



Let's Talk

Trends in Canadian Postsecondary

Academica Group
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Key Trends in Canadian PSE

Return to Campus and Vaccination

Truth, Reconciliation, and Residential Schools

Institutional Stability & The Laurentian Story

The Changing Role of Colleges

Rapid Reskilling and Micro-Programming

Wellness in an Extended Crisis

International on Pause

Environmental Action

Supporting Black Scholars and Learners

Online Learning, Post-Pandemic

A photograph of a graduate in a blue gown, seen from behind, throwing their cap into the air. The scene is set in a hallway with arched windows. The image is overlaid with a dark blue filter.

Return to Campus and Vaccinations

Key Events


- Navigation of community pressure around vaccine mandates, masking, and other public health measures; as well as changing provincial/territorial/national expectations.
- Launch and conclusion of related lawsuits.
- Preparing for an in-person return with a community of varied comfort-levels and interest.



Truth, Reconciliation, and Residential Schools

Key Events

- Confirmation of the unmarked graves at Residential Schools and supporting nearby communities.
- Cases of Indigenous identity fraud & discussion of prevention.
- Increased pressure for renaming buildings and institutions, removing statues, and eliminating other references to certain figures.
- The renaming of Toronto Metropolitan University.

A hand holding a blue pen writing on a notepad, with a cup of coffee in the foreground.

Institutional Stability & The Laurentian Story

Key Events

- Laurentian embarked on CCAA court proceedings in February 2021. This was quickly followed by layoffs, program cancellations, and severance of relationship with affiliate institutions.
- Institutional closures and mergers in the US, private college sector in Canada.
- Creation of uncertainty about the stability, transparency, and permanence of the sector more broadly:
“Could this happen elsewhere? To us?”

A person with long dark hair, wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt, is sitting at a wooden table. They are writing in a white notebook with a black pen. A clear plastic cup with a straw is on the table next to the notebook. The background is dark and out of focus.

The Changing Role of Colleges

Key Events

- Transformation of several colleges into polytechnic institutions
- Expanded 3-year and applied 4-year degree offerings
- Very well positioned to meet the increased demand for career-focused education (identified as leading reason for applying to PSE in Academica's UCAS 2021 study).

A man with glasses and a white shirt is sitting on the floor in a library, reading a book. He is surrounded by tall bookshelves filled with books. The image has a blue tint.

Rapid Reskilling and Micro-Programming

Key Events

- Short term reskilling and upskilling programs exploded in popularity during the pandemic.
- Micro-credentials have been the short-term program of choice in provinces like Manitoba and Ontario.
- More recently, the launch of shared definitions, resources, and guidelines for the development of micro-credentials.



Wellness in an Extended Crisis

Key Events

- Launch of the National Standard of Canada for Mental-Health and Well-Being for Post-Secondary Students by the MHCC in October 2020.
- Launch of dedicated resources by provincial organizations like BCcampus.
- Significant funding from ON, PEI, SK, BC to support student mental health.
- Some questions around the wellbeing of staff, faculty, and others who either were unable to work or unable to take a meaningful break for extended periods of time during the pandemic.

International on Pause

Key Events

- Significant decrease in international enrolment at several postsecondary institutions in Canada at the start of the pandemic.
- ON Auditor General identified the province's postsecondary sector's reliance on international students as a "serious financial risk" to the system.
- Some institutions shifted attention to international students who were already landed, including recertification programs for newcomers and dedicated training for graduating students.



Environmental Action

Key Events

- Major student and community pressure to divest.
- Infrastructure updates and renovations to make campus environmentally friendly.
- Achievement of net-zero campuses at Université Laval and École de technologie supérieure, well ahead of both institutions' schedules.
- New programs and growing enrolment in environment-related programs, accompanied by a decline in oil-and-gas focused programming.



A person wearing a graduation cap and gown, looking to the side. The image is dark and moody, with the person's face partially visible in profile.

Supporting Black Scholars and Learners

Key Events

- Signing of the Scarborough Charter.
- Launch of special scholar opportunities and admissions pathways, such as McMaster University's Equitable Admissions for Black Applicants pilot project.
- Launch of new incubators, research hubs, programs, and partnerships to support Black students.



Online Learning and the Future

Key Events

- Reflecting on two years of online ‘emergency’ education and comparing ‘band-aid’ to ‘best’ online practices.
- Determining what to preserve, what to change, and what to remove as in-person education becomes possible again.
- Student expectations and institutional performance have been redefined by the last two years, so ‘being competitive’ in today’s market has new considerations.



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