



Students Bring Fresh Ideas to Improve Post-Secondary Education

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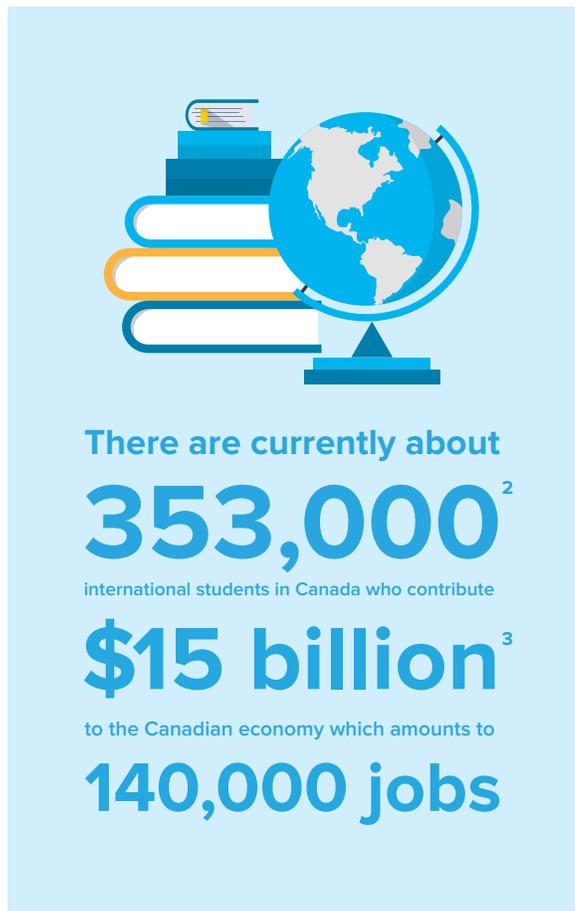
 **CASA | ACAE**
Canadian Alliance of Student Associations
Alliance canadienne des associations étudiantes

 **UNION ÉTUDIANTE
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UNION**

Co-ops and Internships for International Students

International students are increasingly being recruited to Canadian post-secondary institutions because of the value they bring to our classrooms, our communities, and our economy. However, despite paying high tuition fees, these students don't always get the full value for their dollar. In fact, they face numerous barriers when it comes to participating in paid internships or co-op placements, which are increasingly recognized as an integral part of a top quality post-secondary education.

Unfortunately, international students cannot participate in an internship or co-op under their study permit. Instead, they must apply for a separate, no fee work permit, which takes an average of 3 months to get.¹ The lengthy bureaucratic process of getting this permit has prevented many international students from securing work placements during their studies.



CASA recommends the federal government modify the study permit to allow for permit holders (ie. international students) to participate in full-time work-integrated learning placements, such as co-ops and internships.

¹ Co-op/Internship work permit. (McGill, International Student Services). Accessed online: <https://www.mcgill.ca/internationalstudents/work/co-op-internship-work-permit#Applying%20from%20WITHIN%20Canada>
² *The State of Post-Secondary Education in Canada, 2018*. Higher Education Strategy Associates. 2018. Accessed online: <http://highereducationstrategy.com/publication/the-state-of-post-secondary-education-in-canada-2018/>
³ Economic impact of international students in Canada - 2017 update. Global Affairs Canada, 2017. Accessed online: <http://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/impact-2017/index.aspx?lang=eng>

Helping International Students Navigate the Immigration System

International students are no stranger to adversity. They must quickly adapt to a new country, new people, new customs, and sometimes even a new language. While this is to be expected, navigating Canada's immigration system alone should not be.

International students must deal with immigration when they first apply to come study here, if they want to bring their spouse and children, and if they want to remain in Canada after completing their studies. Each of these steps can be complex, especially for those who may be operating in their second or third language. With this in mind, post-secondary campuses

should provide a welcoming place with accessible services to help set international students up for success.

“Article 91 states that only authorized representatives can advise individuals on immigration matters.”

In the past, post-secondary staff working in international student offices were able to help students understand and navigate Canada's immigration system. However, in 2011, the government passed the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, within which Article 91 states that only authorized representatives can advise individuals on immigration matters. While the intent of this law was to “crack down on crooked immigration consultants,” it also now prevents post-secondary staff from providing this service.⁴

Post-secondary staff must now obtain a special certification, which involves committing to 300 hours of training in the busiest months of the year, and costs a total of \$2,600.⁵ Not all post-secondary institutions can afford this large commitment of both time and resources. Also, the training is only offered once a year in French, thereby further reducing access for French and bilingual campuses.



⁴ Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism. “Tougher rules government immigration consultants enacted and new regulator announced” (News Release), June 28, 2011. Accessed online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2011/06/tougher-rules-governing-immigration-consultants-enacted-new-regulator-announced.html>

⁵ Association des étudiants des cycles supérieurs de Polytechnique, « Immigration : Changement dans les services conseils » (Communiqué du Bureau des étudiants internationaux), s.d. <http://www.aecsp.qc.ca/1806-immigrationchangement-dans-les-services-conseil/>.

International students already pay high fees to attend Canadian institutions which, in addition to covering courses, are intended to cover international student-specific services on campus. Organizations who do not charge a fee for these services are already exempt from requiring the certification to give immigration advice, including religious and non-governmental organizations.⁶

CERTIFICATION

25 hours of training per week

12 weeks of training

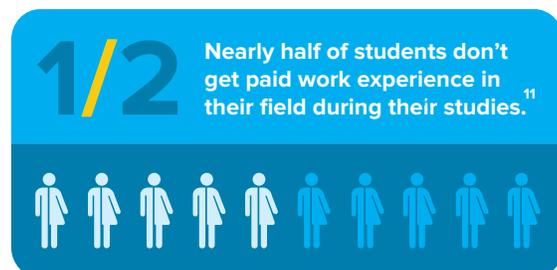
\$2,600 total cost of training

CASA recommends the federal government exempt post-secondary staff from the requirements established in Article 91 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

⁶ Sandra Elgersma and Anna Gay, Legislative Summary. Bill C-35: An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, No. 40-3-C35-E. (Ottawa: Library of Parliament, 2011), Accessed online: <https://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/LegislativeSummaries/40/3/c35-e.pdf>

100% WIL

Work-integrated learning (WIL), which refers to workplace experience gained through co-op and other similar programs, has become a key part of a quality post-secondary education. The practical skills gained through WIL complement the knowledge obtained during one's studies, and helps students to more easily transition to the workforce after graduation. It should come as no surprise that employers have a strong preference for graduates with work experience, even when it comes to filling entry-level positions.⁷ At the same time, paid work opportunities allow students to earn money to help cover the cost of tuition, textbooks, and living expenses.



While we applaud the federal government's efforts to create more work-integrated learning opportunities for students, the reality remains that there still aren't enough. A recent poll by Abacus Data concluded that nearly half of students don't get paid work experience in their field during their studies.⁸

One such way that the federal government has attempted to provide more quality opportunities is through the Student

Youth Unemployment Rates in Canada Ages 20-24¹⁰

14.1%
all youth

16.9%
immigrants

17.7%
visible minorities

22.6%
Indigenous youth

25.9%
youth with a disability

Work-Integrated Learning Program. While a good start, this program's limited scope leaves much to be desired. In particular, the program is open exclusively to domestic students in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math), thereby leaving international students as well as those in the BHASE fields (non-STEM fields such as business, humanities, arts, social sciences, and education) at a disadvantage. Also, the program only offers placements at for-profit companies, which limits the number of opportunities available to students.

⁷ Sophie Borwein, *Bridging the Divide, Part I: What Canadian Job Ads Said* (Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2014). Accessed online: <http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Skills%20Part%202.pdf>

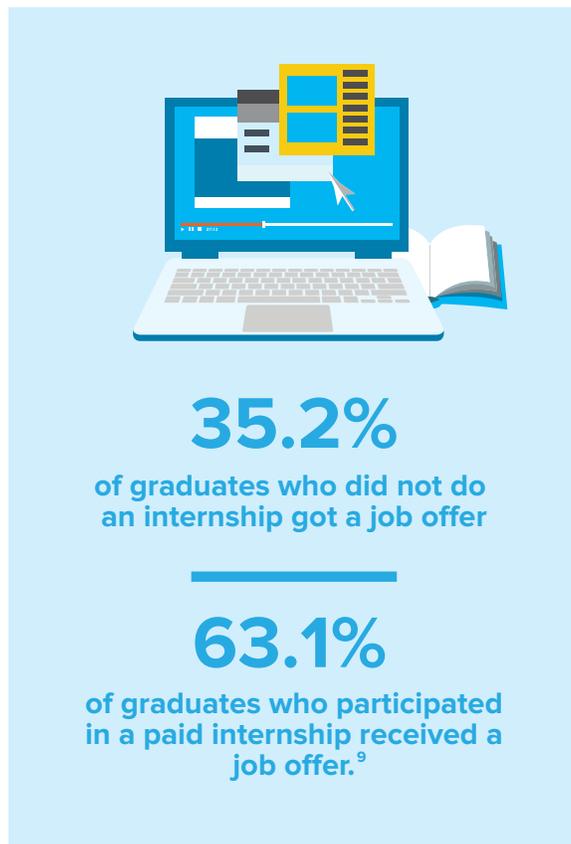
⁸ *Employment Transitions*. (Abacus Data & Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, July 2018). Accessed online: https://www.casa-acae.com/poll_finds_nearly_half_of_students_in_canada_are_not_getting_paid_work_experience_in_their_field

Seeing as under-represented groups, such as Indigenous and racialized youth, immigrants, and youth with disabilities, face additional barriers to entering the workforce and significantly higher unemployment rates, we suggest taking a targeted approach to help these communities participate in WIL.

Given the importance of having a diverse, qualified workforce, we would like to see government play a part in making work-integrated learning opportunities available to 100% of students, otherwise known as “100% WIL.”

As first steps in achieving 100% WIL, CASA recommends that the Student Work-Integrated Learning Program be expanded to include opportunities in BHASE fields, opportunities for international students, and placements in not-for-profit organizations.

CASA also recommends that special emphasis be placed on funding students from under-represented groups to ensure WIL acts as a social and economic equalizer.



⁹ *Class of 2013 Student Survey* (National Association of Colleges and Employers, May 2013). Accessed Online: <http://www.naceweb.org/s05292013/paid-unpaid-interns-job-offer.aspx>

¹⁰ René Morissette, *Perspectives on the Youth Labour Market in Canada* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, April 2016). Accessed online: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-631-x/11-631-x2016002-eng.htm>

¹¹ *Employment Transitions*. (Abacus Data & Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, July 2018). Accessed online: https://www.casa-acae.com/poll_finds_nearly_half_of_students_in_canada_are_not_getting_paid_work_experience_in_their_field

Preventing Sexual Violence on Canadian Campuses

The prevalence of gender-based sexual violence in Canada and across Canadian post-secondary campuses is striking. While sexual violence can affect anyone, young women and transgender peoples are particularly vulnerable, with 1 in 5 women experiencing a sexual assault during their studies¹², and nearly half of transgender individuals experiencing sexual assault over their lifetime.¹³



We also know that nearly half of all reported sexual assaults in Canada are committed against young people, 41% of whom are also students.¹⁴ Once a student has experienced sexual assault, the impacts on their emotional wellbeing, their academic record, and on other aspects of life, can be devastating and long-lasting. This is an issue that neither post-secondary institutions nor governments can ignore. It is clear by

the federal government's commitment of \$5.5 million over 5 years to this issue in Budget 2018 that it is determined to address gender-based sexual violence on campus. As it stands, this \$5.5 million is intended to be given to an external organization, who in turn will be tasked with developing a 'National Framework on Addressing Gender-Based Violence on Campuses'. Students worry that the money is not currently being used to its utmost potential, and believe that it could be allocated differently to make concrete change on their campuses.

Because the term "framework" is inherently vague, students would like to see this framework become a standard, outlining minimum sexual violence prevention, response, and support service requirements for post-secondary institutions. This standard can be modelled off of others that have been created. For example, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is currently developing a post-secondary mental health standard, at an expected cost of \$1.5 million.

Logistically speaking, there are intergovernmental bodies that are well-placed to implement such a standard. The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Table for the Status of Women can work collaboratively with the Standards Council of Canada and in consultation with external stakeholders to develop

¹² "A National, Student-Led Action Plan to End Campus Sexual Violence" Our Turn; 2017. Accessed online: https://ssmu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/our_turn_action_plan_final_english_web.pdf?x26516

¹³ "2015 U.S Transgender Survey". National Centre for Transgender Equality; 2015. Accessed online: <https://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/USTS-Full-Report-Final.PDF>

¹⁴ "Equality Growth: A Strong Middle Class." Government of Canada; 2018. Accessed online: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2018/docs/plan/toc-tdm-en.html>

a sound, evidence-based standard. The standard can also be informed by Statistics Canada's ongoing study of sexual violence on post-secondary campuses.

Every student attending a post-secondary institution in Canada deserves an experience free from violence. The federal government can help achieve this by uniting campuses across the country around an evidence-based standard and giving much-needed direction to post-secondary institutions as to the necessary changes they need to make to better protect their students.

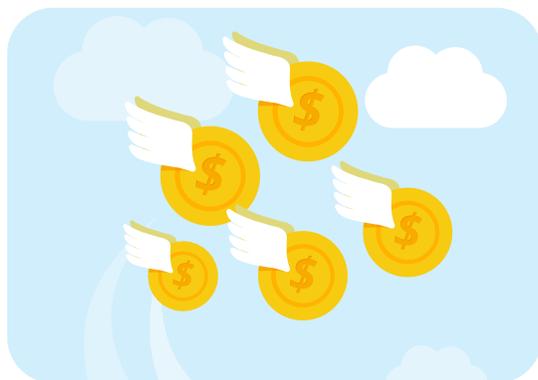
CASA recommends creating a concrete standard to address gender-based violence at post-secondary institutions, outlining the minimum services needed on campus to prevent sexual violence and support those students who have been impacted by it.



Putting Research Funds in Students' Hands

Students are key drivers of research and innovation in Canada. For example, student researchers are currently working to make cement from recycled plastic, to restore lost vision using laser light electricity, to improve the efficiency of solar power cells, and much more!¹⁵

While both student and faculty research is supported by Canada's three granting agencies (CGA), these agencies suffered from major funding cuts in the years 2011 to 2014. Unfortunately, student researchers were hit the hardest by these cuts, as approximately 3/4 of the losses were absorbed by student programs.



In the past years, and particularly in Budget 2018, the federal government made substantial investments in Canadian research. However, out of these huge investments, nearly none at all were allocated to support student-led research. In fact, prior to the government research cuts, students had access to more CGA research funding in current dollars than they do right now. While the total funding for the Natural Sciences and Engineering

Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) increased by 11.2% and 11.8% respectively since the 2011-2012 year, the amount dedicated to student research scholarships decreased by 0.7% and 2.4%.¹⁶

In last year's budget, the government of Canada stated: "...Over the next year, the Government will be doing further work to determine how to better support students, the next generation of researchers, through scholarships and fellowships."¹⁷ We expect the Government of Canada to be true to its word.

CASA and the Quebec Student Union (QSU) recommend the Government of Canada ensure students are given their fair share of research dollars by investing at least \$55.9 million in student programs of Canada's granting agencies.

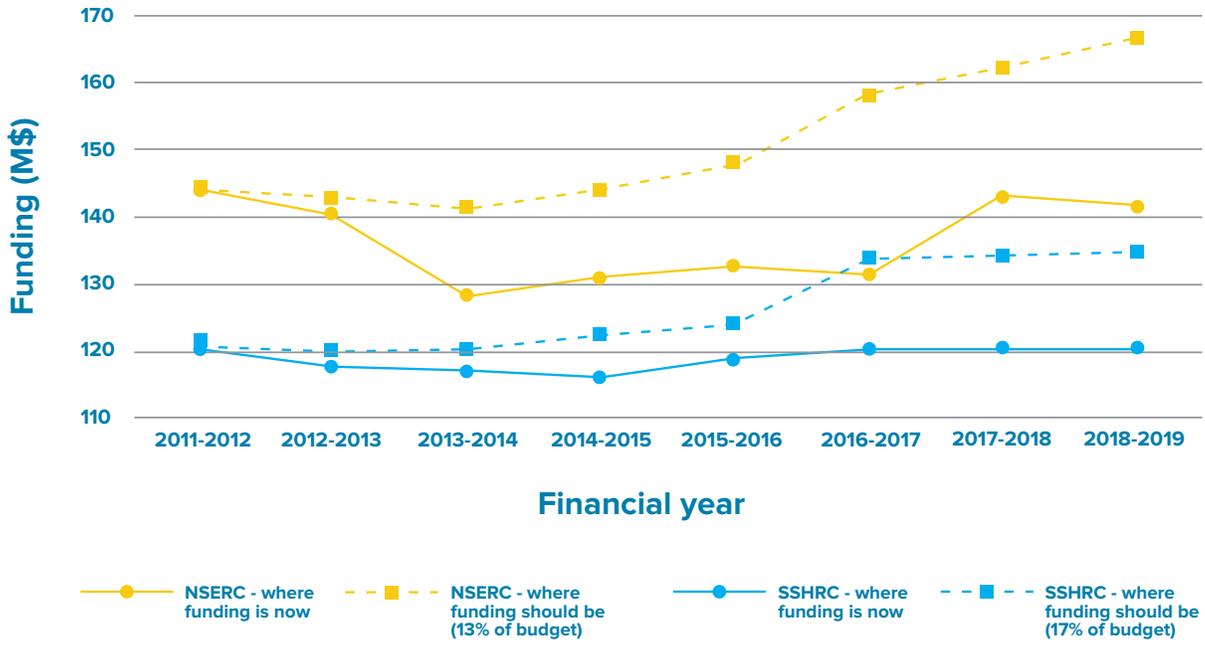
If additional funds cannot be granted to Canada's granting agencies, CASA and QSU recommend instead that current funds be reallocated so that student-led research be funded at the same proportion as they were in 2011. This would mean that 17.2%, 13.2%, and 6.3% of SSHRC's, NSERC's, and CIHR's total budgets would be dedicated to student programs.

¹⁵ Defy the Conventional: the Campaign for uOttawa. (University of Ottawa). Accessed online: <https://www.uottawa.ca/give/browse-our-stories>

¹⁶ Annual Reports 2011-2018. NSERC, SSHRC, and CIHR.

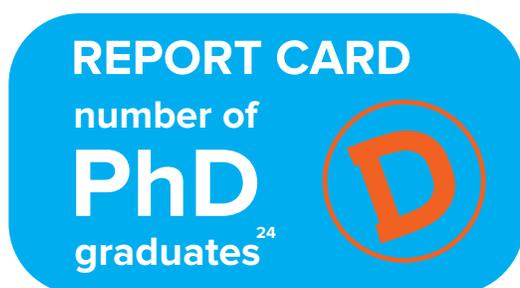
¹⁷ "Equality Growth: A Strong Middle Class." Government of Canada; 2018. Accessed online: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2018/docs/plan/toc-tdm-en.html>

CGA student research funding



Financial Aid for Inclusive Graduate Studies

Graduate studies are incredibly valuable. Not only do graduates from Master's and PhD programs earn higher incomes¹⁸, but they are also skilled researchers who are essential to making Canada's workforce more innovative and productive.



Unfortunately, Canada is falling behind other comparable countries in producing PhD graduates.¹⁹ One of the underlying reasons for this is the high cost of graduate programs and the lack of financial aid available. Unlike undergraduates, graduate students are not currently eligible for needs-based government grants.

While some graduate students are able to secure research funding from Canada's granting agencies (CGA), this group represents a small minority of those at the Master's level - only 2%.²⁰ At the doctoral level, in which funding is even more heavily relied upon, not all students receive CGA support either. For instance, roughly only

12.8% of eligible PhD students are awarded a research grant through SSHRC.²¹

Considering that the average student with debt already owes over \$27,000 from their undergraduate degree²², the financial barriers associated with continued post-secondary education can be a strong deterrent. In fact, 4 in 10 students reported that financial concerns and debt impacted their decision to pursue further studies after their undergraduate degree.²³



As an advocate for equal access to education, CASA believes that graduate students with financial need should be eligible for needs-based government grants.

CASA recommends that the federal government create an up-front, non-repayable Canada Student Grant for graduate students, at an estimated cost of \$58 million per year.

18 *National graduates survey, estimated gross annual earnings of graduates working full-time, by province of study, level of study and sex, CAN-SIM Table 477-0066* (Statistics Canada). Accessed online: <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&retrLang=eng&id=4770066&patern=&csid=>

19 PhD Graduates (Conference Board of Canada). Accessed online: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/details/education/phd-graduates.aspx>

20 Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's Program (Natural Science and Engineering Research Council, August 2016). Accessed online: http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/CGSM-BESCM_eng.aspx

21 *Competition Statistics*. (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council). Accessed online: <http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/results-resultats/stats-statistiques/index-eng.aspx>

22 *2018 Graduating University Student Survey: Master Report* (Canadian University Survey Consortium, July 2018). Accessed online: http://cusccreu.ca/?page_id=32&lang=en

23 *2018 Graduating University Student Survey: Master Report* (Canadian University Survey Consortium, July 2018). Accessed online: http://cusccreu.ca/?page_id=32&lang=en

24 *PhD Graduates* (Conference Board of Canada). Accessed online: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/details/education/phd-graduates.aspx>

25 Source: Canada Student Loan Program 2015-16 Annual Report. Economic and Social Development Canada, 2018. Accessed online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/canada-student-loans-grants/reports/cslp-annual-2015-2016.html>

CASA's Members



About CASA

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Established in 1995, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, student organization composed of 22 student associations representing 270,000 post-secondary students from coast to coast. Through its partnership with the Quebec Students Union (QSU), CASA presents a national student voice to the federal government. CASA advocates for a Canadian post-secondary education system that is accessible, affordable, innovative and of the highest quality.

About QSU

-  unionetudiante.ca
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The Quebec Student Union's mission is to defend the rights and interests of the student community, of its member associations, and of their members, by promoting, protecting, and improving the conditions of students and those of local and international communities.

Together, we represent 350,000 students across Canada.