

University of Alberta, Edmonton, September 28 - Selected Highlights

ISSUES, CONCERNS AND SUGGESTED DIRECTIONS RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

- There seems to be a “pro-science” bias, in that funding for education in the arts is increasingly inadequate by comparison. We need to ensure that universities and colleges can meet their mandate to provide a first-rate education in the arts. (*student*)
- Far too much funding for student loans gets eaten up by administration perhaps more than half of every dollar. (*student representative*)
- The question of teacher preparation is of vital importance. It is essential that teacher education occur in the four faculties of education, and that it not be further dispersed to the colleges. It is essential to properly fund faculties of education so that they can do their important work of preparing students in K-12 as a foundation for further learning in the post-secondary system. (*teacher representative*)
- The assumption that privatization, commercialization and deregulation would lead to improvements has not been borne out, and in fact has contributed both to the worsening of existing problems (e.g. rising student debt) and the creation of new ones (e.g. a growing corporate domination of the research agenda). The key principle should be that post-secondary education is a matter of the public interest, it is a public good, and it should be delivered through public investments. We need to get off the ‘wrong road’ of privatization, commercialization and deregulation, and onto the path of more support for this crucial area of the public interest. (*retired teacher*)
- The shortfall in student funding has led to serious difficulties for increasing numbers of students. For example, in 1991 about 250 students made use of the campus food bank; in 2004 the number had grown to 2300. One-third of these are parents with children; they are “student families in need.” Many more students need the service, but are not willing to ask for food from the food bank. We are failing to provide the necessary support for people who are trying hard to change their lives. (*food bank official*)
- It’s a mistake to cast post-secondary education as a “private good”, of concern only to the particular individual. Grandparents care profoundly about the education of their



- grandchildren and about the education of all of our young people. (*grandparent/citizen*)
- The increasing stress caused by lack of money, the need to work at part-time jobs, and the pressure to do well academically has led to growing frustration, anxiety and depression among more students. Because of funding shortfalls, they have to work increasing hours at outside jobs, their marks suffer, and in some cases they pay a price in terms of their physical and psychological health and well-being. (*researcher/consultant*)
- Students are prepared to pay a portion of tuition in recognition of the fact that there will be a personal benefit. However, the current situation of driving students deeply into debt serves no one well and undermines individuals and the public good. (*student*)
- It is often difficult to make enough money in summer jobs to make a difference. I worked at a job for \$6 per hour in the summer and “couldn’t even pay the bills for the summer,” let alone save for the university term. There are a lot of students like me, with families who can’t pay for their education. We’re not all geniuses, and so we all can’t get scholarships. It is a difficult situation for working class citizens, for whom education is not a right, but increasingly a privilege. (*student*)
- Students can no longer be the stopgap between a lack of government funding and the university’s budget. If the government is serious about investing the future and creating a thriving and diverse province, post-secondary education is that first step. (*student representative*)