simply out of our budgets.

In 2012, student advocacy led the BC government to invest \$2 million in the Open Textbook Project to expand access to OER. Since then, students in BC have saved over \$41.5 million through instructors adopting free, open materials.

Students' unions and the BCFS continue to push institutions to go further — including adding course labels in registration systems so students can easily identify classes that use OER before enrolling.

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.



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 to begin addressing the damage the legacy of residential schools, including the regressive politics that led to their creation and maintenance, had on Indigenous people 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 seeking equity for Indigenous people.

The TRC'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 Indigenous learners waiting to access the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP). Programs like the Métis Nation Post-Secondary Education Strategy and the Inuit Post-Secondary Education Strategy are also underfunded. Continuing to raise these issues to government decision-makers is necessary to ensure progress is made on implementing the TRC's recommendations for the post-secondary sector and that the required funding is available for Indigenous students wishing to pursue post-secondary studies.

At the same time, Indigenous students continue to face widespread and persistent anti-Indigenous racism on campus and in society. This includes discrimination in classrooms, a lack of culturally relevant supports, and the ongoing impacts of colonial systems that create unsafe and exclusionary learning environments. These realities make it even more difficult for Indigenous students to access, remain in, and succeed within post-secondary education. Addressing these challenges requires more than commitments — it requires sustained action and investment. Governments must fully implement the TRC's Calls to Action, including properly funding Indigenous post-secondary education.



MEMBER SERVICES

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, the 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 section at the front 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 14 versions of the handbook – which are locally-produced on recycled paper in a unionized facility – and member local students' unions 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. It secures lower rates and better coverage for eligible members using the collective expertise and purchasing power of member local students' 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. The BC Student Health Consortium also strives to drive progressive change among those offering students health and dental benefits.

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

Student Discounts: The Deals App

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

The Deals App saves you money at restaurants, retail stores, gyms and hotels. You can also save on flights, internet and phone plans, and at local businesses in your community.

Together with member local students' unions, the Federation partners with businesses all over the province to offer student discounts in stores and online. You can access discounts right from your phone. Download the Deals App for free and get access to instant savings at hundreds of businesses across BC.

Ethical & Sustainable Promotional Materials

The Federation coordinates the purchase of ethically and sustainably sourced materials for campuses across the province. Materials include water bottles and lanyards made from 100% recycled plastics, union-made pens, ethically sourced clothing and lots more! By purchasing these products collectively through the Federation, member local students' unions can make your membership dues go further and help make campuses sweatshop-free.



DOWNLOAD
THE APP

EQUITY FOR ALL

80%

of Indigenous
students
report racial
discrimination

+

6.5%

of B.C.
post-secondary
students are
Indigenous

trans students
experience
mistreatment

3x

more than cis
students

+

1 IN 111

young people
in B.C. are trans
or non-binary

1.5x

the rate of discrimination
among women identifying
students is 1.5x higher than
male identifying students

45%

of racialised
students
experience
racism at school

+

1 IN 4

Canadians
are a
visible minority

33%

of students with a disability
are unsatisfied with campus
accommodation efforts

30%+

of 2SLGBTQIA+
students report
discrimination
on campus

**EVERYONE DESERVES A SAFE PLACE TO LEARN.
LET'S DISMANTLE OUR BIASES AND BUILD
SAFER, MORE INCLUSIVE CAMPUSES.**

