



CASA

THE CANADIAN ALLIANCE OF STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

2015-2018

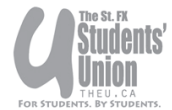
STRATEGIC PLAN



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OUR MEMBERS



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INTRODUCTION

In 2010, CASA members identified a need to engage in a member-driven strategic planning exercise. As the organization evolves, it is important to pause and reflect upon our activities, listen to the needs and goals of our stakeholders, and to establish and solidify the long-term objectives, outcomes and expectations for the organization. It is increasingly important that CASA strives for an organizational culture that thinks strategically, measures its progress and effectiveness, and engages in self-reflection for continuous improvement and innovation. The Strategic Plan seeks to lay the foundation for CASA to accomplish this, and to embed strategic planning in CASA's decision-making and activities.

The success of this plan hinges on the membership, both current and future. It will require empowering the Board of Directors and Executive Director to set reasonable targets on an annual basis, and active involvement from the membership to pursue the goals outlined here. There will be elements of this plan that will not work, and some that will surpass expectations. The challenge for future Memberships and Boards of Directors is to continuously revisit these goals and measures to determine whether they are being used as an effective management tool that can illustrate whether CASA is meeting its core objectives.

Future members will need the courage and wisdom to be comfortable with balancing contradictory roles: being the organization's harshest critic while at the same time being a passionate cheerleader; being a strong agent of change while at the same time viciously defending the status quo; and, doing what is best for the entire membership while at the same time doing what is best for their own school.

SCOPE

This plan is the culmination of a multi-year, multi-stakeholder consultation with the Membership, Board of Directors and Executive Director. The process was engineered to ensure quality, attainability, and buy-in from members, so that this document would truly be a reflection of where members wish to see CASA in the immediate and long-term. During the development of this plan, CASA placed the highest priority on including opportunities for stakeholder consultation and leading practices in strategic planning. Members were provided the opportunity to contribute and refine the plan through surveys; consultations on survey results; world café style input sessions; and committee and board consultations. Sector-wide leading practices and expertise were also called upon by engaging in a thorough environmental scan of other strategic plans for non-profit advocacy organizations and sector-wide leading practices, as well as a facilitated retreat for the strategic planning committee with a government accountability and strategic planning expert. The plan is a commitment for a truly member-driven strategic plan that all members could feel proud of and committed to.

The strategic plan seeks to unify CASA's membership around broad objectives, strategic goals and metrics to track progress toward those objectives. The strategic planning process provided the membership with the opportunity to revisit CASA's fundamental identity, approach, and resource allocation, and identify ways to progress the organization to further excellence for the future.

By identifying organizational pillars and clear strategic objectives, the plan aims to provide consistency and help guide the activities of the Board of Directors and the Executive Director, ensuring that their work is in line with the memberships' overall vision for the organization. The plan will help memberships in the short-term to set annual priorities and activities, as described in the planning process.

MISSION

Through its member-driven structure and grassroots approach, CASA's mission is to advocate for students through policy development and research, awareness campaigns, government relations, and partnerships with other stakeholders.

VISION

Canada will achieve an accessible, affordable and high quality post-secondary education system, whose students enjoy and excellent quality of life.

VALUES

- ✓ CASA will focus exclusively on post-secondary and student related issues
- ✓ CASA will remain a strictly non-partisan organization
- ✓ CASA will be member-driven, with opportunities for all members to contribute to and be heard by the organization
- ✓ CASA will have a membership structure that will remain easy to join and easy to leave

THE PLANNING PROCESS

CASA is an organization that experiences tremendous turnover at the staff, board, and delegate levels. The strategic plan is a tool for maintaining direction and progress throughout this turnover. The strategic plan must be re-visited regularly, measured carefully, and integrated into the daily activities of the board. The strategic planning process must be consistent, systemic, and allow for sufficient opportunity for discussion and debate with membership. The idea is that this strategic plan will be revisited every year in preparation for Transition and Policy & Strategy, and that it will be used as a resource for decision-making and prioritization. It is important that it be flexible while also being specific enough to be attainable. By creating a solid and consistent planning process, the goal is to shift the organizational culture in CASA to think more strategically about the organization.



LONG TERM STRATEGIC PLAN: Every three years members must draft a long-term strategic plan. The strategic plan is an overarching document that seeks to put tangible goals and metrics in place for how CASA will move toward achieving its mission and vision as an organization. The mission, vision, values, and core objectives of the organization will not change from year to year or plan to plan, unless it is the will of the membership at the time of the three-year reviews.

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN: The strategic plan will not succeed if it is not implemented into the daily activities of the home office, board, and membership. On an annual basis the Board of Directors will create an annual Action Plan that will identify specific performance targets, resource and personnel allocations, timeframes and reporting metrics, providing direction to the National Director.

PROGRESS REPORTS: On an regular basis the Executive Director and Chair of the Board will be responsible for delivering a written and oral report to the membership on the progress that has been made toward the Annual Action plan.

THREE-YEAR REVIEW: At the end of each three-year cycle, the current strategic plan will be reviewed to assess overall progress, and the extent to which the identified expected outcomes and metrics were relevant, and have been progressed toward. The Long Term Strategic Plan will be updated or recreated every three years, and voted on by the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

POLICY + RESEARCH

Policy and research refers to the process by which CASA formulates its organizational stance on issues related to post-secondary education and issues facing students in Canada. All of CASA's policy positions are formulated by engaging in thorough research, and a 'ground up, and rooted in solutions' approach which seeks to identify the issues that are affecting students across the country and provide clear recommendations to government for system reform.

CORE OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ CASA will produce post-secondary education policy that is based on research and studies done by accredited sources and will be driven by a grassroots, solution-based approach
- ✓ CASA will produce policies reflecting the diverse needs of all student populations
- ✓ CASA's policy propositions will be informed by research and incorporate feedback and expertise from key sector stakeholders

CASA WILL PRODUCE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION POLICY THAT IS BASED ON RESEARCH AND STUDIES DONE BY ACCREDITED SOURCES AND WILL BE DRIVEN BY A GRASSROOTS, SOLUTION-BASED APPROACH.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Number of new policies adopted
- ✓ Number of policies updated
- ✓ Evaluate how CASA policies match up with its 4 principles
- ✓ Evaluate the diverse array of sources referenced in its policies

CASA WILL PRODUCE POLICIES REFLECTING THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENT POPULATIONS.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Number of new policies addressing the diversity of the student population (mature learners, Aboriginal students, graduate students, trades and tech students, international students, etc.)
- ✓ Updates to old policies reflecting diverse populations

CASA'S POLICY PROPOSITIONS WILL BE INFORMED BY RESEARCH AND INCORPORATE FEEDBACK AND EXPERTISE FROM KEY SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Number of research reports published each year
- ✓ Number of research summaries per year
- ✓ Number of outreach opportunities and policy consultations with sector stakeholders

MEMBERSHIP

Membership refers solely to the internal dealings of CASA, including membership growth and retention, prospective members, organizational governance and internal processes for communicating with and engaging with member associations and delegates. The values of member-driven and easy to join/easy to leave are central to the membership pillar.

CORE OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ CASA will create opportunities for members to be engaged and participate in decision-making and direction-setting processes of the organization
- ✓ CASA will maintain high levels of engagement and communication with all members, making them aware of all opportunities for involvement in CASA activities. While also making members aware of what CASA as a whole has been doing on their behalf
- ✓ CASA will capitalize on its diverse membership by educating member association representatives about the needs and perspectives of various student populations, as well as the diverse needs of student associations of differing sizes and regions
- ✓ CASA's membership will grow organically, attracting new member associations through organizational excellence and consistent support and communication to interested parties

CASA WILL CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEMBERS TO BE ENGAGED AND PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING AND DIRECTION-SETTING PROCESSES OF THE ORGANIZATION.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Dissemination of information regarding CASA, its committees, and the Board positions to all new executives two weeks prior to Foundations
- ✓ Mandatory survey to be completed by all delegates at AGM concerning their level of perceived involvement and inclusion

CASA WILL MAINTAIN HIGH LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION WITH ALL MEMBERS, MAKING THEM AWARE OF ALL OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT IN CASA ACTIVITIES. WHILE ALSO MAKING MEMBERS AWARE OF WHAT CASA AS A WHOLE HAS BEEN DOING ON THEIR BEHALF.

MEASURES:

- ✓ CASA will communicate to the membership in a (at least) bi-monthly email
- ✓ Read-rate of these communications will be monitored
- ✓ Committee attendance will be tracked
- ✓ Members will be surveyed at Advocacy Week in order to determine the efficacy of CASA's communications to the midpoint of the year, and what can be changed

CASA WILL CAPITALIZE ON ITS DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP BY EDUCATING MEMBER ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES ABOUT THE NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVES OF VARIOUS STUDENT POPULATIONS, AS WELL AS THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS OF DIFFERING SIZES AND REGIONS.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Regular education sessions on the needs and perspectives of various student populations
- ✓ Time and space will be created to allow members from diverse associations to interact in a non-formal setting, in order to better understand the needs and perspectives of each association
- ✓ Members will be surveyed at AGM as to how well CASA was able to facilitate member-member interaction, and education surrounding the diverse needs of the membership

CASA'S MEMBERSHIP WILL GROW ORGANICALLY, ATTRACTING NEW MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS THROUGH ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND CONSISTENT SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATION TO INTERESTED PARTIES.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Rate of new members vs. exiting members
- ✓ Number of observers per year
- ✓ Number of observers per year who subsequently become members
- ✓ All member associations will be comprehensively surveyed at AGM in order to determine their overall happiness with CASA, and any problems they may have



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PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations refers to traditional and social media presence and engagement with external partners and stakeholders. PR involves shaping the narrative around what is happening in post-secondary education in Canada, and having CASA's role in the sector recognized by the broader public.

CORE OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ CASA will have a strong, relevant, and positive traditional and social media presence on issues related to post-secondary education in Canada
- ✓ CASA's communications infrastructure will ensure consistent, timely, and relevant outputs
- ✓ CASA will be recognized by media as the voice of students on issues related to post-secondary education in Canada

CASA WILL HAVE A STRONG, RELEVANT, AND POSITIVE TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE ON ISSUES RELATED TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN CANADA.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Number of social media links followed
- ✓ Number of social media subscribers
- ✓ Number of shares via social media
- ✓ Number of positive/neutral/negative mentions and discourse on social media
- ✓ Number of positive, neutral, and negative social media messages
- ✓ Minimum number of Tweets, Facebook posts per month
- ✓ Length of time that posts and links are followed
- ✓ Length of time before links and posts become inactive
- ✓ Length of time before/after events related to social media posts
- ✓ Suite of web analytics, such as: website page hits (unique & return), duration of time spent on website, etc.

CASA'S COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE WILL ENSURE CONSISTENT, TIMELY, AND RELEVANT OUTPUTS.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Length of time before event communications are released
- ✓ Number of press releases per year
- ✓ Percentage of press releases meeting newsworthy standards
- ✓ Number of key messages picked up by media as compared to the number of messages put out in press releases

- ✓ Number of inquiries per press release per year
- ✓ Number of positive/neutral/negative sentiments reflected in media
- ✓ Number of positive/neutral/negative sentiments reflected by each of CASA's key stakeholder groups
- ✓ Average response time to major issues each year

CASA WILL BE RECOGNIZED BY MEDIA AS THE VOICE OF STUDENTS ON ISSUES RELATED TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN CANADA.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Number of interviews given to national media outlets per year
- ✓ Number of national media mentions of CASA positions per year
- ✓ Number of interviews given to local and campus media outlets per year
- ✓ Number of local and campus media mentions of CASA positions per year
- ✓ Annual review and update of communications guide
- ✓ Frequency of communications
- ✓ Approval rating on the relevance of CASA's external communications



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ADVOCACY

Advocacy refers to contact with any and all stakeholders that have the potential to further CASA's policy positions and the organization's mission and vision as a whole. Advocacy can be viewed as the culmination of all of CASA's other activities, as research and policy formulate advocacy priorities, and members and public relations are the conduits through which CASA's policy positions are articulated to decision-makers, media, and other stakeholders who influence decision-makers. All of CASA's advocacy ventures will remain strictly non-partisan and seek to evoke change through strong consensus building amongst key stakeholders.

CORE OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ CASA will build consensus around its policy positions with relevant partners and stakeholders
- ✓ CASA, through its member associations and Home Office staff, will communicate its policy positions to all parliamentarians in the country
- ✓ CASA employs a comprehensive strategy that utilizes Home Office's resources, presented in a timely manner, to adequately prepare members for all lobby activities

CASA WILL BUILD CONSENSUS AROUND ITS POLICY POSITIONS WITH RELEVANT PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Number of House of Commons committee presentations per year
- ✓ Number of advocacy documents distributed to decision-makers per year
- ✓ Number of House mentions per year
- ✓ Number of mentions in official parliamentary documents per year
- ✓ Number of meetings with key policy advisors
- ✓ Approval rating of CASA's members on resources available to lobby successfully
- ✓ Home Office's ability to strategically engage in public discussions surrounding education

CASA, THROUGH ITS MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS AND HOME OFFICE STAFF, WILL COMMUNICATE ITS POLICY POSITIONS TO ALL PARLIAMENTARIANS IN THE COUNTRY.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Number of correspondences and meetings with federal civil service and federal agencies per year; in particular Canada Student Loan Program and Tri-Council agencies
- ✓ Number of correspondences and in-person meetings with members of parliament and senators per year, on and off the Hill each year
- ✓ Members should strive to meet in-person with their local Members of Parliament and Senators twice a year off the Hill

CASA EMPLOYS A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY THAT UTILIZES HOME OFFICE'S RESOURCES, PRESENTED IN A TIMELY MANNER, TO ADEQUATELY PREPARE MEMBERS FOR ALL LOBBY ACTIVITIES.

MEASURES:

- ✓ Approval rating on available resources
- ✓ Timeliness and availability of tools and information used for lobbying
- ✓ Approval rating of CASA's training on lobby material
- ✓ Willingness of Home Office staff to provide quality, tailored, one-on-one assistance to members in a timely manner



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