

CASA'S

Strategic Plan for

2021–2024



CASA

Canadian Alliance of
Student Associations

ACAE

Alliance canadienne des
associations étudiantes

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that the lands on which we do our work are the traditional, ancestral, and often unceded shared lands of Nations whose territories fall within the borders of Canada. We also recognize the thousands of years of labour and stewardship that have gone into the care of these territories, and our responsibility as residents on these lands to commit to working towards reconciliation, decolonization, and Indigenization.

CASA's Home Office is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people

Introduction

Over twenty-five years ago, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations was founded to give post-secondary students a respected, effective, responsive, and adaptive voice in federal politics and policy making. Today, CASA remains a member-driven organization representing members from colleges, polytechnics, and universities in both undergraduate and graduate programs from coast-to-coast. At the organization's core was a commitment to ensuring that elected student leaders would remain central to the decision-making processes of the organization.

CASA strives to represent the perspectives of student leaders of every background, operating as an equitable and inclusive entity for a diverse community of students from universities, colleges, and polytechnics. The organization recognizes the value of the lived experiences its members bring to the table – be it from the individual diversity of its delegates or institutional diversity of its member organizations – and always seeks to translate those varied inputs into growth of understanding. In addition to representing the interests of these members, CASA seeks to be a resource for the leaders who make it up. CASA provides capacity building, lobby training, and professional development resources to empower its members to extend their work beyond advocacy week and become agents of change as individuals.

While remaining responsive and adaptable is key to CASA's operations, it is also crucial that the organization initiate and execute long-term plans and achieve long-term objectives. CASA has a responsibility to improve post-secondary education for today's students and for tomorrow's. To achieve this, it is critical 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. Through this process, each generation of CASA's membership, Board of Directors, Executive Director and staff can assess, reflect, develop and improve the organization.

The strategic plan seeks to unify CASA's membership around broad objectives, strategic goals and metrics to track progress toward those objectives. These are organized under organizational pillars. Organizational pillars are the core competencies of CASA, as identified by the membership. They reflect broad areas of focus and resource allocation for the organization. Each pillar has core objectives, which are the articulation of the member's expectations over the term of the plan. Internally, CASA's Board of Directors and Executive Director will develop and track metrics for each core objective.

Five distinct organizational pillars were identified during the 2018 strategic review process and are carried forward to 2021. They are:

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- Policy and Research
 - Advocacy
 - Membership
 - Governance
 - Public Relations

Mission – Vision – Values

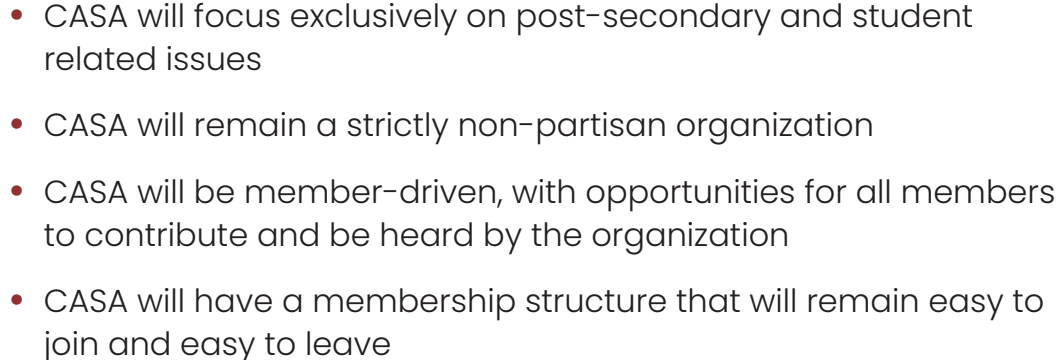
Mission

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 an excellent quality of life.

Values

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- 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 and be heard by the organization
 - CASA will have a membership structure that will remain easy to join and easy to leave

Planning Process

CASA is an organization that experiences tremendous turnover at the delegate, board, and staff levels. The strategic plan is a tool for maintaining direction and progress throughout this turnover. The strategic plan must be revisited 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.

Long Term Strategic Plan

While membership and the board of directors refreshes annually, CASA operates in a three year-cycle to provide a longer-term approach.. 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 do 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 Board Action Plan

The strategic plan will not succeed if it is not implemented in the daily activities of the staff, board, and membership. On an annual basis, the Board of Directors create an annual Action Plan to operationalize the strategic plan. The Board Action Plan identifies specific projects, performance targets, resource and personnel allocations, timeframes and reporting metrics. The Annual Plan is developed by the Board of Directors in conjunction with the Executive Director after Foundations. The Board Action Plan is presented to the membership at Policy and Strategy for discussion and approval.

Committee Action Plans

CASA is a large organization with many arms working to fulfill its mandate. In order to ensure the work is done to achieve the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan and the Board Action Plan, each committee develops a yearly Committee Work Plan after Foundations. These Committee work plans are presented to the membership at Policy and Strategy for discussion and approval.

Progress Reports

On a regular basis, the Executive Director and Chair of the Board are responsible for delivering a written and oral report to the membership on the progress that has been made toward the Annual Board Action Plan.

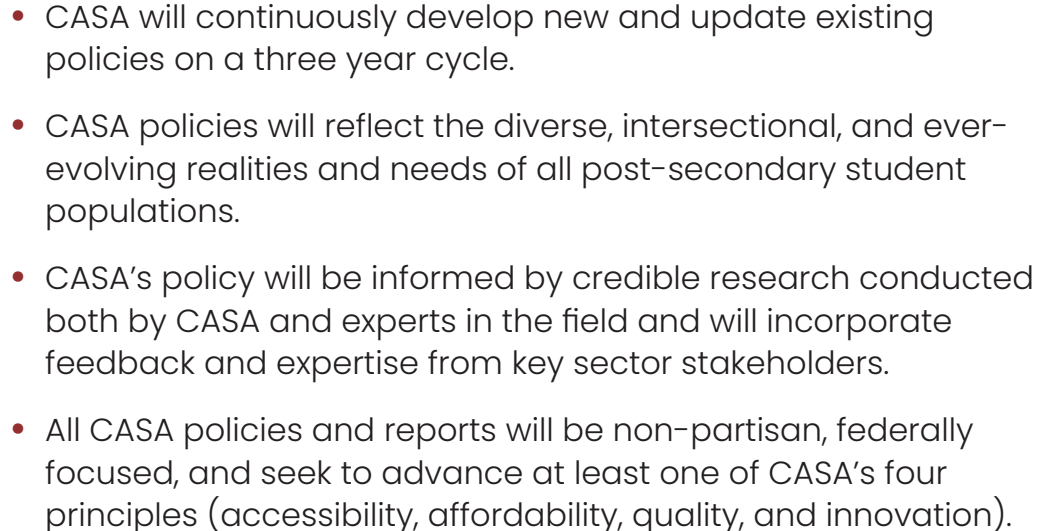
Year-in-Review

At the end of each year, the current strategic plan and the Action Plan are reviewed to assess overall progress in a formal written report to the membership at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Policy and Research

Policy and research refers to the process by which CASA formulates its organizational stance on student issues related to post-secondary education in Canada. All of CASA's policy positions are grounded in extensive research and stem from the many intersections of member and student experiences. Policies represent CASA's official position on a broad range of issues with the goal of proposing realistic solutions that form the basis of CASA's advocacy efforts.

Core Objectives:

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- CASA will continuously develop new and update existing policies on a three year cycle.
 - CASA policies will reflect the diverse, intersectional, and ever-evolving realities and needs of all post-secondary student populations.
 - CASA's policy will be informed by credible research conducted both by CASA and experts in the field and will incorporate feedback and expertise from key sector stakeholders.
 - All CASA policies and reports will be non-partisan, federally focused, and seek to advance at least one of CASA's four principles (accessibility, affordability, quality, and innovation).

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 is viewed as the culmination of all of CASA's other activities. Research and policy formulate advocacy priorities, while members and public relations are the conduits through which CASA's policy positions are articulated to decision-makers and those who influence them, i.e. media & stakeholders. CASA may also draw from its membership to conduct campaigns related to its advocacy priorities. 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 key stakeholders.
- CASA will nurture and maintain relationships with federal parliamentarians and policy makers to ensure its reputation as the premiere resource for student issues.
- CASA will communicate its policy positions to all federal parliamentarians and policy makers.
- CASA will ensure that all members are prepared to advocate effectively to federal authorities through CASA and personally.
- CASA will keep membership informed about the political landscape and aware of any advocacy milestones reached in the federal space.

Membership

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

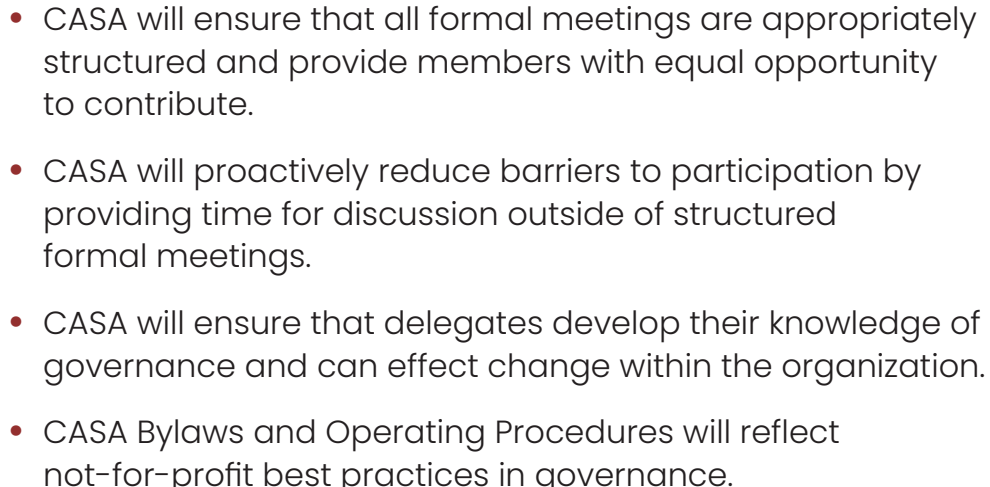
Core Objectives:

- CASA will create opportunities for members to participate in decision-making and direction-setting processes of the organization.
- CASA will review communication strategies to improve transparency and communication with all members, making them aware of what CASA has been doing on their behalf.
- CASA will draw from its diverse membership and consult externally to educate member association representatives about the needs and perspectives of various student populations and associations from across Canada.
- CASA will seek to expand its membership across Canada, attracting new member associations through organizational excellence and active outreach to interested parties.
- CASA will review current strategies to expand advocacy efforts to better represent college and graduate students.
- CASA will host events, panels, and networking events where student leaders can meet and learn from politicians, stakeholders, and CASA alumni.

Governance

Governance refers to the processes by which CASA makes decisions and remains accountable to its membership. CASA's decisions are made in the most effective way by utilizing processes and policies that allow members to contribute their comments, questions, or concerns to decisions at hand. CASA also provides the opportunity for members to gain valuable governance experience, further strengthening the student movement and individuals' leadership.

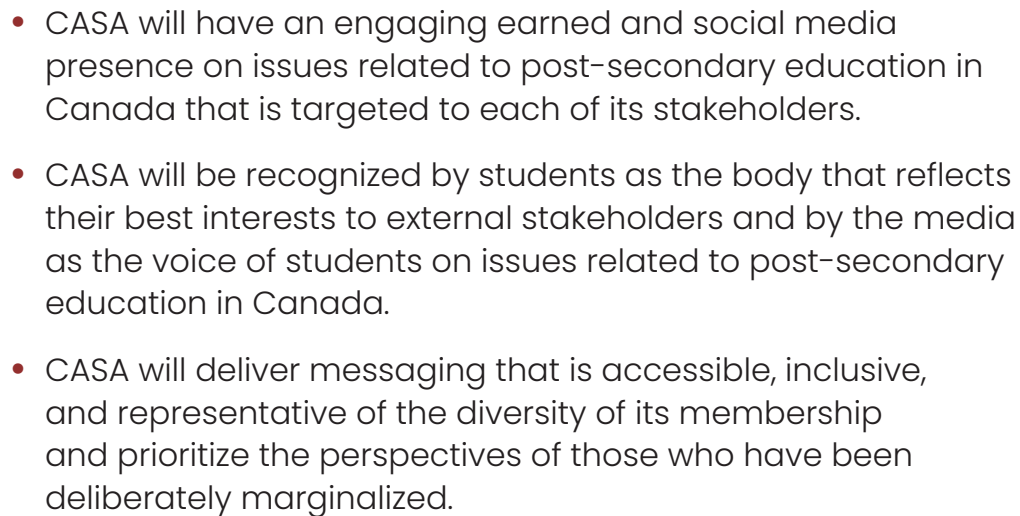
Core Objectives:

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- CASA will ensure that all formal meetings are appropriately structured and provide members with equal opportunity to contribute.
 - CASA will proactively reduce barriers to participation by providing time for discussion outside of structured formal meetings.
 - CASA will ensure that delegates develop their knowledge of governance and can effect change within the organization.
 - CASA Bylaws and Operating Procedures will reflect not-for-profit best practices in governance.

Public Relations

Public Relations refers to CASA's ability to convey its members' objectives to desired audiences through both earned and social media. CASA focuses on delivering its message to the public, interested post-secondary education stakeholders, elected officials and post-secondary students to foster support and understanding of CASA's objectives.

Core Objectives:

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- CASA will have an engaging earned and social media presence on issues related to post-secondary education in Canada that is targeted to each of its stakeholders.
 - CASA will be recognized by students as the body that reflects their best interests to external stakeholders and by the media as the voice of students on issues related to post-secondary education in Canada.
 - CASA will deliver messaging that is accessible, inclusive, and representative of the diversity of its membership and prioritize the perspectives of those who have been deliberately marginalized.

DRAFT Metrics

Policy and Research

Core Objective	Metrics
CASA will continuously develop new and update existing policies on a three year cycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members trained on the policy review process and the federal scope [limitations?] of CASA's work• Policy renewal calendar updated annually, with update to members by AGM each year
CASA policies will reflect the diverse, intersectional, and ever-evolving realities and needs of all post-secondary student populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where applicable policies will have GBA+ analysis

Advocacy

Core Objective	Metrics
CASA will build consensus around its policy positions with relevant partners and key stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint position statements with PSE stakeholders • Partners and stakeholders coming to CASA on positions
CASA will nurture and maintain relationships with federal parliamentarians and policy makers to ensure its reputation as the premiere resource for student issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CASA will grow presence on lobbying registry thru registered meetings • Parliamentarians and policy makers using CASA language/ talking points • Invitations to committee
CASA will communicate its policy positions to all federal parliamentarians and policy makers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of Advocacy Meetings held during Advo Week & Otherwise thru CASA • # of local MP Meetings held by members and recorded in Highrise
CASA will ensure that all members are prepared to advocate effectively to federal authorities through CASA and personally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tied into membership survey re: member confidence in advocacy. [One at beginning, one at middle, one at end. Track growth.] • X amount of member training provided throughout the year.
CASA will keep membership informed about the political landscape and aware of any advocacy milestones reached in the federal space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of membership political updates • # of membership milestone updates (infographics, etc.)

Governance

CASA will ensure that all formal meetings are appropriately structured and provide members with equal opportunity to contribute.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wherever possible, substantive plenary agenda items will have dedicated discussion time in conference proceedings for open discussion
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Membership

Core Objective	Metrics
CASA will create opportunities for members to participate in decision-making and direction-setting processes of the organization.	
CASA will review communication strategies to improve transparency and communication with all members, making them aware of what CASA has been doing on their behalf.	
CASA will draw from its diverse membership and consult externally to educate member association representatives about the needs and perspectives of various student populations and associations from across Canada.	
CASA will seek to expand its membership across Canada, attracting new member associations through organizational excellence and active outreach to interested parties.	
CASA will review current strategies to expand advocacy efforts to better represent college and graduate students.	
CASA will host events, panels, and networking events where student leaders can meet and learn from politicians, stakeholders, and CASA alumni.	

Our Members



About CASA

Established in 1995, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, student organization composed of 23 student associations representing 274,000 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.



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