



UTM STUDENTS' UNION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

EDUCATION FOR ALL

UTMSU LOBBY WEEK



2023/2024

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introduction

Education is a right, not a privilege.

Recognizing that education is a fundamental right rather than a privilege, the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU) has launched an updated lobby document as part of the Education For All Campaign. This advocacy initiative is dedicated to making education free and accessible for all students, domestic or international.

The primary focus of the Education For All Campaign is directed towards influencing the University of Toronto Mississauga administration and political leaders to make education accessible for every student, irrespective of their background or financial circumstances. The overarching goal is to eliminate barriers hindering students' access to education, transforming it from a potential financial burden into a universal opportunity for all students to strive towards a better future.

To substantiate and strengthen the campaign's recommends, the UTMSU conducted a comprehensive Education For All Survey in 2022. The survey, completed by over 1,570 students across the Mississauga Campus, represents a diverse student body with 80.5% being full-time students, 13.7% part-time students, and 5.8% belonging to professional faculty. The survey further revealed a demographic breakdown, with 63.2% of respondents being domestic students, 32.7% international students, and 4.1% from out-of-province.

Throughout this lobby document, insights from the survey as well as student and faculty input will be utilized as compelling evidence to support the five outlined recommendations:

summary of recommendations

- 1** Immediate Reduction and Gradual Elimination of Tuition Fees for All
- 2** Conversion of Student Loans into Student Grants
- 3** Creation of Alternatives to Mainstream Education
- 4** Provision of Online Options for Undergraduate Classes
- 5** More Non-Academic Scholarships for All and Increased Awards for Black and Indigenous Students

The Education For All Survey conducted by UTMSU in 2022 provides valuable insights into the perspectives of the student body. The survey data serves as concrete evidence supporting the need for change and informs the specific recommends outlined in the lobby document.

The data collected not only reflects the current state of student perspectives but serves as a critical foundation for advocating policies that address the diverse needs of the University of Toronto Mississauga student population.

The lobby document underscores a notable incongruence between the university's efforts to attract both domestic and international students and the resources and support provided to meet the needs of these students. Thus, the UTMSU calls for a recalibration of university plans to align with the genuine needs of students, thereby fostering an inclusive and equitable educational environment.

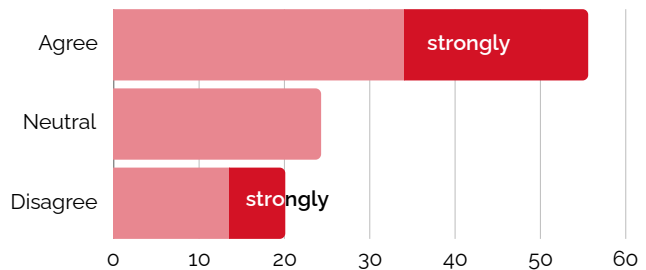




necessity

The Education for All Campaign is necessary due to several pressing reasons:

55.6% of respondents agreed in the positive that tuition fees negatively impact their mental/personal well being (34.1% selected “agree” while 21.5% selected “strongly agree”).
Education for All Survey, 2022



01

EDUCATION IS A RIGHT, NOT A PRIVILEGE

The campaign is grounded in the principle that education is a fundamental right for all individuals, rather than a privilege afforded to a select few. By advocating for equal access to education, the UTMSU aims to challenge systemic barriers that might hinder certain students based on their background or financial situation.

Likewise, by advocating for better access to education, the UTMSU aims to address challenges to student wellbeing as well, as education is an important determinant of health and the inaccessibility of higher education can lead to increased stress and a decline in mental health.

02

POST-PANDEMIC CHALLENGES

The campaign acknowledges the unique challenges presented by the post-pandemic educational landscape. The disruptions caused by the pandemic have highlighted the need for adaptable and innovative strategies to ensure that students receive the highest quality of education despite unforeseen circumstances.

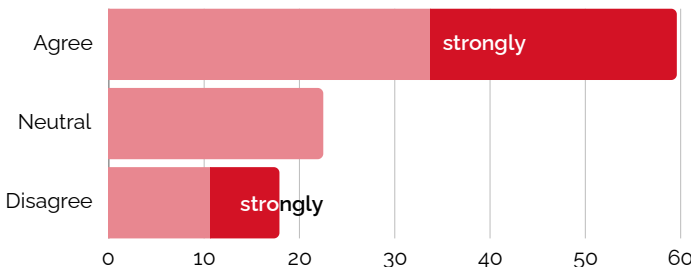
03

FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY

One of the central goals of the campaign is to remove financial barriers to education. Education should not be a burden that restricts opportunities for students but rather an avenue for personal and professional growth. The UTMSU seeks to address financial challenges by advocating for policies that make education financially accessible for all students.

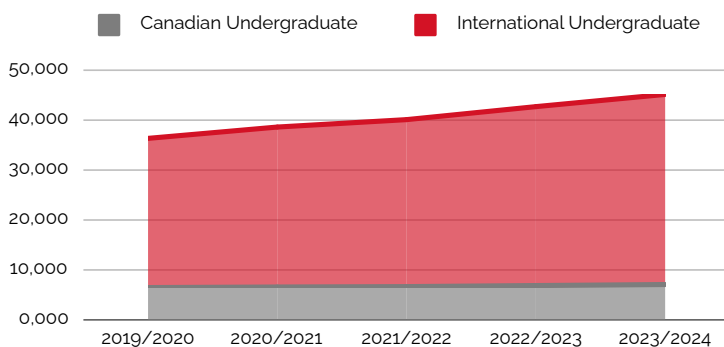
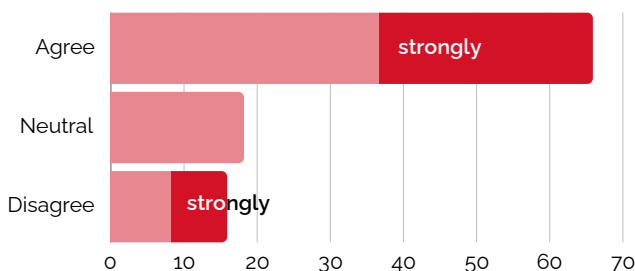
59.6% of respondents agreed in the positive that post-secondary education has negatively impacted their financial mobility (33.7% selected "agree" while 25.9% selected "strongly agree").

Education for All Survey, 2022



65.9% of respondents agreed in the positive that students would benefit from financial aid and scholarships (36.7% selected “agree,” while 29.2% selected “strongly agree”).

Education for All Survey, 2022



Gradual increase in undergraduate domestic and international fees between 2019 and 2024

From Statistics Canada, Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study (current dollars)

This graph showing the relative differences in tuition fees between international students and Canadian students in Canada between 2019/2020 and 2023/2024. The gradual increase in tuition fees, as evidenced by the graph above, demonstrates the need for increased financial aid for students, particularly international students.

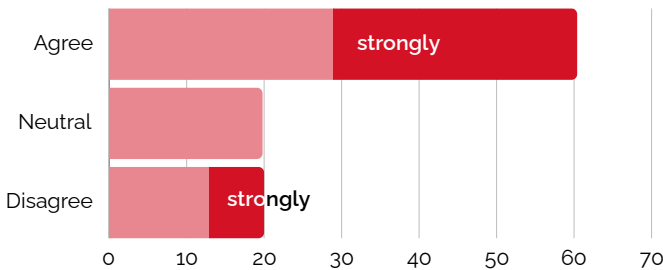
04

DIVERSITY OF STUDENT BODY

The campaign recognizes the diverse nature of the student population, including both domestic and international students, full-time and part-time students, and those from various backgrounds. Ensuring that education is accessible to all necessitates addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by each student.

60.4% of responders agreed in the positive that post-secondary education should be free (31.4% selected “agree” while 29% selected “strongly agree”).

Education for All Survey, 2022



In summary, the Education For All Campaign is necessary to challenge financial barriers and ensure that the university's plans and resources genuinely meet the needs of its diverse student body.

Ultimately education is a right, not a business, a privilege, or a luxury, so university administration and the provincial government must work towards meeting our recommends to create a more accessible and equitable environment for all students at the University of Toronto Mississauga.

STUDENT *testimonials*

The following pages entail student experiences related to education costs and impacts on life.



Navigating the challenges of being an international student at UTM has been a significant undertaking, primarily due to the substantial tuition fees. The decision for me to attend UTM was made by my parents nearly three years before my university enrollment, a testament to the financial considerations associated with international education.

Studying Finance, a passion of mine, motivated this journey. However, the reality of life as an international student has brought its unique set of hurdles. The competitive job market intensifies the pressure to secure stable career prospects post-graduation, requiring me to stand out among numerous qualified candidates.

The financial strain extends beyond tuition, impacting my ability to visit my family in India. With the average flight ticket back home costing around \$3,500, the prospect of connecting with loved ones becomes a substantial financial investment. Student housing and rent considerations also contribute to the overall financial challenge.

The adjustment to life as an international student, detached from family support, has proven emotionally draining. Despite the passion for Finance driving my academic pursuit, the financial and personal implications of being an international student at UTM underscore the complexities inherent in this educational journey.

Karan
UTM Student



Sanya
UTM Student

I am a third-year domestic student and I decided to come to UTM because it was nearby and I wanted to save money. Although tuition fees are significantly less for domestic students than for international students, it is still a hefty price that is accumulated over the four years. Unlike other universities, UTM does not have a CO-OP program which can leave many students feeling uncertain about how much money they are spending for university.

I particularly felt this way when I was applying for PEY positions in my third year. Applying for jobs is a gruesome process and students are given very little guidance compared to other universities with co-op programs. I felt like I was competing with many other students who were able to get internships and opportunities through their pre-existing connections.

One thing I feel that would be helpful for students is to increase the number of paid experiential opportunities available for students at UTM. This would provide them with an opportunity to get real-world experience out of their university degree.



Kavitha
UTM Student

Becoming a university student as a domestic individual required a considerable financial commitment. Fortunately, my parents had diligently saved for this endeavor since my birth, making the prospect of attending university more financially feasible. Despite this foresight, additional funding sources became necessary to cover various expenses beyond tuition.

OSAP, catering to domestic students, provided crucial support, albeit not fully covering additional costs such as rent and groceries. To bridge the gap, I sought employment throughout my four years at university. This involved juggling various roles, including on-campus work-study positions and off-campus customer service roles. However, as a life science student, there were not many opportunities to get paid experience in my field. This meant at times, I had to forgo valuable experience related to my career and seek other opportunities so that I could afford to go to school. Balancing academic pursuits with work responsibilities became a significant challenge, especially as I transitioned from high school to the university learning environment.

Navigating the complexities of university life as a domestic student meant not only adapting to a new style of learning but also mastering the art of time management to harmonize my academic and personal life. This journey has been one of financial prudence, hard work, and personal growth, underscoring the multifaceted nature of the domestic university experience.



Aru
UTM Student

I am a third-year international student and I support the recommendations of the Education for All Campaign. When I chose to study here, I knew I was making a huge financial investment. There is an impression that all international students are inexplicably rich but international students deserve as much attention from the university as domestic students.

UofT students are not provided much information about the different resources available on campus which can leave many students coming to the country for the first time left alone in the dark. When I started my first year, I felt very homesick and found it was very hard to make friends. Overall, my first year at UTM was very hard for me emotionally. To compound this, I also had to manage living on my own as an adult. Food costs are very expensive for a student and are added to the never-ending list of expenses as a student. I was also not guaranteed residence in my first year which meant that I had to look for places off-campus. I had very little guidance regarding the housing market in Mississauga and I found that living off campus is almost equally as expensive as living on campus for students.

As a student, many students are left in a situation where they might have to spend more money on rent to avoid unreliable commutes to and from school.



Will
UTM Student

When I decided to study at UTM, I had gotten very little financial support from the university. I was very reliant on the funds that my parents had saved from my schooling. During my first year, I received a \$3,000 entrance scholarship based on academic merit. This was not sufficient for me because tuition for an international student is around \$60,000 in addition to extra costs for rent. Many scholarships for international students are strictly based on academic merit, which means that only the best of the best students get very large scholarships. This means that other students need to fend for themselves to finance their education.

In addition, during my first year, I felt very anxious regarding POST. I was interested in pursuing CS but I heard many stories about CS POST being very difficult. The uncertainty regarding my first year led to a lot of stress. Reflecting on my first year, I wish I had more access/ knowledge about resources on campus such as academic advisors. They would have helped me understand the different programs and options that they have available for students at UTM. It felt like a letdown to me considering that I am already paying so much for school. It is our responsibility as a learning establishment to ensure that all students, not just a select few, have appropriate access to resources and services. These requirements are essential to developing a postsecondary education system where Education for All students is given top priority.



FACULTY *consultations*

UTMSU executives met with various departments to present the recommendations and ideas mentioned in this document and discuss implementation. We were met with positive reactions in relation to increasing financial aid on a needs-based basis, rather than on merit, as well as increased non-academic scholarships for Black and Indigenous students. Likewise, some members of the departments we consulted were supportive of reducing and eventually eliminating tuition fees as well as converting student loans into grants, though they did raise concerns over the provincial role in reaching these goals.

While some were supportive of creating alternatives to mainstream education, including co-op programs and more internship programs, there were concerns raised over funding and guaranteeing positions for students in the humanities and social sciences. The recommendation to increase online options for undergraduate classes were met with concerns over student engagement with content, increased faculty workload, and decreased in-person attendance.

The UTMSU values the input of the university departments and has taken into consideration the input and feedback provided by a member of the departments we consulted.



RECOMMENDATIONS & *implementation*

Based on research and discussions with students and faculty, the following suggestions would improve access to education for students.

In alignment with the core principles of the Education For All Campaign, and based on research and discussions with students and faculty, the UTMSU presents a series of recommends to the University of Toronto Mississauga that aim to make education free and accessible for all. These recommends encapsulate a vision of an inclusive, equitable, and accessible educational environment, recognizing the diverse needs and challenges faced by the student body.

These recommends reflect UTMSU's unwavering commitment to fostering an environment where education is free and accessible for all:



RECOMMENDATION 1
**IMMEDIATE REDUCTION
AND GRADUAL
ELIMINATION OF
TUITION FEES**

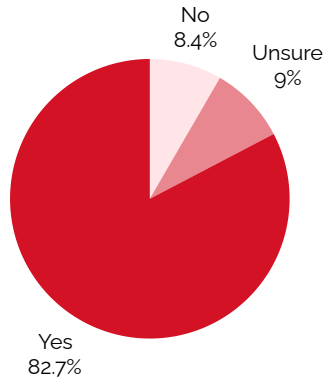
The UTMSU urges swift and substantial reduction of tuition fees for all students, with a commitment to their gradual elimination, in alignment with the Education For All Campaign.

Simultaneously, we strongly oppose any tuition hikes for out-of-province students, advocating for their immediate elimination. These measures aim to alleviate financial burdens, promote fairness, and ensure an inclusive and equitable educational environment for all.

RECOMMENDATION 2
**CONVERSION OF
STUDENT LOANS INTO
STUDENT GRANTS**

To address the financial challenges faced by students, the UTMSU advocates for the conversion of student loans into grants.

This step will contribute to reducing student debt, fostering a more equitable educational landscape, and ensuring that financial barriers do not impede access to education.



55.6% of respondents agreed in the positive that tuition fees negatively impact their mental/personal well being (34.1% selected “agree” while 21.5% selected “strongly agree”) *Education for All Survey, 2022*

RECOMMENDATION 3

CREATION OF ALTERNATIVES TO MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

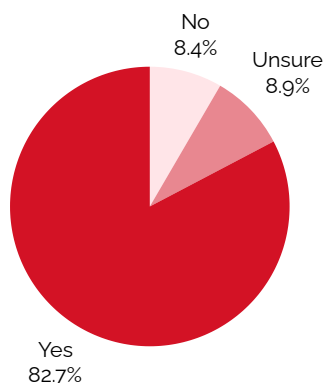
In recognition of diverse learning needs and more impactful financial opportunities, the UTMSU calls for the consistent and continued creation of alternative education pathways that cater to various student preferences and styles.

This includes the implementation of more paid experiential learning opportunities and internship positions. These opportunities will work to enhance students' practical skills and facilitate a smoother transition to the workforce. This initiative aims to provide students with valuable hands-on experience and foster connections between academic learning and real-world application, whilst also alleviating some of the financial burdens students consistently face.

RECOMMENDATION 4
**PROVISION OF
 ONLINE OPTIONS
 FOR UNDERGRADUATE
 CLASSES**

In light of the evolving educational landscape, the UTMSU urges the provision of an online option for undergraduate classes. This accommodation ensures flexibility for students, promoting accessibility and inclusivity. Acknowledging that unforeseen circumstances may lead to class absences, yet students continue to bear financial responsibilities, this recommendation emphasizes the need for online alternatives.

Ultimately, students deserve the flexibility to access course materials remotely, fostering academic resilience and an environment conducive to continuous learning.



82.7% of respondents agreed that they would benefit from having both virtual and in-person learning options.

Education for All Survey, 2022



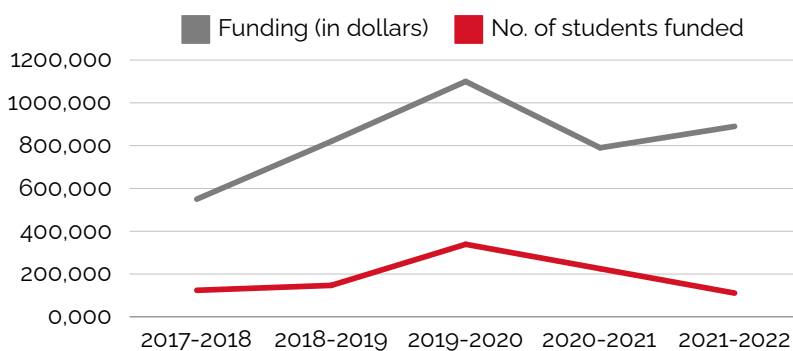
RECOMMENDATION 5

MORE NON-ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ALL AND INCREASED AWARDS FOR BLACK AND INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

To recognize and reward students for their non-academic achievements and contributions, the UTMSU advocates for an increase in non-academic scholarships. According to our survey, over 65% of students have applied for scholarships or grants offered by UofT, suggesting that there is a strong recommend for financial support within the student body. This measure encourages a holistic approach to student success and acknowledges the various talents and skills students bring to the university community.

Additionally, the UTMSU prioritizes the need for increased awards and grants specifically tailored to support Black and Indigenous students. This initiative aims to address historical inequities, promote diversity, and provide targeted assistance to underrepresented student groups.

According to the Governing Council 2023-2024 budget, budgeted expenditure for student aid has only increased by 1% in relation to the 2022-2023 budget ⁽¹⁾.



**Financial support for Indigenous Students
2019-2022**

From UofT's Annual Report on Student Financial Support between 2018 - 2022

These recommendations collectively reflect the UTMSU's commitment to advancing the Education For All Campaign and creating a university environment that prioritizes accessibility, equity, and the diverse needs of its student population.

¹ governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/system/files/agenda-items/20230309_AB_03P.pdf

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**UTMSU LOBBY DOCUMENT
2023/2024**