

Students' Union of St. Thomas University, Inc.

Advocacy Policy

A Policy Concerning Advocacy Priorities
Updated April, 2021

This policy may be cited as "Advocacy Policy"

Part I - Definitions

S.1. In this Policy,

- a) "Union" shall mean the Students' Union of St. Thomas University, Inc., as per the *Constitution*.
- b) "University" shall mean St. Thomas University.
- c) "SRC" shall mean the Students' Representative Council of the Students' Union of St. Thomas University.
- d) "Chestfeeding" shall mean the process of feeding a child human milk from a person's chest.

Part II - Union Advocacy Priorities and Position Statements

Reconciliation

S.2. The Union acknowledges that the land on which the Union and the University gathers is the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik and Mi'kmaq Peoples.

S.3. The Union supports the University enacting initiatives that work towards reconciliation.

- a) The Union supports the incorporation of Indigenous content into the University's course curriculum.
- b) The Union encourages relationship building with local Indigenous communities and Indigenous individuals available at the University.
- c) The Union encourages relationship building between local Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous students.
- d) The Union believes that the University should consult with Indigenous students to better determine the types of services required while attending the University.

- e) The Union encourages the University to be receptive to the questions, concerns, and feedback from Indigenous students in order to consider their positions in its decision-making processes concerning Indigenous students.
- f) The Union encourages the University to accept assignments and essays from Indigenous students verbally.

S.4. The Union will continue to advocate for Indigenous students.

S.5. The Union commits to honouring an Indigenous voice within the Students' Representative Council.

S.6. The Union supports the integration of Indigenous knowledge within their leadership roles.

S.7.. The Union will continue to support the Indigenous community by working in partnership with the Wabanaki Student Centre and their staff.

S.8. The Union acknowledges that education and awareness initiatives are essential for the promotion of culture, inclusivity, and opportunity for Indigenous students.

- a) The nature of these initiatives will come from cooperation between the Indigenous Students' Representative and the Indigenous Students' Reconciliation Committee.

S.9. An annual review of this subheading will be completed by the Vice-President Education.

- a) This review shall be completed with the consultation of the President and at least two members of Indigenous Student Reconciliation Committee and the elected Indigenous Student Representative from the SRC.

Funding and Fees

S.10. The following policies outline the Union's position on ancillary fees:

- a) The Union supports the consultation of students prior to the implementation of new ancillary fees that add new services for students through an approval by the Union.
- b) The Union supports the need for increases to ancillary fees beyond the rate of inflation being passed through the Union.

S.11. The following policies outline the Union's positions on equitable funding for St. Thomas University and its students:

- a) The Union supports adjusting current provincial funding levels to ensure that St. Thomas University is funded at or above the provincial average per weighted full time equivalent.
- b) The Union supports the creation of a predictable tuition schedule for St Thomas University.
- c) The Union supports the implementation and improvement of needs-based, upfront grants by the government to ensure the accessibility for postsecondary education in New Brunswick.

Experiential Learning

S.12. The Union supports the continuation of the Certificate in Experiential Learning and Community Engagement.

S.13. The Union believes that the education of students is greatly benefited from learning experiences outside of the classroom.

- a) The Union supports allocating funds to facilitate international exchange programs for students.
- b) The Union supports the University's commitment to expanding experiential learning opportunities through a combination of staff- and student-led initiatives.
- c) The Union supports the University's commitment to implementing and expanding experiential learning opportunities for Indigenous Students.

S.14. The Union encourages the University to ensure that students are financially compensated for their experiential learning internship opportunities.

S.15. The Union supports the University working alongside student representatives on the President's Advisory Committee on Experiential Learning to ensure the experiential learning opportunities are student oriented.

Accessibility on Campus

S.16. The following policies outline the Union's positions on students with disabilities:

- a) The Union advocates increasing the accessibility of campus for students with disabilities.

- b) The Union supports the training of faculty on the topic of students with special needs.

S.17. The Union supports upgrades to infrastructure to make them more accessible to students with physical disabilities.

S.18. The Union supports the University's commitment to creating an equitable education for all students through effective accessibility services.

S.19. The Union supports a regular review of current campus accessibility services to ensure it supports all student needs.

Child Care

S.20. The following policies outline the Union's positions on childcare:

- a) The Union supports additional tax credit and childcare benefits to increase accessibility for student parents.
- b) The Union supports the creation of further childcare programs and daycare spaces for the children of students, faculty, and staff on and near campus.

S.21. The Union supports safe chestfeeding spaces on campus.

Student Consultation

S.22. The Union supports public meetings being held surrounding major financial changes at the University.

S.23. The Union supports SRC involvement in major changes and decisions at the University as a means of student consultation.

S.24. The Union promotes the active engagement of all students in directing and participating in the affairs of the Union and the University.

- a) Special emphasis should be placed on consulting appropriate minority groups when making decisions that affect them. These groups include but are not limited to; Indigenous students, visible minorities, international students, students with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ students.

Health, Wellness and Safety on Campus

S.25. The Union acknowledges that student wellness is a combination of mental and physical health and will pursue initiatives to enhance both forms of health.

S.26. The Union supports the continued existence and growth of intramural sports programmes on campus in order to foster healthy minds and bodies amongst students.

S. 27 The Union supports the continued existence and growth of campus wide events focussing on physical and mental wellbeing.

S.28. The Union supports the expansion of counselling services on campus in order to meet the demands of students.

S.29. The Union supports the increase of funding to mental health initiatives on campus by the provincial and federal governments.

- a) The nature of these initiatives will come from cooperation between the External Affairs Committee and the Mental Health Committee to ensure coordinated initiatives.

S.30. The Union acknowledges that student safety plays a vital role in ensuring student wellness on campus and will promote initiatives to enhance student safety and awareness.

- a) Special emphasis shall be placed on sexual violence on campus and supporting initiatives that work to eliminate this issue of safety and access.
- b) The nature of these initiatives will come from cooperation between the Academic & University Affairs Commidee, the Sexual Violence Prevention Committee and the University.

Matters Specific to International Students

S.31. The following policies outline the Union's position on matters specific to international students:

- a) The Union supports the University's efforts to maintain or increase annual international student enrolment.
- b) The Union believes that the University has a responsibility to regularly communicate information concerning changes in international student tuition costs and other costs specific to international students in a manner that is unambiguous, transparent, explicit, accessible, and timely.
- c) The Union encourages the University to be receptive to the questions, concerns, and feedback of international students in order to consider their positions in its decision-making processes concerning international students.

- d) The Union believes that the University should consult with international students to better determine the types of services required while attending the University.
- e) The Union encourages the University to consider the welfare and interest of international students as the utmost priority during discussions and negotiations with the Provincial Government.
- f) The Union encourages the University to ensure international students are receiving the support and resources they need, whether it be financial or academic, as well as provide opportunities to support international students during their time at St. Thomas University.

S.32. Due to the constantly changing nature of international student enrolment and involvement at the University, an annual review of this subheading will be completed by the Vice-President Education.

- a) This review shall be completed with the consultation of the President and at least two members of St. Thomas University International Students Association and the elected International Student Representative from the SRC.
- b) This review shall be completed by the last regular meeting of the SRC in February.

Discrimination On Campus

S.33. The Union condemns all forms of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, culture, disability, gender, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, and any other form of discrimination.

- a) The Union respectfully recognizes that the Union operates on the unceded, unsurrendered territory of the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) and Mi'kmaq Peoples.

S.34. The Union supports inquiries into systemic racism at the University to determine whether instances of systemic racism against the BIPOC community occurs.

- a) In instances where it is determined systemic racism is present at the University, the Union supports the University consulting with the BIPOC community to determine the actions required to eliminate systemic racism.

Emergency Learning Strategies

S.35. Due to the risk of a campus closure and remote learning amid a pandemic or an emergency situation, the Union supports student consultation regarding remote learning strategies.

- a) This consultation should prioritize pedagogies that are equitable and do not disadvantage any student groups.

S.36. Due to the impacts emergency learning strategies can have on the academic integrity of the University, the Union supports the consideration of a compassionate grading scheme.

Sustainability

S.37. Given that the rate of climate change is increasing and that the steps required to confront environmental degradation are constantly changing, the Union encourages the University to be a leader in environmental consciousness, education, and sustainability.

- a) The Union encourages the University to divest its endowment fund from fossil fuels as a strategy to fight the climate crisis and support a transition to a renewable energy-driven economy.
- b) The Union encourages the University to review the St. Thomas Environmental Policy and to conduct environmental audits on campus on a regular basis.

S.38. The Union acknowledges that sustainability and environmental awareness is essential for the prosperity of future generations and will promote initiatives to enhance sustainability environmental awareness.

- a) The nature of these initiatives will come from cooperation between the Sustainability and Environmental Awareness Committee and the University.

Part III – University Policies

S.39. The Union supports the maintenance of the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and will be monitored by the Academic and University Affairs Committee.

S.40. The Union supports the maintenance of the stand alone Policy on Sexual Violence and will be monitored by the Academic and University Affairs Committee.

S.41. The Union supports the maintenance of the Environmental Policy and will be monitored by the Sustainability and Environmental Awareness Committee.

Part IV – New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA) Priorities

S.42. The Union supports an open and engaged dialogue with our provincial partner, the New Brunswick Student Alliance, in order to develop policies shared with other student associations in the province surrounding access, affordability, quality of life and quality of

education for students in postsecondary education in New Brunswick. Notable among these are:

- Legislation requiring standalone campus sexual violence policies on all publically funded university campuses;
- Funding for specific trauma informed sexual violence support services on all public postsecondary campuses;
- Creating a “Reconciliation through Postsecondary Education” fund to support reconciliation programming at postsecondary institutions across the province;
- Establishing a provincial Open Educational Resources (OER) pilot project;
- Implementing e-mental health services for postsecondary students with the money allocated to mental health assistance in the province;
- Eliminating interest on the provincial portion of student loans;
- Establishing the New Brunswick Debt Relief Program;
- Conducting an inquiry into systemic racism in New Brunswick;
- And the regulation of international tuition fees through a memorandum of understanding.

Part V – Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) Priorities

S.43. The Union supports an open and engaged dialogue with our federal partner, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, in order to develop policies shared with other student associations in the country surrounding quality, affordable, accessible and innovative postsecondary education in Canada. Notable among these are:

- Expanding access to trade re-skilling by expanding the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant;
- Permanently maintain the pandemic funding for mental health and wellness support for Indigenous communities in an effort to support healing intergenerational trauma and increase access for all indigenous people who wish to pursue post-secondary education;
- Allowing international students to participate in an internship or co-op under their existing study permit;
- Calling upon Employment and Social Development Canada and Statistics Canada to jointly investigate the needs for child care amongst students with dependent children;
- And advocating for the increase of funding for the SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR scholarship programs on a recurring basis.

Part VI – Amendments and Additions

S.44. The Advocacy Policy will be revised by the Vice-President Education of the Students' Union of St. Thomas University annually and will be adopted by the SRC no later than the final regularly constituted meeting in October.

S.45. Amendments and additions to the Advocacy Policy will be entered into the Policy Manual by the Academic & University Affairs Committee.

S.46. Any amendments to the Constitution or Operating Manual invoked by the Advocacy Document must be ratified one month after the proposal of the Advocacy Document.