

COU Academic Colleagues Committee Report to the Ontario Tech U AC

Alyson King (COU Academic Colleague Representative for Ontario Tech University)

Synopsis

This report provides an overview of two meetings held on August 15 & 16, 2023. The Tuesday night meeting was a presentation by an invited speaker followed by a brief discussion while the main COU colleagues meeting occurred on the Wednesday morning. Both meetings were held in a hybrid format (in-person and online) and I attended these in-person.

Background

The objective of the COU Academic Colleagues committee is to support the COU council, consisting of the executive heads of the institution members of the COU, with feedback from academic colleagues concerning COU initiatives.

Meeting Summaries

Evening meeting, August 15, 2023

Conversation on Mental Health and Wellness in the University Context

Wellbeing of International Students: Solutions from Design Thinking

Dr. Liliane Dionne, Professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Dr. Liliane Dionne delivered a presentation on her research on the Wellbeing of International Students, speaking to a slide deck provided as Attachment 1. Using a design-thinking approach, which included peer interviews between graduating BEd students (solution-makers) and international students at the University of Ottawa, creative solutions were identified to improve the wellbeing of international students on the University campus. In response to feedback from international students expressing the need for a diversity of spaces on campus, desire for more beauty and art on campus, and more opportunities to socialize, study outdoors and improve their second-language skills, the solution-makers designed and created prototypes of a campus to better foster the wellbeing of international students. Results from the study were communicated to the university administration by Dr. Dionne.

An engaged discussion ensued, in which Colleagues reflected on how they might contribute to improving the wellbeing of international students and on the recommendations of COU's International Education Working Group, which they had received an update on at the February meeting.

Discussion: Colleagues shared comments about what is happening in their institutions and thinking about "where do we go from here." Issues raised included:

- The problem of separated campuses causes a divided community, so how can universities be better connected so that there is better community. For example, design thinking would allow for separated bike lanes between campuses and ensuring there are green spaces for the downtown campuses.
- Access to green spaces is very important for mental and physical health. Can we look at COU space standards to make sure they meet the [WELL standards](#), include Indigenous spaces, and so

on. Consider how buildings allow for different ways of teaching and learning, and include spaces that enable and enhance well-being.

- Are there ways to make sure that more is done to welcome and support international students, noting that language is not always a problem since some international students have better English/French than domestic students. Could international students be brought to Canada earlier and provide programming to build language, but also to take them on tours, etc. so that they can get to know where the green spaces are and are able to get settled. Could also have ongoing events through the year and include other student groups to help do some of these things.
- It is important for co-op programs to be open to international students.

Morning meeting, August 16, 2023

1. Information Sharing

The group shared some of the challenges that their universities have been discussing at their senate and/or academic councils, including recently approved programs and faculties, budgetary challenges, turnover and recruitment of senior administrators, and safety and emergency measures on campus. These issues varied among the institutions and topics such as some institutions are currently in contract negotiations, others are reviewing their budgets given the Ontario government funding constraints, some are continuing with Indigenization and reconciliation efforts on campus, and student applications. Other comments included that there have been a lot of turnover at the senior administration level and that it is getting harder to recruit at this level. In the wake of the incident at Waterloo, there is uncertainty about what's next.

2. COU President's Report (Steve Orsini)

Blue ribbon panel: COU made a submission regarding the value proposition of unfunded activities, such as tech transfer, knowledge mobilization, etc. Since 2006-7, the real value of operating funding has declined, and it is unsustainable. COU is hoping the panel will recommend increased operating funds because the freeze on the corridor is unsustainable and is forcing universities to favour international students. Universities have more reporting to MCU being required. Because universities are going to have to find savings, tools like MyCreds should help streamline things like getting transcripts and reduce administration costs. Automating a lot of processes might entail both costs and efficiencies to allow putting more funds into frontline services for students and research.

Presentation to the Assn of Municipalities of Ontario: Mr. Orsini discussed a presentation he was preparing on how municipalities can increase housing supply. As educators, we need to think about what society needs because we are not keeping up with the housing demand and housing is not sustainable. While there is a shortage in the skilled trades, most international students are not going into those fields because they want quick programs. He was careful to say that this is not an attempt to polarize international/domestic students, because we need immigration otherwise demographics would decline. IRCC applyboard –provides data on college international enrolment:

<https://www.applyboard.com/applyinsights-article/canadian-provincial-study-permit-trends-international-student-approvals-in-ontario-reach-unprecedented-high-in-2022>

3. COU Overview (see slides)

Corporate Secretary Kathryn White delivered a brief overview of COU's purpose and structure, and the role of Academic Colleagues.

4. **Committee updates** were received from the Budget and Audit Committee and the Board of Directors.
5. **Discussion on Future Topics / Planning for upcoming meetings**

The meeting ended with a discussion on the topics that will be the focus for the 2023-24 meetings and for discussion at the next council meeting with the executives.

**Council of
Ontario
Universities
(COU)
August 15, 2023**





Wellbeing of international students: solutions from design thinking (DT)

*Liliane Dionne, PhD
Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa*



Context



- **Canadian universities want to attract more international students.**
- **International students have an increasing presence on North-American university campuses.**
- **Worldwide demand to study in Canada remains strong.**
- **Given their distance from their networks at home, international students are at higher risk for health problems.**
- **Increasing the wellbeing of international students should be a focus for university administrations and communities.**

Definition

“International students are defined as those who left their country of origin and moved to Canada for the purpose of study. In Canada, the concept of “international students” includes non-permanent residents, such as those with a study permit. It also includes those enrolled in a Canadian program from a Canadian institution that is not located in Canada (also known as “offshore students”) as well as non-Canadian students studying via the Internet.”

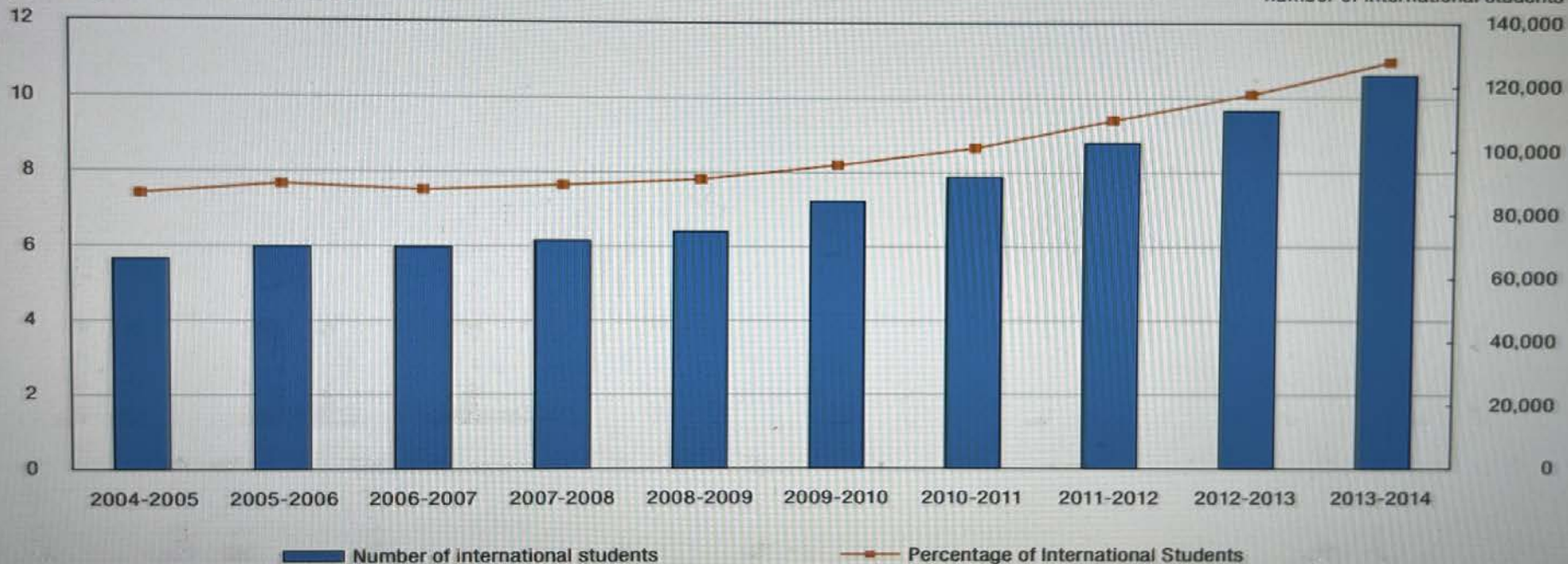
(Source: StatCan)

International students in Canadian Universities, 2004/2005 to 2013/2014

Chart 1
Number and percentage of international students in all university programs, Canada, 2004-2005 to 2013-2014

percentage of international students

number of international students



Source: Statistics Canada, Post-secondary Student Information System (PSIS), 2004-2005 to 2013-2014.

Definitions

International students in the context of Ontario universities



Internationalization of universities is a lasting trend.



International students want to study in Canada: there is a strong demand in Ontario universities, such as Ottawa U.



To the best of our knowledge, no study has used DT to find solutions that promote the wellbeing of international students.



Using the design thinking (DT) approach, which creative solutions could help improve student wellbeing on university campuses?

Research
problem:

UofO campus
has not been
designed to
welcome so
many
international
students

To accommodate international students, DT could be used to

1) Redesign university campus



2) Review overall policies



3) Make the campus more welcoming to the diverse community.

- +
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A **DT experiment** was conducted for solutions to improve international students' wellbeing, specifically within the context of the University of Ottawa campus.

- +
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What is DT?

DT is a creative approach to problem solving (IDEO, 2006)

- **Collective intelligence is used to find creative solutions.**
- **The focus is on human needs, attitudes and behaviors.**
- **The search for solutions is iterative.**



Aquaduct (IDEO)



Characteristics of DT



Concrete

Empathy based

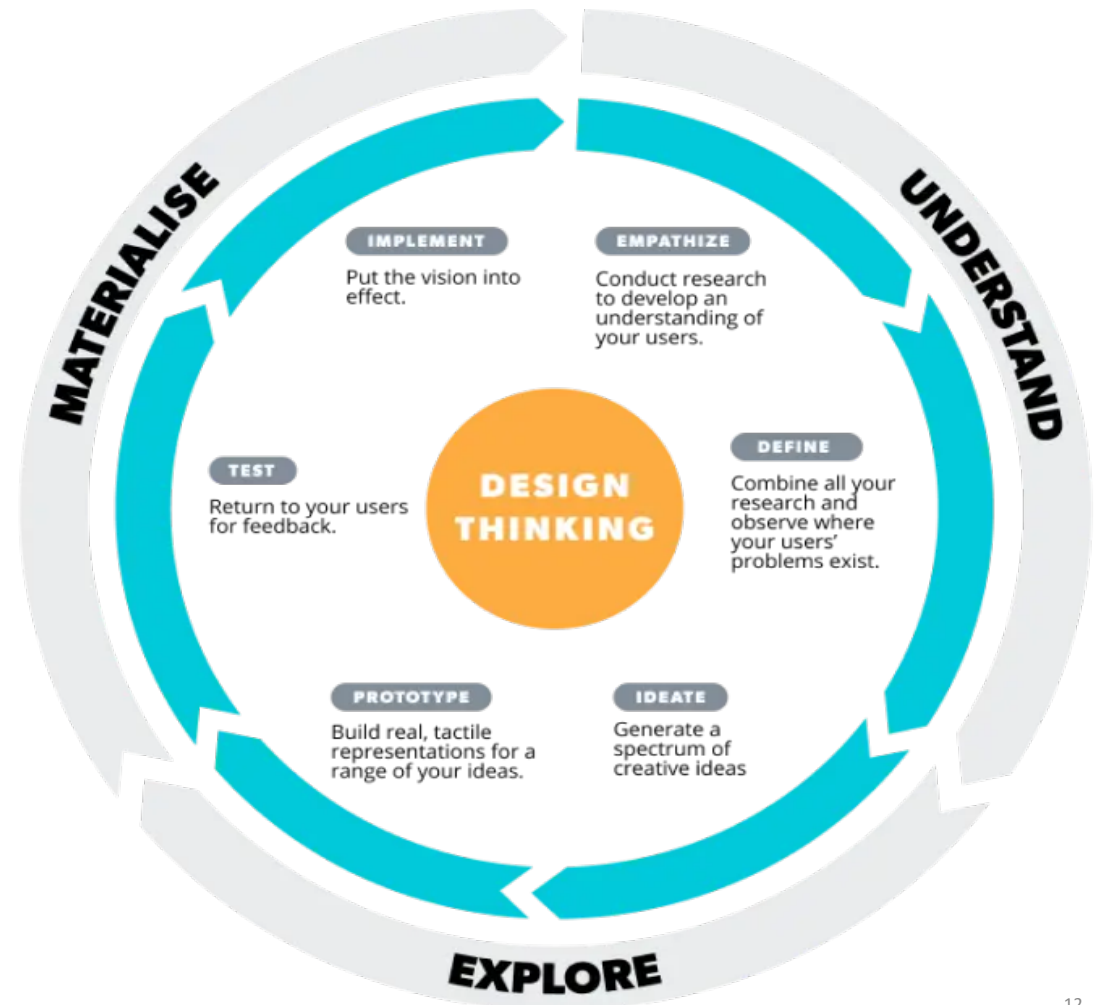
User centered

Optimistic

**Values trial and
error**

**Combines
induction,
deduction and
abduction**

The DT process



THE DT PROCESS

- 1. Empathize:** users are surveyed to gather information on their needs; in addition, diverse perspectives (e.g., from experts) help to understand the problem from multiple points of view.
- 2. Define:** information gathered from the first step is analysed and synthesized. Visual representations of this information serve to define the conceptual challenge.
- 3. Ideate:** ideas are formulated and shared to solve the conceptual challenge, and the best ones are selected.

THE DT PROCESS (Cont'ed)

- 4. Prototype:** to share ideas, prototypes are quickly built, and the best ones are chosen to assess their potential.
- 5. Test:** based on the users' assessment of the prototypes, some are improved, and one is selected as the “winner”.
- 6. Implement:** the winning prototype is presented to users and stakeholders.

(Brown, 2009; Scheer, Noweski, & Meinel, 2012)

Objective of the research:

To experience the DT process to find creative solutions to improve student wellbeing on UofO campus.

Methods

- Recruitment based on first come, first selected: email to ALL graduating students from the francophone B.Ed. program.
- Participants recruited (**the solution-makers**): 4 women and 3 men, aged 30-55. All Canadian residents or citizens of international countries.
- Guidance provided for DT (Facilitator and assistant: 2, Researcher: 1).
- Weekend meetings: once a week over a 7-week period.
- Verbatims created from discussions.
- Thematic analysis was performed.





The experiment






Empathize


Gathering users' ideas: each of the 7 solution-makers interviewed 3 international students)

Empathize: 21 international students were interviewed

International students (THE USERS) discussed their wellbeing with the solution-makers and expressed the need for a diversity of spaces on campus.



They expressed their desire for more beauty and art on campus.



They wished to have more opportunities to socialize and study outdoors and to improve their second-language skills.

International students' needs: What they said?

- Spaces for socialization
- Spaces for language learning
- Recreation spaces
- Outdoor learning spaces
- Lush and green spaces
(flowers, trees, shrubs, artworks, fountains, ecological walking paths with Indigenous plants and information boards)

Define

In addition to surveying international students (users), the solution-makers sought information on the web about the ecological design of university campuses. Ideas for greening the campus and promoting socialization were collected.





Conceptual challenge

Design a campus to better foster the wellbeing of international students.

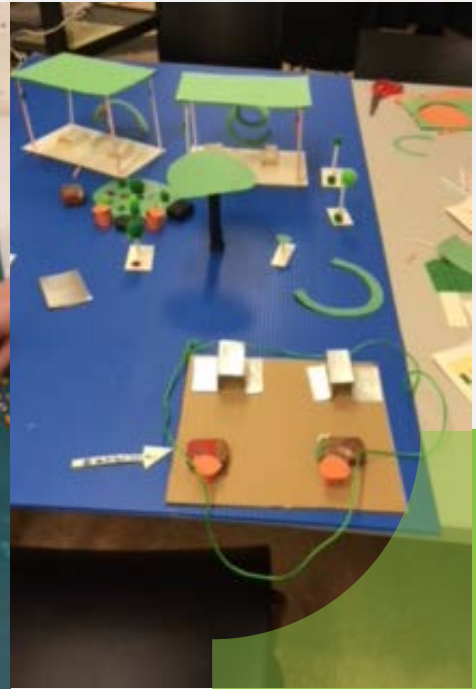
Ideate

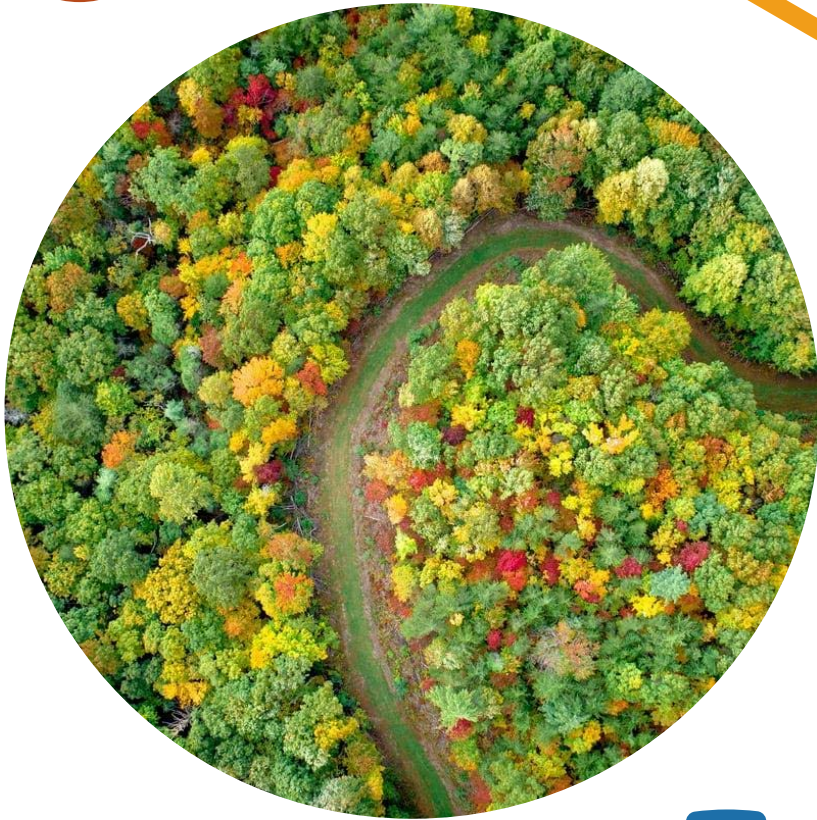


Ideas were shared by displaying sticky notes on a board or by using digital tools (MIRO application) and then the best ones were selected.

Prototype

Prototypes (mockups) are quickly built by using recycled and crafting materials.





Test

The solution-makers contacted some users for feedback on how to improve the mock-ups.



Test

Prototypes are showed to users. Their opinions combined with information from the literature resulted in a final single prototype.

Implement



- Results from this experiment were communicated to the university administration by the researcher.
- Following this step, we could observe some signs of improvement: more green spaces were created on campus.
- Not sure these improvements are related to the communication of our results.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLwUcrJRBH0>





Installation d'une Toiture verte au Pavillon Pérez

Catégorie: Développement durable

Équipe de Projet

- Planificateur – Michael Spurling
- Gérant de Projet – Sylvio Miron
- Expert interne – Charles Azar
- Santé et Sécurité – Elia Koene
- Entrepreneur – Raymond Toitures
- Ingénieur Conseil – Morrison

Le groupe des immeubles est heureux d'annoncer l'installation d'une nouvelle toiture verte au pavillon Pérez, plus particulièrement sur les toitures B1, B2 et C. Le coût total du projet pour le remplacement des toitures B1, B2, C, D, E, F1, F2, H et pour l'installation du toit vert fut de \$286k.

Ce genre d'initiative de projet de développement durable apporte plusieurs avantages sur notre environnement tels que la gestion des eaux de pluie, la réduction de l'effet d'îlot thermique urbain, l'amélioration de la qualité de l'air, la réduction des gaz à effet de serre et sans oublier l'embellissement de l'environnement urbain.



Vue aérienne



Vue à partir du 100 Laurier



Solutions from the DT experiment

- The solutions proposed by the experiment included engagement in **various activities** on campus such as using recreation areas and spending time in gardens.
- **Engagement on campus** focused mostly on recreation, but also on intercultural socialization.

Remarks from the DT experiment

It was surprising to hear solution-makers saying there were no environmental problems in Canada, compared to their countries of origin. Given climate change, it's important to develop courses to educate students about this issue.

Analyzing solutions from DT: designing campuses to improve the wellbeing of international students





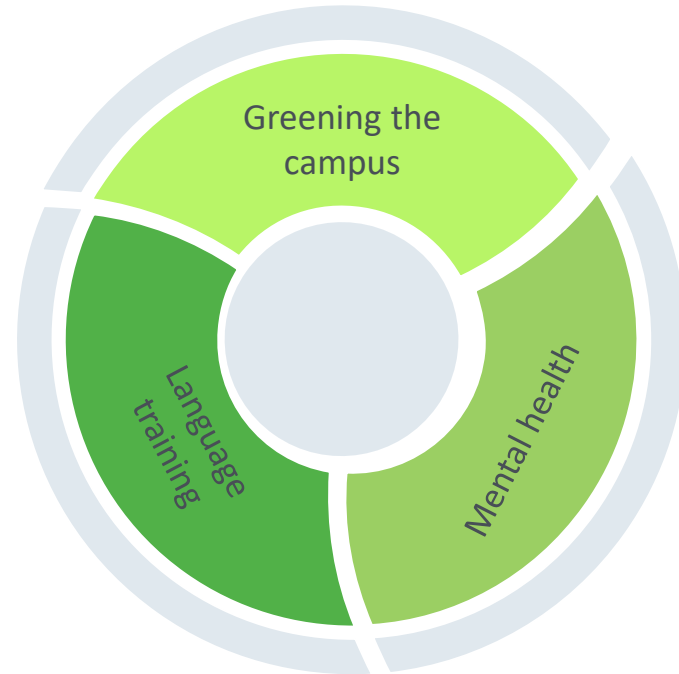
Five categories of solutions for the wellbeing of international students

- Solutions **for mental health** (leisure and sports, spaces to study outdoors)
- Solutions **for greening the campus** (interaction with nature; outdoor study facilities)
- Solutions **for English-language training**.
- Solutions **to promote a sense of belonging** (indigenization, cultural referents, collegial governance)
- Solutions **for cultural integration** (intercultural meetings and dialogues, making friends)





3 types of solutions are helpful to ALL students



Ecological model for campus design

(Banning & Kaiser, 1974; Evans et al., 2010)

- ❑ Combines human ecology and developmental ecology to contribute to student development
- ❑ Focuses on the relationship between students and the university campus environment
- ❑ Academic institutions must provide multiple spaces for students to interact (SOCIALIZATION – CULTURAL INTEGRATION).
- ❑ Emphasizes the importance of students feeling welcome, regardless of their ethnic origin, culture or life experiences (SENSE OF BELONGING)
- ❑ Keeps the campus safe for everyone to feel at home (SENSE OF BELONGING)
- ❑ Focuses on the notion of student participation in decision-making to develop new policies (SENSE OF BELONGING).

Ecological model for campus design

(Banning & Kaiser, 1974; Evans et al., 2010)

- **The development of community cohesion is at the heart of this model.**
- **Within different cultural groups, sports are a means for community engagement.**
- **Another means for student engagement is to contribute to the maintenance of natural spaces; promoting ecologization, and the development of a sense of belonging among students, along with the development of communities of practice.**



Solutions for greening the campus: 3 key concepts

Campuses as living labs

Some campuses play a major role in conserving biodiversity (naturally or by design). These biodiverse spaces can become outdoor classrooms.

Stewardship

Greening campuses requires the labor of a group of persons (e.g., students) in order to maintain the natural spaces (Krasny & Delia, 2015).

Biophilia

Human wellbeing is a function of the relationship between a person and the natural environment (Kellert & Wilson, 1993).

Sustainable Development Goals

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



5 Pillars

- People
- Prosperity
- Planet
- Peace
- Partnership

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>



13 CLIMATE ACTION

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

15 LIFE ON LAND

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Canadian Bureau for
International Education

Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals at Canadian Universities

A Snapshot of Activities, Initiatives and
Strategies Adopted by Institutions Across
the Country

Created by the International Relations
Professional Learning Community (IR-PLC)

Top 10

Most Sustainable Universities in the World

-
- 1 Wageningen University & Research
Netherland
 - 2 University of Oxford
United Kingdom
 - 3 Nottingham University of Oxford
United Kingdom
 - 4 Nottingham Trent University
United Kingdom
 - 5 University of California, Davis
USA
 - 6 Umwelt-Campus Birkenfeld
Germany
 - 7 University of Groningen
Netherland
 - 8 Leiden University
Netherland
 - 9 University College Cork
Ireland
 - 10 Universita di Bologna
Italy

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Only graduated students participated in the DT process – Important challenges such as finding solutions for international students' wellbeing should involve diverse stakeholders from the university in the experiment (e.g., university administration, people responsible for housing, student services, cafeteria, sustainable development team, faculty, community members)
- The challenge was quite specific to the outdoor campus – Important issues for wellbeing concerned more than outdoor campus such as university policies, objectives (vision), the learning environment, student services such as financial service, housing, quality of buildings, etc.

CONCLUSION

- Greening campuses would help to fight against climate change, and to teach students (as well as all the university community) to reduce their footprint.

-
- Designing green spaces and developing a sustainable campus requires the involvement of university administration, as well as the development of robust sustainable development policies.



CONCLUSIONS

- Greening the campus fosters students' community engagement, environmental education awareness, socialization and sense of belonging.

-
- Students' engagement to maintain green spaces is desirable and could be linked to the feasibility of the project.

- Design thinking is an interesting tool for community groups to find ecological solutions to diverse and complex problems: it could be a useful approach for university administrations to develop a collegial governance process.





Concluding remarks

Resources should be devoted by federal and provincial governments for the wellbeing of international students and for the ecological transition of university campuses in Ontario and across Canada.

Some interesting resources

- <https://www.educanada.ca/index.aspx?lang=eng> (STUDENTS EMPLOYMENT)
- <https://cbie.ca/what-we-do/research/library/> (CANADIAN BUREAU FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION)

References (1)

Banning, J. (1978). Campus Ecology: a perspective for student affairs. *National Student Personnel Association (NASPA) Journal*, 126.

Brown, T. (2009). *Change by design: How design thinking transforms organizations and inspires innovation*. New York: Harper Collins.

Fairfield University - Mentoring Communities,
<http://www.fairfield.edu/lifeatfairfield/campuslife/housing/livinglearning/spohomore/ignatianresidential/mentoringcommunities/>

Kellert, S.R., & Wilson, E. (1993). *The Biophilia Hypothesis*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Krasni, M.E., & Delia, J. (2015). Natural area stewardship as part of campus sustainability. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 106(1), 87-96.

References (2)

Pruneau, D. et al. (2019). Les facteurs d'efficacité de la pensée design comme démarche de résolution de problèmes locaux. *Communication presented to the ACFAS congress, Gatineau, May 2019.*

Scheer, A., Noweski, C., & Meinel, C. (2012). Transforming constructivist learning into action: Design thinking in education. *Design and Technology Education: An International Journal, 17(3).*

Strange, C., & Banning, J. (2001). *Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments that Work.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Williams, M. (2014). Greening Northern: an ecological campus. *The North Wind (online), 3(26).*
<https://www.thenorthwindonline.com/greening-northern-an-ecological-campus/>

Un guide pédagogique sur la pensée design (2019)

<https://competi.ca/>

**La pensée design pour le
développement durable**

**Guide pédagogique pour les milieux scolaire, académique et
communautaire**



**D. Pruneau, B. El Jai, V. Richard, L. Dionne, V. Freiman, A.M.
Laroche, M. Léger, N. Louis, M. Mahjoub, et S. Lebrun**



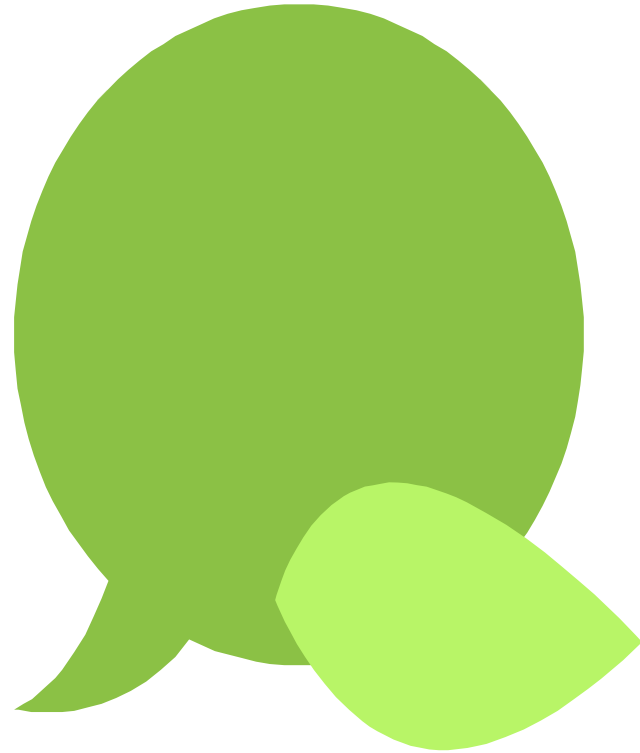
Thank you!



QUESTIONS?



ldionne@uottawa.ca



A PLAN FOR PROSPERITY:

Ensuring the Financial Sustainability of Ontario's Universities

July 2023



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Executive Summary



As the province continues to navigate through economic uncertainty, now is the time to work together to build an even stronger Ontario.

Ontario's universities – key drivers of growth, performance, prosperity and competitiveness – have a vital role to play in fortifying our province and helping address the urgent needs of Ontario.

Universities will continue to transform and remain fiscally responsible as they work to empower and support students, families and communities, while driving the innovation that helps create jobs and bring made-in-Ontario solutions to market.

As the government's Blue-Ribbon Panel and its review of the financial sustainability of the postsecondary sector comes at a critical juncture, this report details how government, business, community partners and universities must work together to ensure universities have the resources they need to continue support students, lead innovation and drive economic growth for the benefit of Ontario.

**The Plan for
Prosperity includes
three key pillars →**

The Plan for Prosperity includes three key pillars:



Supporting student success: Student success is at the very core of Ontario's universities' mission. To help ensure every willing and qualified student can access university and succeed while there, universities are investing nearly \$1.3 billion in student financial support and more than \$1.4 billion in student services, such as mental health.

These investments are delivering impressive results. According to a 2021-22 Ministry of Colleges and Universities' survey, university students who graduated in 2019, and entered the workforce during the pandemic, had a high employment rate of 90.4 per cent six months after graduation, increasing to 94.3 per cent two years after graduation. Almost 90 per cent of graduates who were employed full-time considered their work closely or somewhat related to the skills they developed at university.

However, the real value of provincial operating grants per student declined 31 per cent between 2006-07 and 2021-22. Currently, provincial operating grants represent about 30 per cent of total university operating revenue. In addition, COU estimates that there were more than 21,000 Ontario students in Ontario universities who were not funded through provincial operating grants in 2021-22. Growing demand by highly qualified Ontario students to study in the province has led to the growth in the number of these unfunded students.

On average, Ontarians think 55% of a university's budget should be publicly funded by government, according to a 2023 poll conducted by Ipsos. Currently, real provincial operating grants per full-time student represent 30% of total university operating revenue.

Universities will need additional resources to continue to graduate students that are job-ready, adaptable and resilient.



Driving a competitive economy: Ontario's universities are, by any measure, major economic drivers across the province. To help meet labour market demands, universities continue to transform course delivery, as well as expand micro-credential programming to reskill and upskill Ontario's workforce. Since 2010, universities increased enrolment in STEM programs by 68 per cent and health programs by 38 per cent, while establishing more than 660 agreements with industry associations to support programs to upskill and reskill mid-career workers.

Enrolment at Ontario's universities is only expected to grow. The Ministry of Finance's population projections indicate that the number of citizens and permanent residents aged 18 to 24 in Ontario will grow by 7.8 per cent over the next 10 years.

In particular, as both the provincial and federal governments set ambitious immigration targets, a growing number of new Ontarians will need access to degree programs, micro-credentials and continuing education courses. Creating capacity to accommodate increased enrolment requires planning and preparation now.

In addition, universities play a critical role in conducting ground-breaking research, commercializing new ideas and creating jobs to propel economic growth in communities throughout Ontario.

These critical investments are attracting international talent and investment. Universities remain committed to graduating the highly skilled talent and driving the ground-breaking innovation that fuels economic development across Ontario's communities and on the global stage.



Transforming for the future: In order to support students in an enriching learning environment so they can lead innovation and drive economic development, Ontario's universities remain committed to continued innovation, transformation and adaptation.

To do so, universities continue to adhere to strong fiscal management, transparency, accountability and stewardship of the resources they receive, while transforming and adapting to meet ever-changing labour market and student needs.

As such, the sector has proactively developed the Financial Health and Transparency Framework Plan, which outlines how universities are monitoring their financial position and ensuring action is taken. Universities are working in collaboration with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities on the implementation of a final Framework. In addition, universities continue to adhere to leading practices in university board governance to ensure strong financial oversight and open and transparent decision-making.

This commitment to sound financial practices is yielding tangible results. For example, salary and benefit costs per full-time equivalent (FTE) student at Ontario universities (\$15,256) are tied for the second lowest in Canada – well behind typical comparators to Ontario, such as Quebec (\$16,045), Saskatchewan (\$17,652) and British Columbia (\$19,628).

Compared to other provinces, Ontario receives the lowest per-FTE operating grant funding for universities, with Ontario at \$8,647 and a Canadian average of \$12,215 in 2020-21. Recent provincial budgets across Canada have significantly increased operating funding for universities, while all Canadian provinces except Ontario have allowed for tuition increases.

To ensure Ontario's universities can continue to transform to meet labour market needs and drive innovation, they require investment and the flexibility to increase their revenue sources, which will translate into economic prosperity for students, communities and the province.

Recommendations

To continue to sustain current capacity and support students, enrolment growth and research and innovation, Ontario's universities recommend the government:

1. Increase Operating Funding: A one-time increase to base funding to reduce the decline in real per-student grants; ongoing annual percentage-based increases in base funding to reflect the higher costs of meeting student needs; and full funding for enrolment expansion to develop the talent Ontario's economy needs.

2. Provide Multi-Year Tuition Flexibility Allow multi-year tuition flexibility, including corresponding increases to Tuition Set-Aside and Student Access Guarantee (SAG) to help support low- and middle-income students, that provides predictable and necessary revenues to ensure universities can deliver on their mandates to develop highly skilled talent, foster research and innovation, and support local economic development.

Ensuring the financial sustainability of Ontario's universities will assure they can continue to support their students, graduate highly skilled talent and drive ground-breaking innovation that meets labour market demands, grows the economy and keeps Ontario competitive.

A strong, publicly-assisted postsecondary education ecosystem is critical to meeting the needs of students, fostering community economic growth, driving research and innovation and developing the highly skilled talent critical to Ontario's economy.

By working in partnership with government and across stakeholders, Ontario's postsecondary institutions can continue to address priorities critical to Ontario's economic growth, both now and in the future, creating a more prosperous future for our students, communities and the province.

Introduction



As the province continues to face rapid change, universities are critical in helping navigate this change and solving some of the most pressing challenges facing our society today.

Ontario's universities are working in partnership with government, businesses and stakeholders to help the province meet labour market demands, rebuild its health-care system and drive the research and innovation that results in job creation and economic growth.

It is why Ontario has a reputation for high-quality publicly-assisted universities that compete on the world stage.

Universities provide comprehensive student supports that demonstrate a commitment to student success, high-quality programs that respond to ever-changing labour market needs, and innovative research that advances emerging industries. Their contributions mean that the sustainability of the sector

is vital to meeting the needs of Ontarians and the province as a whole.

Ontario's publicly-assisted postsecondary sector is one that instills pride in Ontarians and attracts highly skilled talent and investment from across the globe.

According to a 2023 poll conducted by Ipsos, 76% of Ontarians are proud of our publicly assisted university system in Ontario.

Universities remain committed to continued innovation, transformation and adaptation in order to support students in an enriching learning environment, so they can lead innovation and drive economic development.

To do so, universities continue to adhere to strong fiscal management, transparency, accountability and stewardship of the resources they receive.

- Universities proactively developed and remain accountable under, a Financial Health and Transparency Framework Plan to provide ongoing monitoring of universities' financial positions and ensure action is taken, where appropriate, and are working with the Ministry on implementation of a final Framework.
- Universities continue to adhere to leading practices in university board governance to ensure strong financial oversight and open and transparent decision-making, illustrating that universities and their boards are taking their fiduciary responsibilities seriously.
- Universities remain accountable to the province through their Strategic Mandate Agreements and performance-based funding, and will continue to collaborate with the province on how best to achieve enhanced outcomes.

Ontario's universities and the programs they offer are integral to meeting the needs of students and communities, and as such, the province has a vested interest in ensuring their continued maintenance, growth and sustainability.

However, universities continue to face significant financial pressures and require more resources to remain vital partners to Ontario's prosperity.





It is why, in order to fully unleash their potential, Ontario's universities require a long-term financial framework that includes government investment and the flexibility to increase their revenue sources.

Investing in Ontario's university sector is an investment in student success and Ontario's prosperity – an investment that will ensure Ontario has the talent to meet labour market demands and fill job shortages, and the innovation to fuel economic growth.

A strong majority (73%) of Ontarians support publicly assisted universities receiving additional funding from government, even if it means a modest short-term increase in the provincial deficit, a reduction of spending elsewhere or a slight tax increase, according to a 2023 poll conducted by Ipsos.

Recommendations

To continue to sustain current capacity and support students, enrolment growth and research and innovation, Ontario's universities recommend the government:

1. Increased Operating Funding: A one-time increase to base funding to reduce the decline in real per-student grants; ongoing annual percentage-based increases in base funding to reflect the higher costs of meeting student needs; and full funding for enrolment expansion to develop the talent Ontario's economy needs.

2. Provide Multi-Year Tuition Flexibility: Multi-year tuition flexibility, including corresponding increases to Tuition Set-Aside and Student Access Guarantee to help support low- and middle-income students, that provides predictable and necessary revenues to ensure universities can deliver on their mandates to develop highly skilled talent, foster research and innovation, and support local economic development.

Ontario's universities welcome the opportunity to work with the government's Blue-Ribbon Panel, as its review of the financial sustainability of the postsecondary sector comes at a critical juncture. We will continue to work with government and stakeholders to ensure our province's postsecondary sector remains strong and vibrant.

By working together, we can ensure Ontario's publicly assisted postsecondary institutions continue to be well-poised to support student access and experience, develop a highly skilled workforce and promote economic growth and innovation throughout Ontario.

Supporting Student Success



Student success is at the very core of Ontario's universities' mission and that which fuels postsecondary education.

Students succeed when universities devote their energies to continuously improving student experiences, both in and out of the classroom, and through efforts that begin before students arrive and continue long after graduation.

By working to improve access to university in the face of growing student demand for university programs, while also providing students with the ever-changing supports they need while on campus, Ontario's universities are steadfast in their commitment to student success at university and beyond. A financially sustainable sector will ensure more students can access the type of opportunities offered by postsecondary institutions, achieving success throughout their time on campus and beyond.

Ensuring Access and Supporting Increased Student Demand

Access to postsecondary education is a transformative opportunity. Simply put: a high-quality postsecondary education is a significant step to well-paying jobs and resilient careers.

According to a 2023 poll conducted by Ipsos, 90% of Ontarians agree that they want (or would want) their child to attend university.

Results show that every willing and qualified Ontario student should have access to a high-quality postsecondary education and an enriching postsecondary experience that will help them succeed.

Ontario's universities are working to provide this access to a growing number of students by:

- Providing nearly \$1.3 billion in student financial assistance in 2021-22, including through scholarships, bursaries and grants.
 - » These contributions exceed the total OSAP funding provided to students across the entire spectrum of post-secondary education, including universities, colleges and private career colleges, which amounted to \$954 million in 2021-22.
- Supporting more than 21,000 full-time Ontario students (with a value of \$176.5 million) who are not funded by provincial operating grants due to a cap on enrolment.

As universities face growing financial constraints, more and more students are applying to university because of strong job prospects. **The latest applications data**

from the Ontario Universities' Application Centre indicates that applications from Ontario schools increased by more than 11 per cent between 2021 and 2023.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Finance's population projections indicate that the number of citizens and permanent residents aged 18 to 24 in Ontario will grow by 7.8 per cent, or more than 87,653 individuals, over the next 10 years.

Ensuring Ontario's universities have the capacity to accommodate increased student enrolment requires planning and preparation now. Universities will continue to work with government to support growing student interest and demand.



Providing Wraparound Student Supports

In today's rapidly changing world, and as the needs of students continue to evolve, student success at university depends, in part, on access to effective services that can support and guide them in the pursuit of their educational goals.

While on our campuses, universities strive to ensure students are having the best experience possible by providing domestic and international students with wraparound supports, including for mental health and career counselling.

These supports are helping equip students with tools that foster resiliency, preparing them for a rapidly changing world throughout university and beyond.

To help better connect students with the resources they need, Ontario's universities are spending more than \$1.4 billion on student services, such as student health and mental health, career guidance and placement and athletics – an increase of almost 22 per cent over the past five years.

In addition, Ontario's universities continue to work to ensure students have access to places to live close to campus. When students live near where they study and work, they have greater access to local businesses, community events and engagements, as well as co-op and work opportunities – key components in building strong communities and supporting local economies.

Ontario's universities remain committed to partnering with the province, municipalities and community partners to expand opportunities to develop purpose-built housing. For example, According to a 2022 housing survey of 16 Ontario universities conducted by the Council of Ontario Universities:

- There are currently more than 59,600 total residence spaces.
- More than 6,400 new residence spaces have been added over the past five years – a 10 per cent increase – and it is projected that more than 9,000 new spaces will be added over the next five years.

Universities will continue to provide students with access to the resources and supports they need to be successful throughout their studies and after they graduate.

Ensuring Student Success Beyond Postsecondary

Ensuring access to a university education and providing key supports for students has been fundamental to helping university graduates experience success as they enter the workforce and throughout their careers.

In fact, evidence indicates that our graduates experience high employment rates and build resiliency, even throughout economic downturns:

- According to a 2021-22 Ministry of Colleges and Universities' survey, university students that graduated in 2019, and entered the workforce during the pandemic, had a high employment rate of 90.4 per cent six months after graduation, increasing to 94.3 per cent two years after graduation.

- In addition, the survey indicates that almost 90 per cent of graduates with full-time employment worked in jobs that were either closely or somewhat related to the skills they developed at university.

- During the last four economic recessions, Canadians with a bachelor's degree or higher were less than half as likely to experience job loss, according to Statistics Canada.

However, an enriching university experience provides graduates with more than economic success. It integrates academics as well as social and cultural supports – including those that enable students to forge new friendships and relationships, develop personal accountability and become well-rounded global citizens.

An investment in Ontario's postsecondary institutions means enhanced student success, helping to ensure improved access to a higher education and the necessary on-campus resources for students.



Driving a Competitive Economy



Ontario's universities are major economic drivers across the province. By employing hundreds of thousands of Ontarians, purchasing goods and services and partnering with industry to help address urgent community needs, universities are economic anchors in their communities.

For example:

- In 2020, Ontario universities collectively employed more than 138,600 Ontarians and purchased approximately \$5 billion in goods and services.
- Spending activities from institutions, students, visitors and alumni have resulted in 487,639 jobs impacted by universities' spending activities and \$45 billion to the GDP in 2020.

It is imperative that Ontario's universities are financially sustainable to ensure they can continue to graduate the highly skilled talent and drive the ground-breaking innovation that meets labour market demands, grows the economy and keeps Ontario competitive.

Meeting Labour Market Demand

Together, universities, colleges, labour training facilities and Indigenous Institutes all have a role to play in ensuring Ontario has a workforce with a diverse set of skills to respond to the full spectrum of labour market needs – from skilled trades and apprenticeships to high-demand fields, such as STEM and health care.

Ontario is facing severe labour shortages that are only expected to grow. A report by Stokes Economics found that Ontario will need more than 950,000 skilled trade and apprenticeship jobs, and a total of 928,700 jobs that require a university education. In addition, there are currently 350,000 unfilled jobs in Ontario, according to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Leveraging the strengths of the entire postsecondary education sector is critical to meeting these labour market needs. Building on the respective strengths of universities, colleges, labour training facilities and Indigenous Institutes will help ensure all players are delivering on their mandates.

Stokes Economics found that, by 2030, Ontario will need more than 233,000 jobs in STEM that require a university degree, and nearly 148,000 jobs in health care. To help address this demand, universities have increased enrolment in STEM by just over 68 per cent and nearly 38 per cent in health programs since 2010.

Furthermore, new technologies, markets and industries are rapidly emerging, many of which will require highly skilled and specialized talent.

80% of Ontarians agree that Ontario's universities produce the talent needed in the province to help build a prosperous Ontario, according to a 2023 poll conducted by Ipsos.

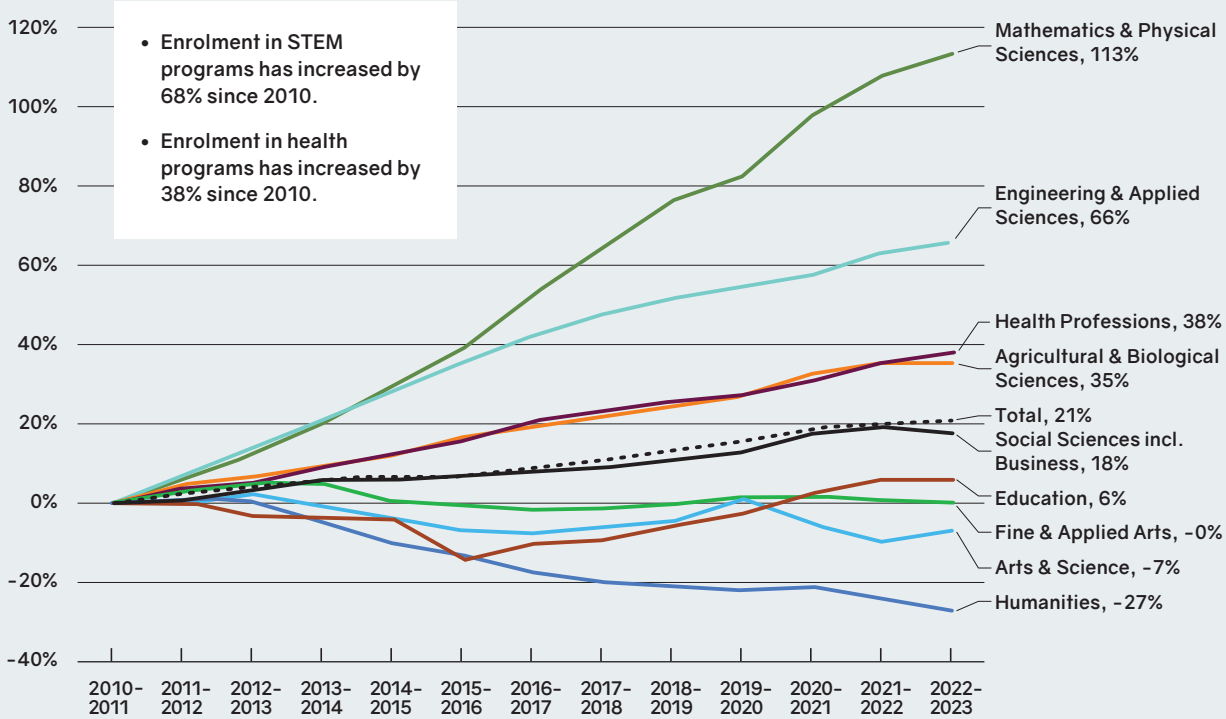
Ontario is already seeing the emergence of these new industries – from advanced manufacturing and construction to life sciences and critical minerals. The electric vehicle supply chain, for example, is one that is rapidly evolving. With governments setting ambitious targets for zero-emission vehicles, we will need the next generation of innovative employers, creative entrepreneurs and nimble employees who will help advance this critical industry and others.

“To reach those [zero-emission vehicles] goals, the government will need a vast network of researchers, engineers and technicians, all with the flexibility and ambition to undertake this work. They’re going to need students.”

– Canada will need students' help to reach its aggressive EV targets, Emily Baron Cadloff, Corporate Knights, May 2023



Enrolment Trends at Ontario Universities by Program Area



Source: Ontario Universities Enrolment Data
 Indexed against 2010-11. STEM includes Agricultural and Biological Sciences, Engineering and Applied Sciences and Mathematics and Physical Sciences

As new industries emerge and more and more jobs change and become automated, Ontario’s universities will continue to respond to these evolving needs, delivering highly skilled-talent that is equipped to adapt and face these challenges head on.

Promoting Innovation and Economic Prosperity

Ontario’s universities are one of our province’s greatest sources of talent, entrepreneurship and research – three key ingredients that in combination fuel prosperity in and around the regions that surround those universities.

The research, innovation and intellectual property generated on university campuses

attracts investment to Ontario from across the globe, drives economic development and propels high-demand sectors forward, such as life sciences, electric vehicles, health care, advanced manufacturing and critical minerals.

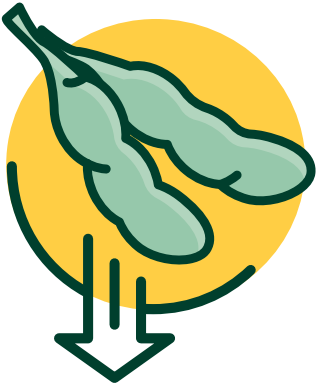
While research and innovation is critical for Ontario’s prosperity, provincial support for university research programs declined in real terms by 52% between 2010-11 and 2021-22. In fact, when compared to other provinces in 2020-21, Ontario’s share of total research funding from provincial sources was seven per cent compared to 16 per cent in Alberta and 22 per cent in Quebec.

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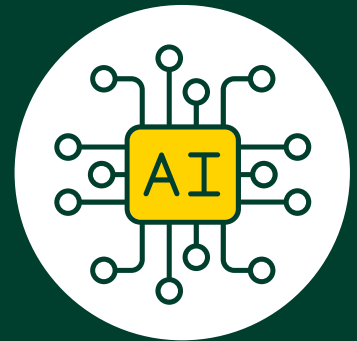
Supporting Critical Industries Across the Province

LIFE SCIENCES



Soybeans are an extremely valuable export, generating \$2.6 billion for Canada in 2019 – and Ontario is leading the nation in production, representing more than half of all Canadian soybean acreage in 2021. Researchers at the [University of Guelph](#) are supporting Ontario's leadership in soybean production with the development of more than 80 soybean varieties with superior genetics, which generated \$130 million in sales in 2019.

Supported by a \$100M gift from Gerald Schwartz and Heather Reisman, the [University of Toronto](#) has launched a development project that will enhance Toronto's capacity in AI and life sciences. The Schwartz-Reisman Innovation Centre (SRIC) will be the new home of the Vector Institute, a world leader in AI, which has catalyzed the growth of Ontario's and Canada's AI companies since it was established in 2017, through the Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy. Over the last three years, the [Vector Institute reports](#) that Ontario's AI ecosystem has created ~82,000 jobs, produced over 160 patents, and attracted more than 164 companies.



Improving efficiency in healthcare is one way Ontario can expand the capacity of the sector to meet the needs of a growing population. Researchers at the [University of Ottawa](#) and The Ottawa Hospital are making advancements in this area with CANImmunizes, the world's first digital immunization app, which allows patients and health care providers to efficiently and conveniently review and monitor vaccination records.



Canada ranks fourth in the world for number of clinical trial sites, and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic it is essential that Ontario develop the highly-skilled workforce needed to support this growing field. [York University's Certificate in Clinical Research](#) provides students with up-to-date knowledge of the field, developing the critical skills needed to deliver ground-breaking innovations in clinical research.



Developing effective and efficient methods of evaluation for those with brain injuries, dementia and cognitive impairments is critical to improving health outcomes and quality of life for patients. Researchers at [McMaster University](#) are driving innovation in the field with the Cognitive Health Assessment Management Platform, which tracks brain activity through a series of neuropsychological tests to help clinicians evaluate cognitive health and functions, improving diagnostic capabilities.

CRITICAL MINERALS



Resource exploration and extraction is an extremely complex practice, requiring highly-skilled engineers to ensure

projects are carried out effectively and with appropriate consideration for health, safety and sustainability. Laurentian University is providing students with the skills they need to drive innovation and growth in the critical minerals sector through their Mining Engineering program, which includes opportunities for in-class and hands-on co-operative learning.



Mitigating the environmental impacts of mining is an important consideration in the sector, particularly as the impacts of climate change become increasingly apparent around the world. Researchers at Trent University's PowerGeolab are leading the industry in developing innovative practices such as a new method which uses mine waste and tailings to sequester CO₂, simultaneously mitigating the direct impacts of mining activities and removing greenhouse gases from our atmosphere.

Lakehead University's Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Mining and Exploration leads sustainable practices in critical rare mineral mining in Ontario's Ring of Fire. With cross-disciplinary experts from 16 departments, and partnerships with local communities, the center examines the environmental, social, and economic impacts of resource development. The university develops innovative technologies for eco-friendly mining, prepares students for the industry, and prioritizes collaboration with First Nations and Métis groups. By integrating innovation, research and partnerships, Lakehead University is shaping a responsible and sustainable future for critical rare mineral mining in the region.



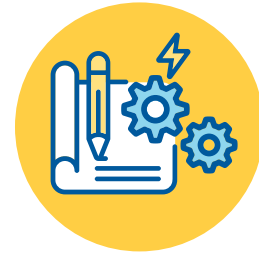
Mining is an ecologically taxing process which draws on highly skilled experts with a range of specializations including engineering, geology and ethics, among others. Nipissing University's Environmental Management program provides students with a strong background on best practices which can be applied to mining and other environmentally sensitive fields, with courses ranging from natural resource management, impact assessments, and indigenous relations.

Critical minerals are playing an increasingly crucial role in the modern world, providing essential components for many of the consumer electronics which have become integrated in our day-to-day lives. Researchers at Western University are taking the search for these precious resources to new lengths, providing their expertise to support the Khepri Asteroid Mining Mission, which seeks to explore the potential for space resource utilization.



ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Through an experiential learning opportunity in partnership with Ontario's Ministry of Transportation (MTO), students at Brock University researched and presented policy solutions to address a series of challenges facing MTO. One example of the topics that groups were tasked with was EV policy, speed and road safety, helping students gain valuable hands-on experience as they tackle some of Ontario's most complex EV challenges.



Transitioning to a green economy requires highly-skilled engineering talent to design new technologies in energy production and transmission. Through undergraduate programs in sustainable energy, Carleton University is providing students the opportunity to explore a range of cleantech applications, such as smart technologies for power generation and distribution, providing a strong foundation for understanding the challenges and opportunities of wide-spread EV use.



Developing an end-to-end EV manufacturing ecosystem will help Ontario foster a globally competitive EV market. Through Ontario Tech University's Automotive Centre of Excellence, researchers and students partnered with Canada's Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association to build all components of Project Arrow – the first Canadian-made zero-emissions vehicle.

Many end-of-life EV batteries still have up to 70 per cent of their capacity left when they end up at recycling facilities.

Researchers at the University of Windsor are partnering with industry to find new ways of repurposing these batteries for use in home electrification, e-bikes and microgrids as another route to battery disposal that could offer cost-effective solutions to EV adaptation.



The global aviation industry produces three per cent of the world's carbon emissions and must overcome a variety of challenges to meet its net zero target by 2050. University of Waterloo's Institute for Sustainable Aeronautics (WISA) is finding new technologies and strategies to make aviation sustainable. An example is WISA'S Pipistrel project, an e-plane for flight schools which will result in a 1,000-tonne reduction in carbon emissions over 20 years.



INFRASTRUCTURE



Invasive species present a significant risk to the timber industry – one of Ontario’s main economic drivers – by harming local ecosystems that could threaten Ontario’s ability to supply materials. Algoma University is leading critical research in invasive species biology by studying the effects of climate change on migratory and behavioural patterns, helping develop tools to safeguard the timber industry.

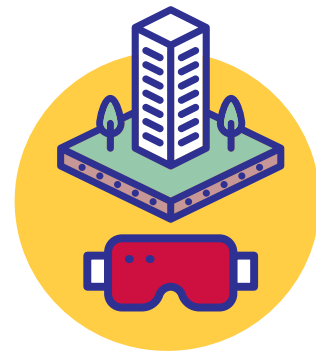
Concrete accounts for almost 10 per cent of global carbon-dioxide emissions. Researchers at Queen’s University, in collaboration with the University of Toronto and the University of Cambridge, are researching strategies to reduce the emissions associated with concrete infrastructure. These strategies have the potential of cutting concrete carbon-dioxide emissions by as much as 50 per cent.



Through a unique experiential learning program, OCAD University students are honing their skills in all facets of media content production, preparing them for careers in the booming content creator economy, as well as creating a talent pipeline that can help expand capacity for the growing film industry. OCAD U LiVE is a 24-7 digital streaming channel featuring content produced by students and is gaining prominence as a production house, giving students real-world paid work experiences and strengthening the connection between students and digital infrastructure.



Through the Navigable Virtual Reality for Architectural Interactive Learning (NVR-FAIL) tool, a professor at Toronto Metropolitan University is providing architecture students with the ability to navigate their architectural designs in a 3D space and experience their projects through a new perspective. This learning experience is helping push the boundaries of forward-thinking architecture.



The growing impacts of climate change have implications for city and building design. A researcher at Wilfrid Laurier University was selected as a lead author for a UN report on the impacts of climate change on human health and well-being. The report offered suggestions on how to build resilient communities that are prepared against the future impacts of climate change.

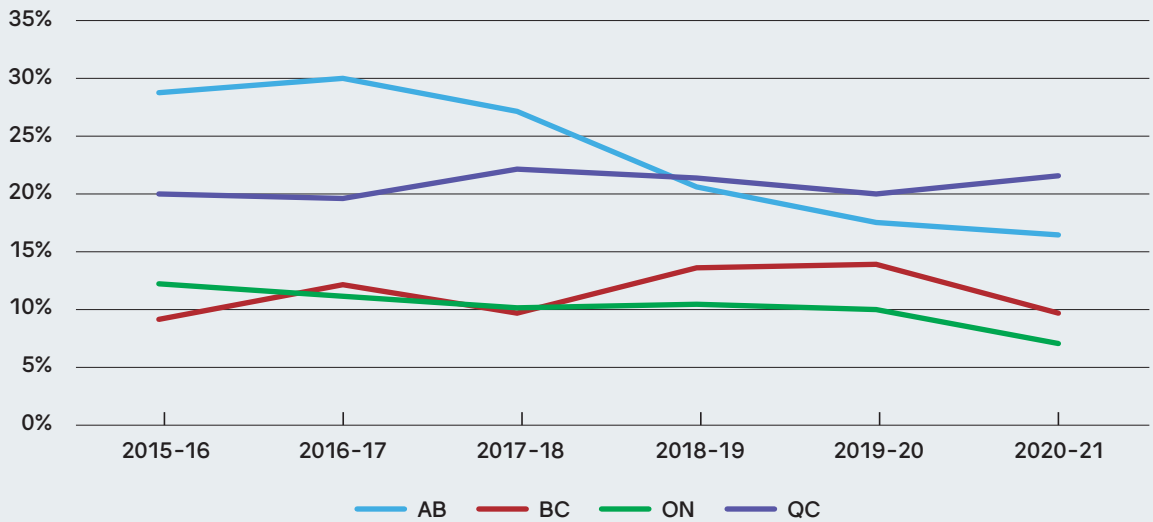
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Provincial research funding also leverages federal funding for the benefit of Ontario. Investing in research and innovation, including the matching of federal funding, is critical to Ontario's economic growth and future prosperity. This is particularly apparent for critical biomanufacturing and life sciences infrastructure, such as the Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund.

More can be done to fully realize the potential of innovation in Ontario and ensure university researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs can continue to create the type of breakthroughs that make Ontario a global leader and our economy more self-sufficient.



Provincial Government Share of Total Research Funding



Source: CAUBO, Financial Information of Universities and Colleges (FIUC)
Includes funding for universities and affiliated hospitals

Transforming for the Future



Over the past decade, Ontario's universities have grappled with a rapidly changing landscape. While demands for increased access to the latest information, technology, classrooms and student services continue to rise, universities have faced decreasing government funding in real terms.

These increasing demands require institutions to adapt quickly in an environment that demands a steady flow of educational offerings that best serve students. To effectively tackle these challenges, postsecondary institutions – just like businesses – require agility, responsiveness and good governance.

It is why Ontario's universities remain steadfast in their commitment to strong fiscal management, transparency, accountability and stewardship of the resources they receive, while transforming and adapting to meet ever-changing labour market and student needs.

Transforming and Finding Efficiencies

The make-up of our student body, and accordingly, student needs, are changing rapidly. From mid-career workers and newcomers to Ontario, as well as students just out of high school, the type of learner arriving on our campuses has evolved.

As more and more new Ontarians are welcomed to our province, they will need access to high-quality degree programs, micro-credentials and continuing education courses.

Ways Ontario's universities are transforming programming to support students



Graduating nurses with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in as little as 19 months and streaming students into high-needs clinical areas.



Allowing for secure issuing and verification of official digital documents through [MyCreds](#), a 24/7 digital credential wallet.



Through the [Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health](#), universities have partnered with colleges and students to create a centralized resource for frontline service providers.



Enhancing academic pathways and reducing barriers for students looking to transfer among Ontario's publicly assisted institutions through ONCAT.



Providing international students with access to comparable OHIP health coverage through the University Health Insurance Plan, reducing costs to universities and students.



Offering more than 3,500 continuing education courses and entering into more than 670 industry partnerships to address local, regional and provincial skills shortages. (As of 2020-21, just under 120,000 students were enrolled in these programs – an increase of 28% since 2017-18.)

To ensure changing student needs are met, Ontario's universities continue to serve a diverse cohort of students by innovating and transforming programming, services and resources.

While Ontario's universities continue to adapt, innovate and evolve to help address a diverse range of student needs, they are also finding ways to drive efficiencies, streamline and reduce red tape, diverting more resources to students through cost-savings.

To keep pace with a changing landscape, Ontario's universities will continue to work to transform and remain nimble, as they continue to serve the needs of students and communities.

Committed to Financial Health and Transparency

Ontario's universities are committed to strong fiscal management, good governance, transparency and accountability to students and the communities they serve.

For this reason, universities have identified Leading Practices in University Board Governance, which emphasize the accountability of university boards for the financial sustainability and effectiveness of their institutions. These leading practices affirm that all universities' voluntary boards support and adhere to strong governance practices, take seriously their fiduciary responsibilities, and are committed to continuous improvement in governance practices.



Ontario's universities: Finding efficiencies and cost-savings

- Nurse Practitioner education in Ontario is primarily delivered by an efficient and cost-effective consortium of nine universities.
- Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace works with universities and broader public-sector organizations to leverage savings through central agreements.
- The Canadian Shared Security Operations Centre investigates how shared services can help mitigate cybersecurity threats.
- COU's Task Force on University Space Transformation has commissioned a space standards review and environmental scan that will help build universities of and for the future by examining current space standards and identifying efficiencies.
- The Ontario Universities' Application Centre removes the need for each institution to process its own applications, eliminates duplication of work, and saves students time and money.
- The University Pension Plan (UPP), protects the security and sustainability of pensions in the sector through a Jointly Sponsored Pension Plan model. The UPP currently manages \$11.8B in pension assets across 16 participating organizations.
- Universities are implementing technology-enabled solutions, such as enterprise resource planning software, for savings and efficiency.



COU's Financial Health and Transparency Framework outlines the following actions:

- Report annually on five core financial metrics (net income/loss ratio; primary reserve ratio; interest burden ratio; viability ratio and net operating revenues ratio). These ratios reflect cash levels/liquidity, revenue and expense management, financial strength and flexibility, and debt management and affordability. In addition to the five core indicators, universities that carry external debt commit to third-party credit rating reviews.
- Set appropriate minimum thresholds for the five financial health indicators and confirm the key indicators that would drive financial health actions.
- Take appropriate action, in response to performance against the minimum thresholds and external credit ratings, to proactively mitigate emerging financial risks.
- Continue providing sector leadership in transparency by ensuring financial metrics, and other financial information, including operating budgets and credit rating reviews, are publicly available on websites.

In addition, universities have proactively developed a Financial Health and Transparency Framework to provide ongoing monitoring of their financial position and to ensure action plans are developed and implemented as required.

Since the sector published the framework last year, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities shared its University Financial Accountability Framework, which builds on the sector's proposal. Ontario's universities are committed to working with the Ministry in the development and implementation of its framework.

Furthermore, as part of their commitment to accountability, universities remain accountable through their Strategic Mandate Agreements and performance-based funding, and will continue to collaborate with the province on how best to achieve enhanced outcomes.




Mounting Financial Pressures

However, Ontario's universities continue to face significant financial pressures and require more resources to remain vital partners to Ontario's prosperity. A number of factors have contributed to these mounting pressures, making the sustainability of universities increasingly untenable. These factors include:

- Universities receiving the lowest per-student government funding in Canada with Ontario receiving \$8,647, while the Canadian average was \$12,215 in 2020-21.
- Provincial operating funding per student declining in real terms by 31% since 2006-07 and currently representing about 30% of total university operating revenue.
- More than 21,000 domestic students (with a value of \$176.5 million) being unfunded by the province due to the corridor cap.
- The tuition cut in 2019 and ongoing freeze costing the sector \$1.9 billion in foregone revenue to-date and an estimated additional \$997 million in 2023-24.
- Delays in international student visa approvals having an immediate financial impact of more than \$100 million in 2022-23.

These financial pressures are eroding the sector's ability to deliver on universities' mission to support students, communities and the province. Universities can no longer continue to absorb cuts and freezes amidst rising inflation and costs. The status quo cannot continue.

Aiko is a second year Biology student from Timmins, Ontario. If, for example, tuition fees increased by 5%, Aiko would pay an additional \$397 dollars in tuition fees – that is less than she would have paid in 2018.

In fact, recent provincial budgets across Canada have significantly increased operating funding for universities. In addition, all other Canadian provinces allow for tuition increases.

It is why Ontario's universities are calling for a long-term financial framework that includes government investment and the

flexibility to increase their revenue sources. Through this financial framework, universities can continue their critical mission to support students; develop a highly skilled and adaptable workforce; strengthen industries, businesses and communities; drive ground-breaking innovation and help restore Ontario's competitive economy.

Recommendations

To continue to sustain current capacity and support students, enrolment growth and research and innovation, Ontario's universities recommend the government:

1. Increased Operating Funding: A one-time increase to base funding to reduce the decline in real per-student grants; ongoing annual percentage-based increases in base funding to reflect the higher costs of meeting student needs; and full funding for enrolment expansion to develop the talent Ontario's economy needs.

2. Provide Multi-Year Tuition Flexibility: Multi-year tuition flexibility, including corresponding increases to Tuition Set-Aside and Student Access Guarantee to help support low- and middle-income students, that provides predictable and necessary revenues to ensure universities can deliver on their mandates to develop highly skilled talent, foster research and innovation, and support local economic development.

Conclusion



As higher education continues to be immersed in change, with institutions navigating increasing competition, diversifying student populations and increasing financial pressures, Ontario's universities continue to prepare for the future and transform.

By adapting, innovating and enhancing the approaches, processes and structures that have long defined our institutions, universities are not just educating, but meaningfully impacting as many students and communities as possible.

Amidst this change, Ontario's universities continue to work to ensure access to a university education for all willing and qualified students – one that helps

them grow, thrive, and adapt – not only throughout their post-secondary education, but also throughout the course of their post-graduation lives.

To ensure high-quality, relevant and accessible university education in Ontario, it is critical to keep the values of students, society and the market in mind, as universities transform in real-time and work in partnership to shape the policies and practices of postsecondary education.

The success of our students and graduates, as well as Ontario's economic prosperity, requires strong partnership between government and universities. Through dynamic future-focused planning and a resolute focus on the changing needs of students, we can work together to solve today's challenges and build a brighter tomorrow for Ontario.



Further Reading



Partnering to Increase Access to Student Housing:

<https://ontariosuniversities.ca/reports/partnering-to-increase-access-to-student-housing>

Supporting International Student Success:

<https://ontariosuniversities.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Supporting-Ontarios-International-Students-OU.pdf>

Powering Ontario's Electric Vehicle Ecosystem:

<https://ontariosuniversities.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Powering-Ontarios-EV-Ecosystem-March-2023.pdf>

Empowering Ontario's Life Sciences Ecosystem:

<https://ontariosuniversities.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Partnering-to-Support-a-Robust-Life-Sciences-Sector-April-2023.pdf>

The Vital Role of Engineers:

<https://ontariosuniversities.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-Vital-Role-of-Engineers-March-2023.pdf>





For more information, please contact:
Council of Ontario Universities
180 Dundas Street West, Suite 1800
Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8
contact@ontariosuniversities.ca

Connect with us:
www.ontariosuniversities.ca
www.cou.ca

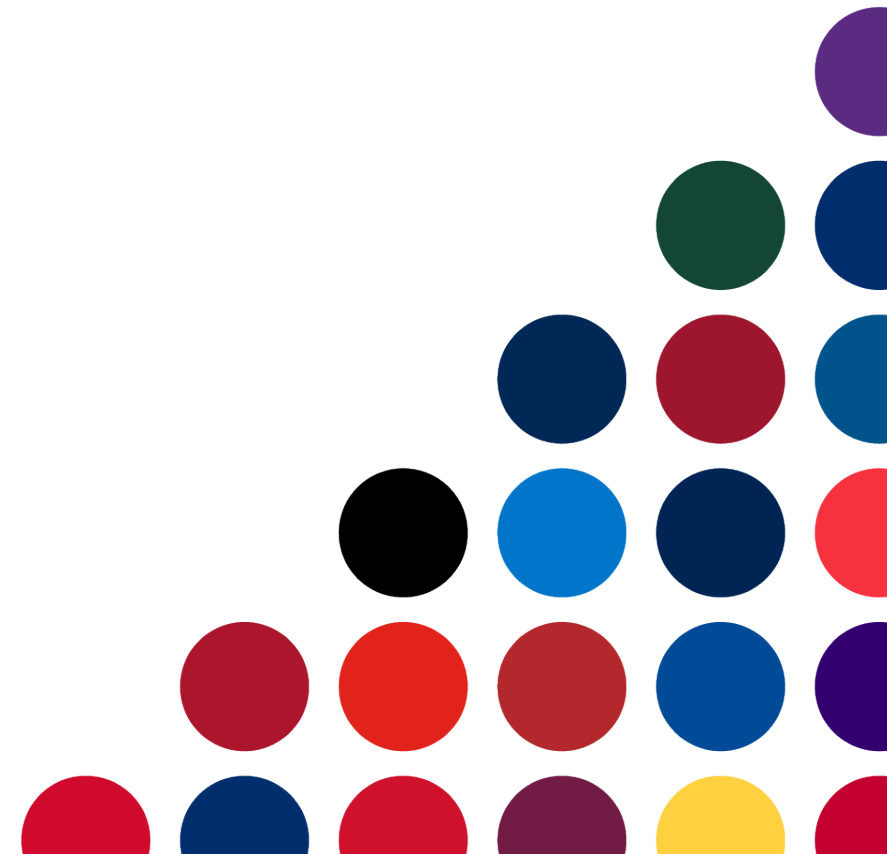




COU Overview

Academic Colleagues

August 16, 2023





Purpose of COU

From the COU Constitution:

“to promote cooperation among the provincially assisted universities of Ontario, and between them and the Government of the Province, and, generally, to work for the improvement of higher education for the people of Ontario.”

See: <https://cou.ca/about/policies-constitution/>



Members

- 20 members (<https://cou.ca/about/universities/>)
- 1 Associate Member (Royal Military College)
- 3 Provisional Members (Université de Hearst, NOSM University, Université de l'Ontario français)
- Members represented by:
 - The Executive Head (President or Principal) of each member institution
 - One faculty colleague from each member selected by the Senate or equivalent from among the academic staff members of the Senate (Academic Colleagues)
 - Together, Executive Heads and Academic Colleagues form Council and are the Members of COU Holding Association Inc.



Academic Colleagues Terms of Reference

- Developed in 2002, revised in 2011.
- As members of the Academic Colleagues group and COU committees, Colleagues seek to stimulate thoughtful and insightful discussion and action within Council and the wider university community.
- To serve as members of COU standing committees, task forces and working groups.
- To provide regular updates and reports on the activities of Council to their respective academic Senates or equivalent bodies.
- To anticipate, examine and analyze significant issues with a view toward specific contributions to Council objectives.



COU Structure and Governance Review

- Council: Policy and governance discussions/decisions
- COU Holding Association Inc.: Business affairs
- Seeking to replicate current structure in a manner that complies with the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act
- Timelines:
 - Substantive update and consultation with Academic Colleagues in December 2023
 - Approval of new structure targeted for April 2024 Council Meeting, with new structure taking effect immediately



What is a COU affiliate?

- Individuals at each COU member institution who are united by common interests and responsibilities, who work on behalf of Ontario universities. Much of COU's ongoing work is done through the affiliates.
- The affiliate structure provides “communities of interests” and peer support for these individuals, networking and opportunities to share best practices.
- Some lead initiatives on behalf of the sector – VPs Academic (OCAV), VPs Research (OCUR), VPs Finance and Admin (CSAO), CUPA (institutional planners) – at the direction of Executive Heads.
- Some have operational responsibility within COU on behalf of member institutions, e.g., the Council of Finance Officers produces the annual financial reports in comparable form for each institution – “COFO reports”.



COU Affiliates

The following affiliates are supported by the COU Secretariat:

- Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV)
- Council of Senior Administrative Officers (CSAO)
- Ontario Council on University Research (OCUR)
- Council on University Planning and Analysis (CUPA)
- Council of Chairs of Ontario Universities (CCOU)
- Council of Ontario University Secretaries (COUS)
- Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM)
- Ontario Universities Strategic Communications Council (OUSCC)
- Government Relations Officers (GRO)



Task forces, working groups, reference groups, etc.

Taskforces, working groups, reference groups, etc., are formed for a specific period to undertake a specific task. They usually are staffed with Council members and senior university staff who are subject matter experts, with the COU Secretariat providing policy, research and administrative support. Some examples:

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Questions?

Contact:

Kathryn White

Corporate Secretary and Senior
Policy Advisor

kwhite@cou.ca

416-979-2165 x206

Canadian Provincial Study Permit Trends – International Student Approvals in Ontario Reach Unprecedented High in 2022

May 5, 2023



Canada's most popular destination province for over 22 years continues to be the hub of international education in the Great White North. Ontario's market share of student visa approvals in Canada continued to increase, welcoming over 226,000 international students in 2022—representing 54% of all approvals in the country.¹

Ontario continues to be the top destination for international students in Canada by a wide margin.² But, what exactly draws students from around the world to this province? Which study levels are the most sought-after in Ontario, and where are international students coming from?

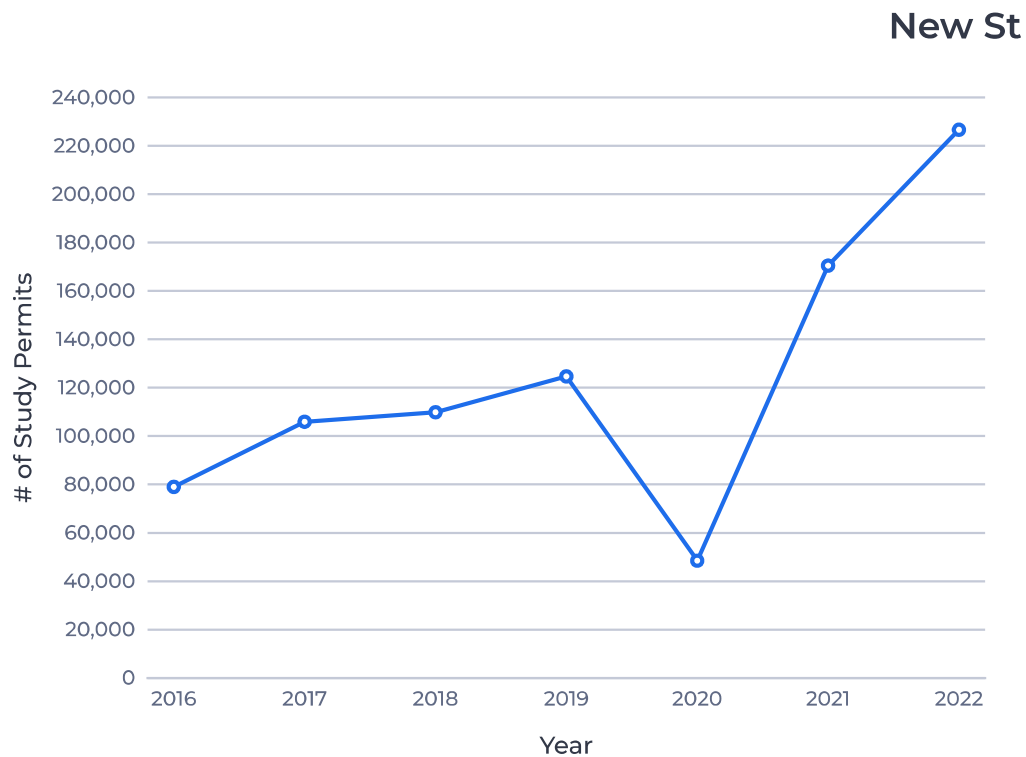
Let's dive right in!

Key Insights at a Glance

- Last year, over 226,000 international students were approved to study in Ontario.
- College was Ontario's fastest-growing study level in 2022, with over 143,000 approvals.
- Iranian and Hong Kong students had faster growth in approvals in Ontario compared to the national average.

Approvals in Ontario Hit a Record High in 2022

Despite [rising tuition and living costs](#) in Canada's most populated province, Ontario continues to attract international students like no other. Let's take a look at how study permit approvals grew in Ontario over the past few years.



The number of international students approved to study in Ontario has increased significantly since 2019. In 2022, the province saw a surge in applications to study, reaching over 400,000 study permit applications. Out of these applications, over 226,000 were approved. This represents a growth of 33% compared to the previous year, and an impressive growth of 82% over 2019.

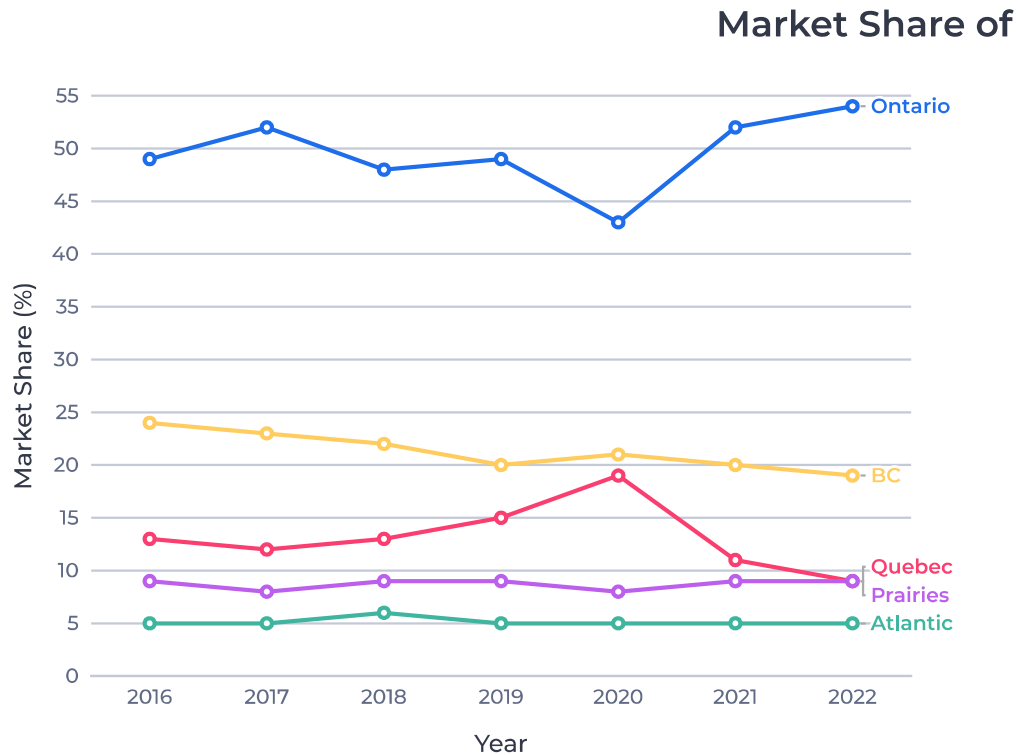
However, the surge in applications may have contributed to a decline in approval rates, which dropped to 57% in 2022. This represented a five percentage point decrease from the 62% approval rate in both 2019 and 2021.

Despite the approval rate decline, the overall increase in student visa applications to Ontario is not surprising, given the province's high-quality education system, a diverse range of academic institutions, and [excellent job prospects](#). Ontario is also home to several vibrant cities, including

Toronto, Ottawa, and Waterloo, which offer a welcoming and supportive environment for international students.

Ontario Increases Market Share in Canada

Ontario's surge in approvals was well above the national average growth of 27% and has helped the province maintain its position as the most popular Canadian destination for international students. Let's take a closer look at how Ontario approvals compared to the Canadian provinces:



Ontario continued to dominate Canada's international education sector with a 54% share of all student visa approvals in 2022, up from 52% in 2021. And both years were significant increases from before the pandemic when Ontario's market share fell below 50% in three of four years.

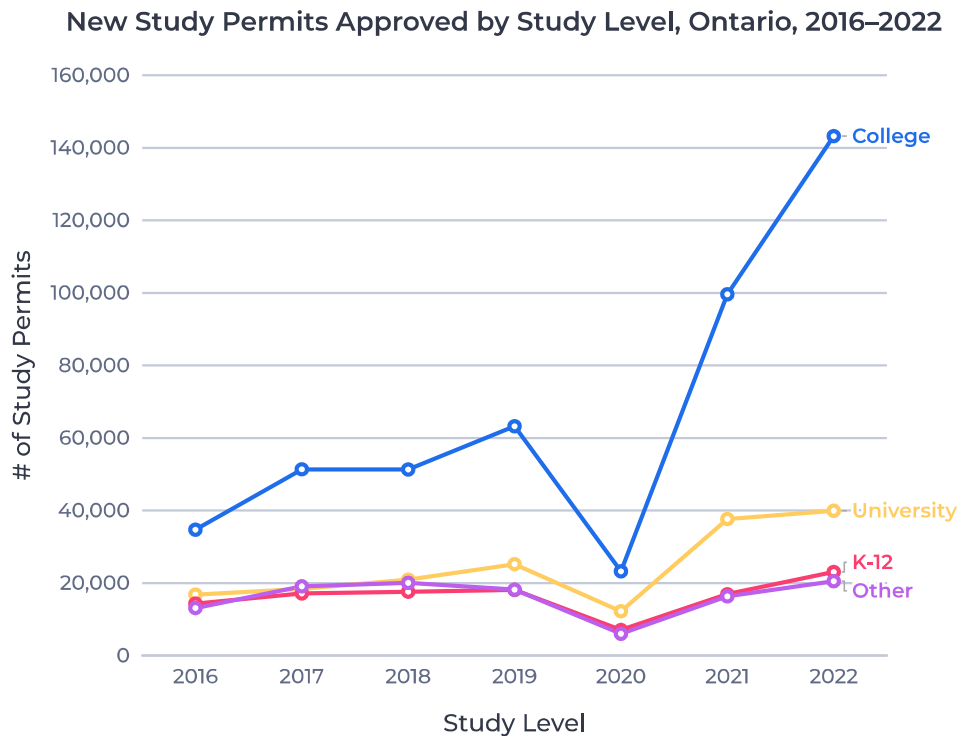
Ontario's market share gains can largely be attributed to its massive overall growth. Ontario had a 33% increase in study permit approvals in 2022 over the previous year, surpassing the growth rates of both Quebec (+5%) and British Columbia (+19%). The latter two provinces both saw their market share decline by two percentage points over this period.

Meanwhile, the Prairies and Atlantic regions both experienced over 30% growth in study permit approvals in 2022, with their market shares keeping up with Ontario at 9% and 5% respectively.

Overall, Ontario's growth in 2022 not only outpaced the national average but also helped cement the province's position as the dominant destination for international students in Canada, with a market share that continues to rise.

College Programs in Ontario are Driving International Student Approvals in Canada

With the demand for international education growing in Ontario, it's important to understand which study levels are the most highly pursued. The graph below shows how study level popularity has shifted in Ontario over the past seven years:



Source: IRCC

College-level education was the fastest-growing study level in Ontario last year, with over 143,000 approvals. This was an increase of nearly 44,000 approvals over 2021, representing a 44% growth rate. Last year, College approvals represented 63% of all approvals in the province, up from 58% in 2021.

For comparison, nearly 40,000 international students were approved to study at the university level in 2022, a much slower growth rate of just 6% over the previous year. Notably, approvals for doctoral and undergraduate programs at universities in Ontario declined, while there was only marginal growth in approvals for master's programs. As a result, university approvals accounted for only 18% of all approvals in Ontario in 2022, down from 22%. This trend means that international students may be shifting their focus away from traditional university programs and exploring more cost-effective offerings.

Universities looking to grow their international student body could focus their recruitment efforts on Iran or Bangladesh, as a respective 66% and 60% of their Ontario students pursued this study level last year.

Primary and secondary study permit approvals accounted for 10% of all approvals in Ontario in 2022. Overall, K-12 approvals experienced a 36% increase compared to the previous year. This was eight percentage points lower than the national average. Primary schools, in particular, grew by an impressive 70% over this period, reaching 11,800 approvals, while secondary schools only saw a 12% growth. This is in line with the [growing interest in primary and secondary education](#) among international students and their families that we're seeing across Canada.

Ontario's International Student Population Expands with New Top Source Markets in 2022

So, which source markets are driving the growth in study permit approvals in Ontario? The table below shows how Ontario's top 10 student populations grew in 2022 compared to the previous year:

New Study Permit Approvals, Ontario, 2021–2022				
Rank	Country of Citizenship	2021 Approvals	2022 Approvals	% Change
1	India	98,263	138,498	+41%
2	Philippines	6,921	12,288	+78%
3	China	16,413	12,118	-26%
4	Nigeria	3,308	6,506	+97%
5	Nepal	1,730	5,003	+189%
6	Hong Kong (SAR China)	2,243	3,766	+68%
7	Colombia	2,688	3,720	+38%
8	Iran	2,385	3,390	+42%
9	Brazil	2,767	2,774	+0%
10	Vietnam	1,655	2,438	+47%



Source: IRCC

In 2022, study permit approvals for Indian, Filipino, Nigerian, and Colombian students in Ontario continued to rise, which was in line with the national trend. Additionally, **Iranian and Hong Kong students had faster growth in approvals in Ontario compared to the national average.** Overall, Ontario has a 42% growth rate in study permit approvals for Iranian students, compared to the national average of 34%. Similarly, Hong Kong had a growth rate of 68% in Ontario, almost double the national average of 35%.

Although many of the top ten source markets for Ontario remained unchanged from 2021, two new countries joined the leaderboard: Nepal and Vietnam. Nepal saw a significant surge in approvals, from 1,700 in 2021 to over 5,000 in 2022. Vietnam climbed to the tenth position with a 47% growth rate in study permit approvals, totaling nearly 2,500 approvals. Despite this positive trend, Vietnam's approval rates in 2022 remained below 2019 levels.

It is worth noting that South Korea and Turkey dropped out of the top 10 list, with Turkey experiencing a decline of 32% in study permit approvals in 2022. This made Turkey one of the few major source markets with a decrease in approvals. This drop in approvals could be attributed to factors such as political unrest, economic challenges, or pandemic-related travel restrictions. Overall, the changes in the top 10 source markets for Ontario highlight the evolving preferences and trends of international students and the need for educational institutions to adapt their strategies to meet those changing demands.

Looking Forward

The surge in international student enrollments in Ontario is expected to continue. And since career-oriented opportunities are a [top student concern](#), don't be surprised to see college-level education remain the fastest-growing study level.

As international student approvals continue to rise, Ontario should also witness the emergence of new student markets. The decline in approval rates in 2022 could be an area of concern for the province, and institutions may need to work on streamlining the application process to improve the student experience.

Some ways that Ontario can remain Canada's market leader include the following:

- Providing competitive tuition fees to allow international students to access more affordable programs by leveraging existing [scholarship and bursary programs](#), particularly [in popular colleges and universities](#) in Ontario.
- Offering more seats in programs to support the growing demand amongst international students in Ontario, particularly in more densely populated areas like Ottawa, Toronto, and Waterloo.
- Staying up-to-date on [labour market and job vacancy trends](#) across Canada to help students settle and find post-graduate work opportunities in their study cities.
- Assigning additional resources and programs to support students from emerging student markets like Iran and Hong Kong.

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FOOTNOTES:

1. The terms *student visa* and *study permit* are generally used interchangeably for Canadian international students. Rather than student visas, Canada provides accepted international students with study permits, which allow those students to enroll in classes at Canadian institutions. When a student is accepted for a study permit, they are also usually provided with a visitor visa, which allows that student to enter Canada for their studies. For the purposes of this article, we'll use the terms interchangeably.

2. All data courtesy of [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada \(IRCC\)](#).

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