

# **SHARING THE BURDEN**

**A Student Submission to the Shared  
Service Budgeting Process**

# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

### CONTINUED SUPPORTING A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

*Recommendation 1: The QUIC should receive increased funding to expand its current services with the objective of providing support to an emergent international student population.*

*Recommendation 2: The University should work with the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre to secure stable funding to support its core operations.*

*Recommendation 3: In the event that the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre secures stable ongoing funding for its core operations, funding received from the provincial grant should be reallocated to expand the hours of operation for the Elder-in-Residence program.*

*Recommendation 4: Student feedback should play a central role in the upcoming review of Health, Counselling, and Disability Services.*

*Recommendation 5: The University should provide funding for the expansion of the embedded counsellor program, to be matched by donors or revenue-generating units.*

*Recommendation 6: The University should continue to pursue alternative locations of Health, Counselling, and Disability Services.*

### EFFICIENT ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

*Recommendation 7: The University should commit funding towards conservation and demand management projects identified in the course of the ESCO project.*

*Recommendation 8: The University should reallocate spending for merit-based scholarships towards needs-based financial assistance. Any future increases in funding for this assistance should be indexed to inflation.*

*Recommendation 9: The Student Experience Office should work in conjunction with student leadership to identify components of the Office's portfolio that could be effectively administered by students.*

## **SUPPORTING ACTIVE LEARNING**

*Recommendation 10: Career Services should receive funding to support the expansion of internship programs.*

*Recommendation 11: Following the changes to the student meal plan resulting from the Canada Revenue Agency in 2014, Hospitality and Ancillary Services should investigate the possibility of including student-run services on the Queen's meal plan.*

*Recommendation 12: The University should continue to investigate potential avenues for repurposing the Physical Education Centre.*

# INTRODUCTION

The Academic Plan recognizes the critical importance of student support services in a university environment, acknowledging that Queen's, "must continue to provide the many forms of support, formal or otherwise, that students need outside the classroom." (Academic Plan, p.63) In order to be successful in fulfilling the fundamental tenants of its educational mission, Queen's must first ensure a priority is placed on the wellbeing of its student body.

It is the position of the AMS that, in a climate of fiscal uncertainty and a growing student population, the university must reinforce its commitment to student support. Particularly in recognition of the rising financial contribution students are making towards the cost of their education, the AMS believes that Queen's has an obligation to provide easy access to quality support services.

Queen's is part of an Ontario-wide trend that sees students becoming larger financiers of their education than ever before. In just over 2 decades, the percentage of total operating income stemming from provincial

grants has declined from 80% to around 50%, and student contributions since 1988 have risen from 19% to nearly 50%.

This trend is accompanied by a declining percentage of university operating budgets flowing directly back to students in the form of improved quality of education. In recent years, the Operating Budget has been increasingly instrumental in financing capital projects, compensation increases for existing faculty, and the indirect costs of research activity, diverting funding away from the student experience.

It is the position of the AMS that a significant percentage of the Operating Budget should be directed towards the improvement of student life and learning. Particularly as enrolment increases, students must be provided with the quality in- and out-of classroom experience that is at the heart of the university's reputation. To ensure this, there is a requirement for a continued and substantial commitment from the Operating Budget to provide funding for expanded support services. As we welcome in a growing number of students, this necessity can only intensify.

# SUPPORTING A DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

The AMS supports the University's commitment to increasing the diversity of its student body. That said, ensuring the success of an evolving population will require a similar commitment the expansion of support services directed towards emerging demographics. The relative growth of international students, aboriginal students, and students with disabilities as a proportion of the Queen's community will necessitate a commensurate increase in specific supports for each of these groups. In the coming years, services tailored to these demographics be required to support capacity growth beyond the requirements stemming from general enrolment increase.

## THE DUAL OBJECTIVES OF ENROLMENT INCREASE AND INTERNATIONALIZATION WILL PLACE PRESSURE ON THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CENTRE (QUIC) IN THE COMING YEARS

Internationalization is a key focus of Queen's Strategic Framework, with a particular emphasis being placed upon recruitment of international students. At present time, the Queen's University International Centre provides a variety of resources and services that assist international students as they adjust to living and learning in a new country.

As Queen's increases its active recruitment abroad, it is imperative that incoming international students are able to benefit from the resources, services, and community of support available at the QUIC. The AMS believes that a strong commitment to student support is a necessary component of a well-rounded internationalization strategy.

***Recommendation 1: The QUIC should receive increased funding to expand its current services with the objective of providing support to an emergent international student population.***

## THE FOUR DIRECTIONS ABORIGINAL STUDENT CENTRE IS CURRENTLY RELIANT ON UNPREDICTABLE REVENUE STREAMS TO CARRY OUT ITS CORE PROGRAMMING

The Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre provides tailored support for Indigenous students while operating as a resource for the broader Queen's community.

At present time, Four Directions receives half its funding from a provincial grant that is renewed on a 3-year cycle. This poses a threat to the service's ability to fulfill its core function: the grant could be eliminated or reallocated with little notice, compromising programming and advisory support.

Particularly in light of the growing demand for this service as the university seeks to increase the number of aboriginal learners enrolled at Queen's, the Centre's unreliable revenue model will be inhibiting to long-term planning or capacity expansion.

***Recommendation 2: The University should work with the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre to secure stable funding to support its core operations.***

The Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre plays a central role in creating a community of support for Indigenous students at Queen's. Recognizing this, the AMS believes it is imperative that the service has the financial security to plan for future growth in its core programming.

***Recommendation 3: In the event that the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre secures stable ongoing funding for its core operations, funding received from the provincial grant should be reallocated to expand the hours of operation for the Elder-in-Residence program.***

The Elder-in-Residence program provides outreach, visibility, and in-depth one-on-one counselling to the Four Directions community. This position increases the capacity of the Centre to perform advisory work, and also raises awareness around the resources and services Four Directions offers.

Particularly given that advisory work represents an area of particular need for students accessing the Centre, the expansion of the Elder-in-Residence program would constitute an important step in expanding support for current and incoming aboriginal learners at Queen's.

A GROWING PERCENTAGE OF QUEEN'S STUDENTS REQUIRE AN ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION, AND THE COMPLEXITY OF THESE ACCOMMODATIONS CONTINUES TO INCREASE

There has been a substantial increase over the last decade of both the percentage of university students accessing services through HCDS, and the average amount of support each student requires. This trend has had an ongoing impact on the capacity of disability and counselling services in recent years. Given the crucial importance of HCDS in supporting student well-being and success, the service must be appropriately equipped to meet a swell in demand.

HEALTH, COUNSELLING, AND DISABILITY SERVICES (HCDS) IS CURRENTLY OPERATING AT, OR OVER, CAPACITY

There is a consistent demand for Health, Counselling, and Disability Services on campus. Counselling services are currently in a period of transition as long-term service provision shifts towards community health

providers and a growing embedded counsellor program. Beyond this, more students are presently seeking accommodations as a percentage of the population, resulting in high caseloads in the Disability Services Office. The same is true of the demand for counselling appointments, with non-emergency wait times remaining high.

While wait times have decreased in Health Services, the space constraints imposed by the service's current location have made it difficult for it to grow in order to meet increased demand. The essential support provided through HCDS is fundamental to student health and wellness, and any increase in enrolment must be mirrored by a comprehensive increase in the capacity of this service.

***Recommendation 4: Student feedback should play a central role in the upcoming review of Health, Counselling, and Disability Services.***

Students are supportive of the decision to undertake a review of the operations of HCDS. The AMS believes that students should constitute a key component of the consultative process, and that future funding for the service should be attributed on the basis of the goals and objectives outlined in the finalized document.

***Recommendation 5: The University should provide funding for the expansion of the embedded counsellor program, to be matched by donors or revenue-generating units.***

An expansion of the embedded counsellor program would fulfill the dual objectives of decreasing the central burden on counselling services and provide more specific and tailored support to students across the university. Recognizing the benefits associated with the expansion of this program, the AMS recommends that the university investigate the possibility of instituting a matching program to encourage private donations or funding from revenue-generating units to expand the program.

***Recommendation 6: The University should continue to pursue alternative locations of Health, Counselling, and Disability Services.***

Students believe there is an urgent need to secure a new location for Health, Counselling, and Disability services. Pursuant to this goal, the university should attribute funding towards the investigation and evaluation of potential spaces for HCDS with the ultimate objective of finding a viable long-term home for the service.

*NOTE: This may include further examination of the Physical Education Centre, as outlined in recommendation 11.*



# EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING

In recognition of the limitations imposed by the financial climate of the university, students believe that the allocation of shared service funding should seek to support the efficient delivery of programs and initiatives.

## THE RISING PRICE OF ENERGY CONSTITUTES A SUBSTANTIAL COST DRIVER FOR THE UNIVERSITY

The rising costs of energy and water are exercising an upward pressure on facilities budgets across the university, with prices for water increasing nearly 10% over last year's figures.

At present time, Queen's is engaged in several energy conservation initiatives to reduce to impact of these price increases. This includes a campus-wide audit undertaken to identify efficiency and conservation projects with the aim of reducing energy use intensity, water use intensity, and overall energy use. The objective of these initiatives is to transition towards a more environmentally-friendly campus while realizing long-term cost savings.

***Recommendation 7: The University should commit funding towards conservation and demand management projects identified in the course of the audit***

In recognition of the positive environmental impact and downstream cost savings associated with these projects, student support the funding of programs such as lighting retrofits, infrastructure renewal, re-commissioning of HVAC systems, and the expansion of real-time utility meeting. The dual benefit of sustainable initiatives and cost containment constitute an effective and efficient use of shared service funding.

## QUEEN'S HAS PLACED AN INCREASED FOCUS ON THE CREATION OF MERIT- BASED SCHOLARSHIPS, REPRESENTING A RISING EXPENDITURE THAT DOES LITTLE TO INCREASE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF A QUEEN'S EDUCATION

Students support investment and expenditure on financial assistance with the objective of reducing access barriers to post- secondary education. However, merit-based financial assistance does little to address the access barriers inhibiting underrepresented groups from attaining a degree. On the contrary, this funding





tends to disproportionately benefit high-income students, and operates primarily as a recruitment tool for universities.

As the traditional university-aged demographic in Ontario begins to shrink, universities across the system have placed a renewed focus on merit-based financial assistance. Merit-based scholarships constitute a significant driver of cost inflation, comprising nearly 10 per cent of new spending at universities across Ontario in an effort to attract new students.

Considering the tremendous impact this investment has had on university operating budgets, students are concerned that it is not allocated in a way that effectively increases access to post-secondary

Last year, 66% of first year students in the province received merit based entrance scholarships, with the average value of such awards being \$1,822. Conversely, only 15% of students received needs based scholarships, with an average value of \$1,250. Given that some 33,000 students (over 12% of all OSAP recipients) report having some form of unmet need, it is clear that merit-based student assistance is an ineffective means of improving access across the system. Moreover, these scholarships were inhibited in their function as a recruitment as a result of their pervasiveness in Ontario.

***Recommendation 8: The University should reallocate spending for merit-based scholarships towards needs-based financial assistance. Any future increases in funding for this assistance should be indexed to inflation.***

education for underrepresented groups. Given the ineffective use of this funding, students recommend it be rolled into needs-based assistance, with future increases in funding indexed to inflation.

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE  
OFFICE OFFERS SOME  
PROGRAMMING THAT  
COULD BE PROVIDED  
MORE EFFICIENTLY AND  
EFFECTIVELY THROUGH  
STUDENT CHANNELS

The AMS believes that students are uniquely capable of providing service and support to their peers, informed by an intrinsic understanding of the diversity of issues and pressures that persist across the student body. While students recognize the necessity of administering a range of professional services through traditional university channels, there are a number of services that are better equipped to fulfil their mandate in a peer-to-peer environment.

***Recommendation 9: The Student Experience Office should work in conjunction with student leadership to identify components of the Office's portfolio that could be effectively administered by students.***

The AMS believes that, in cases where professional expertise is not a key component of service provision, students are ideally positioned to assume responsibility for services designed to

support their peers. Activities such as residence orientation and Queen's Reads could be undertaken efficiently and effectively with student oversight. This would ensure the design of the program is

tailored by students for students, and would also allow service provision to continue without necessitating an increase in the capacity of the Student Experience Office.

## SUPPORTING ACTIVE LEARNING

In recognition of the critical impact many shared services have on the educational environment, students believe a portion of shared service funding should facilitate the advancement of active learning. Whether it be through the attribution of infrastructure, resources, or support, the shared services can play a role in cementing active learning as a core element of Queen's educational experience.

***Recommendation 10: Career Services should receive funding to support the expansion of internship programs***

Students support Queen's commitment to expand the availability of internship opportunities on campus. Recognizing the positive contribution of work-integrated learning on the overall learning experience, students recommend that funding be provided to Career Services to assist in the expansion of the infrastructure required to effectively administer a growing program.

***Recommendation 11: Following the changes to the student meal plan***

***resulting from the Canada Revenue Agency in 2014, Hospitality and Ancillary Services should investigate the possibility of including student-run services on the Queen's meal plan.***

With the inclusion of taxed products on the student meal plan this year, Queen's has been provided with the opportunity to greatly expand the range of services payable through Flex Dollars. Given the important role student-run services play as avenues for active learning, students recommend that the University consider extending Flex Dollars to include student-run services across campus. This would constitute a strong show of support for the mandate of student-run services, and would greatly enhance their ability to provide service and opportunity to the Queen's community.

QUEEN'S CURRENT COMPLEMENT OF STUDENT LIFE SPACE IS LACKING IN QUANTITY AND QUALITY

The Broader Learning Environment requires sufficient dedicated space in order

to thrive. Student life space operates as the platform for the many activities and groups that comprise the broader learning environment. Services, student governments, clubs, and other student-run initiatives all require physical infrastructure to support them in carrying out their mandates, utilizing everything from office and meeting rooms to storage space and service stations. All told, student life space is the physical manifestation of the broader learning environment.

The Queen's Centre Project was originally envisioned in the context of the impending influx of new students precipitated by the double cohort entering the post-secondary system in 2003. Over the course of the ensuing decade, Queen's expanded enrolment by almost 2000 students in excess of this initial increase, and two phases of the Queen's Centre were not completed.

Combined, these factors have resulted in a considerable pressure on the quantity of student life space available today. Particularly given the impending increase in admissions, students are concerned that the current complement of space places restrictions on the prosperity of the broader learning environment.

***Recommendation 12: The University should continue to investigate potential avenues for repurposing the Physical***

### ***Education Centre.***

The AMS believes the Physical Education Centre should be prioritized as a focus for deferred maintenance, renovations, and usage studies. While the re-opening of the PEC constituted an important first step in addressing the deficit of student life space on campus, a great deal of planning must be undertaken to transform the current infrastructure into a utile and multi-functional student space. The AMS supports the university in investigating potential programming for the space, including the creation of another hub for student life, or the implementation of a health and wellness centre.