



Policy Paper

International Students

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper provides an overview of the role of internationalization in Ontario's post-secondary education system. The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) recognizes the importance of attracting more international students to study in Ontario, as articulated by the Ontario government in its 2010 Open Ontario Plan. In a competitive global environment, international students enable the province to train and retain highly skilled personnel, provide access to a greater pool of talent, diversity and ideas, and contribute to the economy. Similarly, in a globalized environment, Ontario's colleges and universities are recognizing the importance of expanding their presence beyond national borders, through international branch campuses and student exchange programs.

The paper addresses six major themes concerning internationalization. The first five themes concern international students studying in Ontario, while the final theme addresses internationalization of Ontario campuses more broadly.

International Student Tuition

International students should pay the real cost of their education, and tuition fees should not be used to compensate for institutional funding shortages. Moreover, international student tuition should be regulated to ensure that any year-to-year increases are at a predictable and reasonable rate.

Financial Aid for International Students

Ontario should seek to attract the best and brightest students, regardless of socioeconomic circumstances. Currently, a lack of need-based financial assistance deters low-income international students from studying in Ontario. A tuition set-aside from international student fees should be created to fund need-based aid for qualified international students.

International Student Health Coverage

International students should have access to affordable health care that is comparable in coverage to that available to domestic students. The current University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) does not meet this standard. Like many other provinces and countries, the Ontario government should include international students in the publicly funded Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP).

Employment for International Students

To attract international students and retain them post-graduation, these students must have access to meaningful and relevant work experience while in Ontario. The government should take steps to reduce barriers to employment for international students, educate employers about hiring international students, and expand the Ontario Opportunities Program to undergraduate students regardless of employment status.

International Student Support Services

International students face pressures associated with living and learning in a new culture. Ontario must invest in strengthening student support programs to ensure that all international students can be successful in Canada's post-secondary institutions.

Branch Campuses and Recruitment

Increasing numbers of universities are establishing affiliated international colleges and branch campuses. The Ontario government should regulate these affiliated international colleges to ensure that a consistent set of entrance standards are applied to all prospective international students. In addition, the government should establish a comprehensive quality strategy for international branch campuses, to ensure students attending these campuses receive the same quality of instruction and student supports as those studying at domestic campuses.

Introduction

In the 2010 Ontario Budget, the provincial government announced a plan to increase international enrolment in post-secondary institutions by fifty percent over five years.¹ In 2009, Ontario universities enrolled a total of 16,274 full-time undergraduate international students.² When the government's international enrolment target is met, this number will increase to over 24,000. With the expectation of enough undergraduate international students to fill a medium-large sized university, there is a pressing need to address the significant issues associated with this increased internationalization.

International students enrich the learning environment at Ontario universities. They add to the diversity of perspectives and experiences in the classroom and enhance the broader cultural diversity on campus. Because this results in real benefits to domestic students, OUSA supports the government's plan to increase international student enrolment.

The provincial government derives \$102 million annually in direct revenue from all 66,000 international students studying in Ontario, and these students collectively spend over \$2.1 billion dollars in Ontario.³ The contribution of international students to Ontario's economy will continue to grow if Ontario meets its goal of increasing international student enrolment by 50%. In recognition of the important role that international students play in post-secondary institutions, the Ontario government provided \$3.5 million to universities in 2009-10 for international marketing.⁴ Even with this support, enrolment growth in Ontario colleges has increased at a greater rate than in Ontario universities. Additionally, there is concern that other provinces and countries are outpacing Ontario with regard to attracting international students.⁵

Ontario's decision to increase international enrolment corresponds with a growing international market for these students. By 2025, global demand for international education is predicted to grow from 1.9 million to 7.2 million students.⁶ The most popular study abroad locations in the world are currently the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Australia. However, as demand for international education has increased, competition between countries for these students has risen as well. Both Australia and the United States have recently seen a significant reduction in the growth of international students attending their institutions, in part as a result of effective international marketing campaigns by other countries. In order to create a post-secondary education (PSE) system that is competitive in attracting students from around the world, it is essential that the provincial government establish a strategic plan to provide international learners with a high-quality education at an affordable and predictable rate.

There are six major areas of concern that require greater attention from the Ontario government if the province wishes to be successful in attracting and retaining international students. These concerns are addressed in detail in this policy paper, and grouped under the following categories: tuition, student financial aid, health coverage, employment, student support and branch campuses and recruitment. This paper will discuss OUSA's principles, concerns, and recommendations for each major category.

Attracting the best and brightest from around the world to study in Ontario should be a focus of this province. A greater number of international students will improve the learning environment, make Ontario a hub of world-class education and will contribute to the growing prestige of Ontario's post-secondary institutions. Increased internationalization can also provide economic benefits in the form of both students who purchase domestic products

¹ Government of Ontario, *Open Ontario: Ontario's Plan for Jobs and Growth, 2010 Ontario Budget* (Toronto: 2010).

² Calculated from Council of Ontario Universities, *Common University Data Ontario* (Toronto, 2009).

³ Roslyn Kunin & Associates, Inc., 2009. *Economic Impact of International Education in Canada*. Presented to Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. Vancouver.

⁴ Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, *Final University Operating Transfer Payment Totals 2009-10 Summary* (Toronto: 2010).

⁵ Based upon calculations from Canadian Association of University Teachers, *Almanac of Post-Secondary Education in Canada* (Ottawa: 2010).

⁶ The Council of the Federation, *Premiers Working Together to Sustain Economic Recovery* (Winnipeg: 2010).

and services, and potential future prosperity through an influx of skilled labour. To remain competitive, however, Ontario must distinguish itself from the growing number of players in the internationalization sphere, not only by providing a high-quality educational experience, but also as the most supportive environment for international students in the world.

Tuition

Principles

Principle One: International students in Ontario should not be financially subsidized by the government, but should pay no more in tuition than the real cost of their education.

While domestic undergraduate students have approximately half of their post-secondary education funded by the provincial and federal governments,⁷ the Ontario government declared all “non-exempt”⁸ international students ineligible for funding in 1996.⁹ OUSA does not believe the government should subsidize the cost of education for international students; however, it is unfair to expect international students to pay more than the real cost of their education.

OUSA recognizes that the cost of educating international students is likely higher than that of domestic students, as it can be expensive to recruit and provide special support services to international students. However, the Ministry of Training, College and Universities currently funds these costs to some extent. For example, as part of the government’s Reaching Higher Plan, additional investments were made to help recruit international students in the form of the International Strategy Marketing Special Grant, currently worth \$3.71 million annually.¹⁰

While international students utilize government services and resources during their time in Ontario, they also contribute to funding these services during this same period of time, through payment of sales taxes on goods and services, municipal taxes through rent, and, often, income tax on employment income. However, international students are less likely than domestic students to stay in the province after graduation and contribute to the tax system over the long term. Therefore, OUSA believes it is not unreasonable for international students to pay the real cost of post-secondary education without government subsidy.

Principle Two: International student tuition must not be used to generate additional revenue to make up for government underfunding at Ontario institutions.

One of the most frequently discussed areas of concern for international students is tuition. On average, international students pay 240% more in tuition than domestic students. The average international tuition for an Ontario student in first-year arts and science in 2009 was \$16,907, compared with \$4,698 for domestic students. These tuition fees are summarized in Table 1. The primary reason international student tuition has risen to such levels is that international student tuition is not regulated by the government and universities receive no operating funds for these students.

There is significant concern that international students are beginning to pay more than the full cost of their education. In 2009-10 the average revenue for each domestic first-year arts and science students was \$9,735.¹¹ Comparing this

⁷ Snowdon & Associates. 2009. *Revisiting Ontario College and University Revenue Data*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

⁸ Some international students are exempt from the policy and are considered eligible for subsidy due to sponsorship agreements with different agencies and countries. Details about “eligible” international students can be found in the Ontario Operating Fund Distribution Manual.

⁹ Snowdon Report, “Revisiting Ontario College and University Revenue Data”, 2009

¹⁰ Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, *Final University Operating Transfer Payment Totals 2009-10 Summary* (Toronto: 2010).

¹¹ OCUFA Operating \$ per BIU Chart plus data compiled and calculated from the Common University Data Ontario, Council of Ontario Universities, 2006-2009.

to \$16,907, the 2009-10 average international tuition fee for arts and science, shows that our universities received an average of \$7,172 more in revenue for each of these international students.

It is important to note that statistics of average revenue per domestic full-time equivalent student (FTE) do not take into account the significant capital and research funds that institutions receive from the provincial and federal governments, which benefit international students. Additionally, it has been suggested that the costs associated with recruitment, transition, and additional support services for international students are cost burdens beyond that of domestic students, and post-secondary institutions should receive higher revenue per international student to compensate for these additional costs. On the other hand, it has been estimated that each international student in Ontario generates \$1,560 in government income and sales tax revenue, and it can be argued that at least a portion of this money should be spent on the student's education.¹² The complexities of comparing the per-FTE funding and revenue of domestic and international students make it difficult to come to a definitive conclusion on the debate surrounding the 'fair share' of international students. Nevertheless, attention should be paid to the level of international tuition as compared to domestic students to ensure that these students do not subsidize university costs not met by domestic tuition and government revenue.

Table 1: International Student Tuition at Ontario Universities, 2009-10¹³

University	% Intl. of Total Students	Domestic First Year Arts/Science Tuition	International First Year Arts/Science Tuition	Percentage Difference Intl. vs. Domestic	% Growth from 08-09 to 09-10	% Growth from 07-08 to 08-09	% Growth from 06-07 to 07-08
Brock	3.59%	\$4,966	\$13,337	169%	5.00%	4.00%	6.01%
Carleton	8.68%	\$4,951	\$14,406	191%	4.50%	8.00%	6.00%
Guelph	1.63%	\$4,988	\$16,149	224%	4.21%	4.50%	8.00%
Lakehead	0.98%	\$4,880	\$13,000	166%	4.00%	4.17%	20.00%
Laurentian	3.14%	\$4,894	\$11,913	143%	0.00%	8.15%	4.00%
McMaster	5.05%	\$4,929	\$14,549	195%	6.00%	6.00%	0.00%
Nipissing	0.54%	\$4,715	\$11,500	144%	4.55%	4.76%	5.00%
UOIT	4.81%	\$4,989	\$13,371	168%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
Ottawa	3.39%	\$4,964	\$15,134	205%	0.00%	9.21%	4.49%
Queen's	3.24%	\$5,005	\$17,030	240%	8.02%	4.50%	2.00%
Ryerson	3.10%	\$4,983	\$15,390	209%	8.00%	5.50%	4.50%
Toronto	9.59%	\$4,991	\$21,334	327%	9.95%	10.00%	5.00%
Trent	5.77%	\$4,989	\$13,684	174%	5.02%	5.02%	4.00%
Waterloo	6.90%	\$5,004	\$17,582	251%	3.00%	4.00%	2.00%
Laurier	1.31%	\$4,989	\$14,240	185%	5.01%	4.99%	-0.95%
Western	2.86%	\$4,937	\$14,650	197%	3.90%	4.06%	3.83%
Windsor	8.89%	\$4,870	\$13,750	182%	8.01%	7.97%	7.97%
York	5.20%	\$4,989	\$14,989	200%	1.46%	1.41%	17.77%
OCAD	5.47%	\$5,060	\$14,760	192%	4.93%	4.20%	3.85%
WEIGHTED AVERAGE	5.24%	\$4,968	\$16,907	240%	5.90%	6.64%	6.10%

It is also dangerous for institutions rely on international students as tools to generate revenue because international enrolment is often not a stable source of revenue. The United States has seen declines in the international enrolment

¹² Roslyn Kunin & Associates, Inc., 2009. *Economic Impact of International Education in Canada*. Presented to Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. Vancouver.

¹³ Compiled and calculated from the Common University Data Ontario, Council of Ontario Universities, 2006-2009.

growth rate for the past several years. From 2006-07, to 2008-09, the growth in international enrolment declined from 4.3 to 3.0%, posing a problem for institutions that planned on a sustained level of growth.¹⁴ Australia also had many universities build budget models on international student revenue growth. When the 2009 recession and immigration changes caused enrolment to drop, many institutions faced severe reductions in revenue and were forced to make budget cuts.¹⁵ Exorbitant international tuition rates cannot compensate for chronic underfunding of Ontario's post-secondary institutions, and could create an unsustainable funding model that would negatively affect Ontario's institutions over the long term.

Principle Three: The provincial government has a responsibility to ensure that international students are levied fairly.

While studying at one of our institutions, Ontario acts as a temporary home for students and citizens of other countries. The positive development of this relationship is of the utmost importance to Ontario's future in international education. This future relies on growth in our international reputation, which is undoubtedly shaped by the student experience of those currently in the system. As newcomers to the country, international students have little social support and no representation in government, leaving them vulnerable. As hosts, it is the responsibility of all Ontarians to ensure that visiting students are treated fairly, and it is the responsibility of the provincial government to lead by example. The status quo of deregulated tuition clearly provides room for institutions to take advantage of international students. The provincial government must ensure that international students do not leave Ontario feeling taken advantage of by unfair fees. This is particularly important considering the enormous beneficial economic impact international students have in Ontario.

Principle Four: Any increases in international student tuition must be predictable for students, as well as reasonable, year-to-year.

Dramatic and unpredictable increases in tuition make it very difficult for international students to plan adequately for upcoming years of education. Not only do sudden increases in tuition put undue financial stress on international students, but some students may be forced to abandon their studies. In addition to the negative consequences for the student in these cases, this scenario represents a loss of potential revenue for the system. International students deserve to know the total cost of their current and future tuition fees from the moment they first enrol. Universities have the ability to provide this predictability but many have not yet acted on it.

Concerns

Concern One: When international student tuition increases at a higher rate than the growth in revenue for domestic students, international students move further away from contributing the real cost of their education.

Since 1996, international student tuition has been completely deregulated. Consequently, over the past three years, international tuition has increased at an average rate of 6.2%, which is considerably higher than the 5.0% cap on domestic increases in tuition.¹⁶ Considering that international tuition fees are already much higher than domestic tuition fees, it is concerning that the financial contribution of international students is growing at a faster rate each year than that of domestic students.

It is recognized that institutions do not receive operating capital or research funding from the government for international students. However, through the comparison of per full-time equivalent (FTE) revenue data and international tuition fees, it can be seen that at some institutions, international tuition is well above the cost of educating these students. The University of Toronto, University of Waterloo and Queen's University are examples

¹⁴ Burelli, Joan, 2010. *Foreign Science and Engineering Students in the United States*. National Science Foundation, Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences. <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/infbrief/nsf10324/nsf10324.pdf>

¹⁵ Philip G. Altbach, *Australia's Decline* (Washington: Inside Higher Ed, 2010).

¹⁶ Calculated from Council of Ontario Universities, Common University Data Ontario (Toronto, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009).

where tuition charged is far above the average revenue per domestic student. Whereas the average revenue per full-time equivalent domestic first-year arts and science students in 2008-09 was \$9,735,¹⁷ these universities charged \$21,334, \$17,582, and \$17,030, respectively to first-year arts and science students.¹⁸ This discrepancy – amounting to an incredible \$11,599 at the University of Toronto – raises serious concerns that international students are being used to compensate for funding gaps in other areas. International tuition must not be used as a revenue stream to support institutions in the absence of strong provincial and federal support.

Concern Two: International student tuition is completely deregulated, making these students vulnerable to dramatic and unpredictable fee increases.

Over the past three years international tuition has increased at an average rate of 6.2%, which is considerably higher than the 5.0% cap on domestic increases in tuition.¹⁹ Universities across Ontario increase international tuition every year and are not required to provide any justification for doing so. At York University, there was a 17.8% increase in 2006-07, followed by a 1.14% increase the following year. At Lakehead University, there was a 20% increase in 2006-07, followed by a 4.17% increase.²⁰ These are just some examples of dramatic and unpredictable fee increases that international students cope with from year-to-year. It is not uncommon for double-digit tuition increases to be sandwiched by increases below domestic inflation. These unpredictable fee increases make it impossible for international students to accurately budget in advance how much funding they will require to finance their education. In addition, since educational costs for institutions should be relatively consistent from year to year, unpredictable fee increases raise the concern that the money is being used to fund other expenditures. The absence of any regulation surrounding international tuition makes it difficult to ensure that international students are being levied fairly.

Recommendations

Recommendation One: International student tuition must be regulated within the Ontario tuition framework to ensure fairness for students, such that international tuition is equal to the government and tuition revenue generated for a comparable domestic student plus additional costs associated with educating these students.

The regulation of international tuition to the real cost of education will not only protect international students from dramatic tuition changes, but will also help keep Ontario competitive as a destination of choice. Though not all international students remain in Ontario after graduation, while attending post-secondary institutions they contribute substantially to government revenue and they should not be expected to further subsidize the cost of educating domestic students.

As stated earlier, the task of identifying what exactly constitutes the real cost of education is a daunting one. Therefore, we must make a concerted effort to identify all relevant variables and come to a reasonable estimation of this cost. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities already has the data required to make this estimate.

The presence of international students in Ontario's post-secondary institutions is beneficial both to the institutions and to society as a whole. Fair, consistent, and predictable tuition rates will allow institutions to cover the costs of admitting international students, while helping to make Ontario a key destination for international education.

¹⁷ OCUFA Operating \$ per BIU Chart plus data compiled and calculated from the Common University Data Ontario, Council of Ontario Universities, 2006-2009.

¹⁸ Snowdon & Associate, Revisiting Ontario College and University Revenue Data (Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2009).

¹⁹ Calculated from Council of Ontario Universities, Common University Data Ontario (Toronto, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009).

²⁰ Ibid.

Recommendation Two: International student tuition must be regulated in cohorts to maintain predictability for students, such that tuition increases beyond the first year would be capped at a predictable rate not to exceed five per cent.

OUSA believes that ensuring some degree of predictability of international student tuition is needed for Ontario to remain a competitive destination for international students and ensure fairness to students. This regulation would require that increases beyond the first year are capped at the domestic student growth rates. The capacity for institutions to track students and charge tuition increases accordingly is already in place, as this cohort system is used in the current domestic tuition framework. This is vital to providing international students with the ability to plan for future tuition increases. Moreover, it would cost almost nothing to implement.

Student Financial Assistance

Principles

Principle Five: Ontario should be attracting the most academically qualified international students, regardless of financial means or the various non-financial barriers international students face.

Attracting the best and brightest students from across the world is an important investment in Ontario's future. Bright international students contribute to the overall quality of Ontario's post-secondary institutions by introducing new perspectives in the classroom and enhancing the diversity of the learning environment. Moreover, many international students remain in Canada following their education, and represent a skilled labour pool vital to success in the knowledge economy. This is particularly important at a time when Canada is facing several pressing labour shortages.²¹ A talented international student from a low-income background should not be prevented from attending post-secondary education in Ontario due to financial or non-financial barriers.

Concerns

Concern Three: The vast majority of international students come from upper-middle and high-income backgrounds, indicating that studying in Canada is not an option for most international students from low-income backgrounds.

The results of the International Student Survey from the Canadian Bureau for International Education show that only one in ten international students comes from a low-income background, while 85% of international students described themselves as from a middle- or upper-income background.²² Worryingly, over the past decade, the number of international students from low-income families has declined. In 2009, only 8% of international students describe their family's wealth as below average. This figure has declined from 12% in 1988 and 10% in 1999 and 2004.²³ All of this points towards the fact that studying in Canada is not an option for many international students from low-income backgrounds. More disturbingly, it points out that Canada is trending towards becoming a less accessible international study destination.

Ontario must do more to assure that financial circumstances for bright international students are not a barrier to entering a post secondary education in the province. Efforts should be made to attract all qualified, high-calibre students to study in Ontario, regardless of socioeconomic background.

²¹ Roslyn Kunin & Associates, Inc., 2009. *Economic Impact of International Education in Canada*. Presented to Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. Vancouver

²² Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2009. *Canada First: The 2009 Survey of International Students*. Ottawa.

²³ Ibid.

Concern Four: While a number of merit-based scholarships for international students exist, there is currently limited need-based financial aid available to international students.

Currently, there exists a lack of any substantial need-based financial aid for Ontario international students. While 12 of 20 universities in Ontario offer emergency loans and bursaries to international students, these tend to be reserved for exceptional circumstances, and little systemic financial assistance is available. Only 4% of international students reported in 2009 that they received financial assistance from governments in Canada.²⁴ The absence of need-based financial aid may deter middle- and low-income students who are highly qualified from pursuing post-secondary studies in Ontario.

Recommendations

Recommendation Three: The provincial government must mandate that institutions adopt a set-aside of international tuition reserved for need-based financial aid for international students.

Currently, 10 per cent of domestic student tuition fee increases are set aside to fund financial assistance for students with need. The same practice should be applied to international student fees to improve international student access to Ontario's post-secondary education system and to attract students of all socioeconomic backgrounds. The advantage of using a tuition set-aside to fund these programs is that public funding is not required. Rather, the loan and bursary program would be self-funded through the tuition of all international students enabling those who can least afford to pay to access financial assistance.

Recommendation Four: The provincial government and post-secondary institutions should offer more merit-based and needs-based scholarships aimed at attracting high-achieving international students to Ontario.

Ontario should be focused on attracting the best and brightest individuals to study in our post secondary institutions. In a recent survey, Canada's reputation and institutional prestige were the most important deciding factors for international students' decision to study in Canada, whereas cost of education and the availability of scholarships were not selected by a majority of respondents, demonstrating that there is room for improvement in these areas.²⁵ While it is important to consider financial need in providing support for international students, institutions and the government should also offer more merit-based scholarships to encourage exceptional international students to study in Ontario.

Currently, a third of all international students studying at Ontario universities receive some institutional support.²⁶ While this number appears impressive, the greater availability of international scholarships in the United States frequently results in students opting to pursue studies at American institutions, rather than Canadian ones. If Ontario wishes to remain competitive in seeking the best international students, it must continue to offer financial support to strong international candidates.

Health Coverage

Principles

Principle Six: International students in Ontario must have access to affordable health insurance during their studies.

²⁴ Canadian Bureau for International Education, *Canada First: The 2009 Survey of International Students* (Ottawa, 2009).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

In 1994, international students were removed from the eligibility requirements of the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) then formed the University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP), a private plan provided through Sun Life Financial, which was meant to act as a substitute for OHIP for international students, faculty and their dependants.²⁷ Unfortunately, the cost to the student for coverage under UHIP is considerable. Single students pay \$756 annually, and this amount balloons to over \$3000 a year for students with dependants (see Table 2).

Table 2: Cost of UHIP Coverage for Various Groups, 2009-10

Type of Student	Cost of UHIP Coverage
Single Student	\$756
Students with one dependant	\$2,052
Students with two or more dependants	\$3,348

High health insurance premiums are a disincentive for international students seeking education in Ontario, especially when other jurisdictions within Canada provide more affordable health care. In Saskatchewan, international students are automatically covered under the provincial health plan free of charge. Other provinces, such as Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador international students are covered under the provincial health plan after a six- or twelve-month waiting period. On a global scale, three of the top four international host countries – the United Kingdom, France, and Germany – offer public health care to international students. The fourth country, the United States, does not have a comparable public health care system, so is unable to offer this service to international students. The absence of public health care for international students puts Ontario at a competitive disadvantage with other jurisdictions in attracting the best and brightest students to study at its post-secondary institutions.

Principle Seven: International students must have access to any doctor or hospital in Ontario at an affordable rate.

Though UHIP covers the same health services as OHIP, any doctor in Ontario is allowed to charge international students well above what UHIP will provide. UHIP will cover up to 125% of the OHIP rate, but doctors may charge up to 250% of this same rate, forcing international students to pay out-of-pocket.²⁸

For hospital visits, UHIP will cover all expenses only if the student visits a hospital on the preferred hospital network. These are hospitals that have agreements with Sun Life Finance to offer a lower price for service. Hospitals that are not on this list can again charge up to 250% of the OHIP rate.²⁹

Given the benefits international students provide to Ontario's post-secondary institutions, it is unfair to expect them to settle for second-tier health care service, particularly when they are paying very high premiums for the service in the first place.

Principle Eight: If international students must buy into a private health plan, this plan must be governed and overseen by a body with significant representation from international students.

All Ontario international students are mandated to buy into the UHIP plan if they wish to study in Ontario.³⁰ Consequently, the decisions made by those that govern the plan have significant repercussions for all international students in the province. These students need to have adequate representation on the UHIP governing body to

²⁷ The University of Windsor is unique in that it offers its international students its own private health insurance plan separate from UHIP.

²⁸ Interview with Jane O'Brien, Chair of the UHIP Steering Committee, October 21, 2010.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ All students excepting those international students studying at the University of Windsor, which has an alternate health insurance plan.

ensure that they have a voice that can represent their needs and concerns. Currently, the UHIP Steering Committee has no student representation.

Concerns

Concern Five: Due to the private nature of the University Health Insurance Plan, premium increases are subject to market demand and thus can fluctuate significantly.

There are significant year-to-year fluctuations in UHIP premiums that make financial planning significantly more difficult for international students. For example, in 2005-2006 there was a rate of reduction of 1%, followed by a 30% increase the next year. Moreover, growth rates in UHIP premiums are substantially higher for students with dependants. In the same year that single students saw a 30% increase, an international student with one dependent faced a 58% jump in insurance premiums. Students with two or more dependents experienced the largest increase in rates, with the cost of UHIP increasing by 69% in 2005-2006.

The excessive variability in UHIP rates makes it impossible for international students to budget accurately from year-to-year and also could deter middle and low-income students from studying in Ontario. Moreover, the unpredictability of UHIP premiums puts Ontario at a competitive disadvantage in attracting international students when compared to the more stable public health care system offered by other Canadian provinces and countries.

Concern Six: In some cases, students are forced to pay out-of-pocket for health care services that cost above what UHIP will cover.

When an international student visits a hospital in Ontario, UHIP will only guarantee it can cover the student's expenses if the hospital is on the Preferred Hospital Network. These are hospitals that have agreements with Sun Life Financial to offer services at the inter-provincial rate, which is the rate charged to other Canadian provinces for their residents. Hospitals that are not on this list can charge up to the maximum 250% of the OHIP rate.³¹ There is supposed to be at least one preferred hospital in every university community; however, students who commute to campus may face difficulty in accessing one of these hospitals. In addition, students who need emergency attention do not always have the luxury of travelling to the nearest preferred hospital, and it is unfair to expect them to. The UHIP website states, "if you choose to be treated at or are admitted to a hospital that is not on this list [of preferred hospitals], it is possible that you will have to pay expenses in addition to what UHIP pays".³² Restricting the pool of hospitals at which UHIP recipients can receive treatment unfairly compromises the breadth of health care coverage for international students.

In addition to hospitals, any doctor in Ontario is allowed to charge international students well above what UHIP will reimburse. For a normal visit to the doctor, UHIP will cover up to 125% of the OHIP rate for health services, but doctors may charge up to 250% of this same rate, forcing international students to pay the remainder out-of-pocket.³³ Unlike hospitals, there is no preferred list of doctors.

Concern Seven: The UHIP reimbursement system forces students to find the funds to pay up-front for basic health services.

³¹ Special Committee on International Graduate and Professional Students, *Addressing the Cost of UHIP (University Health Insurance Plan) for International Graduate & Professional Students*, (Kingston: Queen's University, Feb. 2007).

³² The University Health Insurance Plan, *Does it matter where I go to receive medical care?*, (2009), accessed at <http://www.uhip.ca/medicalcare.aspx>

³³ Interview with Jane O'Brien, Chair of the UHIP Steering Committee, October 21, 2010.

Because UHIP is a private insurance plan, international students are required to pay for services up-front and then later seek reimbursement from the insurance company.³⁴ Consequently, international students can end up responsible for fronting hundreds of dollars in fees for treatment, which can be a stressful process for students when they are sick or injured. Unfortunately, when it comes to private health insurance, this is simply how it has to be. Moving international students under the public health insurance plan, however, would eliminate this problem.

Recommendations

Recommendation Five: The provincial government should allow international students to enrol in the Ontario Health Insurance Plan without paying an additional premium.

As has been recognized by five other Canadian provinces, the Ontario government can improve the quality and breadth of health coverage for international students by providing them with coverage under OHIP. Opening Ontario's health care system to international students would not only bring Ontario up to speed nationally, but would allow us to compete with top international host countries like the United Kingdom, France and Germany. Moreover, permanent residents, foreign workers with a work permit for at least six months, and their children are already eligible for OHIP.³⁵ International students deserve the same consideration.

Given Ontario's difficult fiscal situation, students understand that it may be difficult for the government to immediately find the estimated \$50 million required to extend OHIP coverage to international students. Nevertheless, adding international students to the eligibility list is vital to ensuring that these students, who pay taxes while in Ontario, are treated fairly and given the comprehensive health care coverage they deserve.

Recommendation Six: In the short-term, the provincial government should allow international students to pay insurance premiums directly to OHIP in return for the same comprehensive coverage given to domestic students.

Currently, international students pay health premiums to a private insurance provider in exchange for coverage. If, instead of paying a private company, these funds were collected by the student's institution and paid directly to OHIP, the cost to government of covering these students under the public plan would be eliminated.

While students would still be paying for health insurance, this arrangement would eliminate some of students' main concerns around the exorbitant fees that are sometimes charged to by doctors and hospitals for even the most basic care. If international student were covered under OHIP, they would never need to pay above the OHIP rates.

Students are adamant that this be considered a short-term solution until such time that international students can be included under OHIP at no additional cost.

Recommendation Seven: As long as UHIP exists, the UHIP Steering Committee must have significant international student representation.

Currently, the UHIP Steering Committee has no student representation. Yet a key role and responsibility of the committee is to "govern the UHIP programme and resources on behalf of international students".³⁶ In order to truly govern UHIP on behalf of international students, the Steering Committee must have representation from students, to ensure student concerns are adequately considered and addressed. Without including the voices of international students on the governing body that directs UHIP's operations, it is impossible to make sure student interests are safeguarded.

³⁴ Council of Ontario Universities, *The "Open Ontario" Strategy for Internationalizing Postsecondary Education*, (Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities, 2010).

³⁵ Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, *OHIP Eligibility* (Toronto: 2009).

³⁶ The University Health Insurance Plan, *Roles and Responsibilities*, (2009), accessed at <http://www.uhip.ca/roles.aspx>.

Employment

Principles

Principle Nine: Qualified international students in Ontario should be able to access meaningful employment on and off campus during the course of their studies, including institutional work-study programs.

The 2009 Survey of International Students found that 26% of university students and 15% of college students reported working while attending a Canadian post-secondary institution.³⁷ Meaningful employment allows students to learn specific job skills required to enter into the Canadian workforce after they graduate. In addition, access to employment is important to international students both for experiential learning and to help finance their education and living expenses while residing in Ontario. International student employment also contributes to the overall economy of Ontario and provides the provincial government with additional tax revenues. In recognition of the importance of providing international students with a level playing field in the competition for jobs, the government recently relaxed restrictions that previously made it difficult for international students to work off campus. Nevertheless, barriers remain and the international student employment rate lags far behind that of Canadian students.³⁸

Principle Ten: If they choose, qualified international students who seek employment in Canada should have an equal opportunity to find work post-graduation.

A 2009 survey found that over 51% of international students planned to apply for permanent resident status, and 71% indicated that they would seek employment in Canada after graduation.³⁹ A key part of Ontario's "Postsecondary Education Internationalization Strategy" as articulated in the 2005 *Reaching Higher* plan is to contribute to economic growth and address a skilled labour shortfall in certain fields by retaining qualified international students after they complete their post-secondary studies.⁴⁰ Despite this government policy, international students are faced with barriers to post-graduation employment that a typical domestic graduate does not face. These include delays in receiving work permits and widespread confusion among employers about the feasibility of hiring international students.⁴¹ These barriers make it difficult for Ontario to compete with other jurisdictions, where international students are treated more favourably in the job market.

Principle Eleven: International students in Ontario should be equipped with the skills they need to succeed in the Canadian workforce during the course of their education.

Good communication skills, adaptability, and cultural awareness are a few skills that international students may struggle with compared to their domestic counterparts. Without adequately addressing some of these issues while students are in school, many international students experience difficulty in the workforce prior to and after graduation. If students are better equipped with the essential job skills, it will increase their chances of success in the Canadian workforce.

Concerns

³⁷ Canadian Bureau for International Education, *Canada First: The 2009 Survey of International Students*, (Ottawa, 2009).

³⁸ Joseph Berger, Anne Motte, and Andrew Parkin, *The Price of Knowledge, Access and Student Finance in Canada*, (Montreal: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2009).

³⁹ Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2009. *Canada First: The 2009 Survey of International Students*. Ottawa.

⁴⁰ Bonnie Patterson, and Jennifer Grass, *The "Open Ontario" Strategy for Internationalizing Postsecondary Education*, (Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities. July 2010).

⁴¹ Canadian Bureau for International Education, *Northern Lights: International Graduates of Canadian Institutions and the National Workforce* (Ottawa, 2007).

Concern Eight: International students often have difficulty obtaining meaningful employment during the course of their studies and face barriers to employment that domestic students do not experience.

In Ontario, roughly 45% of all domestic students are employed part-time during the academic year.⁴² In contrast, employment levels for international students are half this level. Since the 1990s, full-time international students have been able to obtain on-campus employment without applying for a separate work permit, and in 2006 the government relaxed restrictions allowing more international students to work off-campus through the Off-Campus Work Permit Program as well.

However, international students still experience many barriers to employment, both on- and off-campus. International students who receive a scholarship or sponsorship from the Canadian government, an NGO, or another source are still ineligible to work off-campus.⁴³ This is despite the fact that many of these sponsorships are need-based, so these students may have the greatest impetus for seeking paid employment during their studies. In addition, students participating in exchange programs and visiting students cannot work off-campus while holding only a study permit.⁴⁴ While virtually all international students can legally obtain on-campus employment, there are often limited on-campus jobs available, and the competition for these tends to be very strong.⁴⁵

Concern Nine: International students are discouraged about employment prospects post-graduation, and complicated government policies often make it difficult to obtain employment.

While the majority of international students intend to seek employment during or after completing their studies, 80% of students are pessimistic about employment prospects, and 85% report having some or great difficulty in finding a job.⁴⁶ One international student participating in a focus group expressed the pessimistic view of many international students when it comes to employment, stating, “I want to get a job which suits my credentials and career aims. I don’t want to be driving a taxi after getting a PhD or doing a clerical job, in which I can’t use my expertise or knowledge.”⁴⁷

In addition, even when international students do find work, several report being unable to capitalize on job offers because employers were unwilling to hold the position until their work permits arrived.⁴⁸

Concern Ten: Employers often view hiring international students as more complicated than domestic students due to confusion with government policies.

Many employers do not know that they are allowed to hire international students and are unwilling to start until the government provides better information on the rules and regulations.⁴⁹ This confusion is due in part to contradictions in government policy surrounding international students. For example, while official policy has stated the importance of retaining international students post-graduation as skilled-labourers who can contribute to Canada’s economic and social welfare, Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s website for employers still emphasizes that students with study permits must leave once they conclude their studies.⁵⁰ In addition, when compared with a number of other countries

⁴² Statistics Canada, *Perspectives on Labour and Income* (Ottawa: 2010, Vol. 11, No. 9).

⁴³ Citizenship and Immigration, *Studying in Canada: Work permits for students – Working off campus* (Ottawa: 2010).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Canadian Bureau for International Education, *Northern Lights: International Graduates of Canadian Institutions and the National Workforce*, (Ottawa, 2007).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

that have high volumes of international students, Canada has the longest visa processing times, which can frustrate employers who must wait for a work permit before the student can begin post-graduation work.⁵¹

Some of the concerns about post-graduation work that were raised by international students during a focus group were: confusing and inconsistent government policies; communication silos; lack of up-to-date information available to employers; the perceived need at some companies to hire a lawyer to protect the company from risk associated with hiring an international graduate; the inability of a job candidate to start work when a job offer is made; the possible delay of months before a work permit is issued; and inconsistent information or misinformation circulating about the rules and regulations for hiring an international graduate.⁵²

Concern Eleven: Programs designed to make it easier for international students to access permanent residency are not as accessible to undergraduates as they should be.

The Opportunities Ontario Program is a program available to international students in Ontario that fast-tracks an application for permanent resident status through Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Because of recent changes, graduate students no longer require an offer of employment to obtain permanent resident status. However, undergraduate students are still required to have an offer of employment.

Additionally, while the Opportunities Ontario Program is an important step in facilitating the settlement of international graduates, the program is inaccessible to many of these students for several reasons. Application fees for the program are extremely high, ranging from \$1,500-\$2,000, which is far above any comparable immigration fee at the provincial or federal level. Moreover, application to the program does not guarantee gaining permanent residence status, and in the event that applicants are rejected, they cannot apply for a refund of any part of the application fee. Finally, while there are over 16,000 current international undergraduate students, and nearly as many graduate students pursuing PSE in Ontario, only 1,000 Opportunities Ontario placements are available.

Recommendations

Recommendation Eight: The barriers facing international students in gaining meaningful employment should be removed through a streamlining of government policy and greater availability of employment skills training.

To enable international students to obtain meaningful work experience in Ontario, both during and following their studies, steps must be taken to make policy guidelines clearer. While many aspects of immigration policy fall under federal jurisdiction, steps can be taken by the Ontario government to clarify some processes as well. For example, the Ontario Universities International program, which facilitates exchanges between Ontario universities and a number of other institutions across the world, could be expanded to include summer research initiatives or research internships during the academic year, so students are provided with Canadian work experience.⁵³ This would also help address the shortage of on-campus jobs available for international students. In addition, the provision of international student employment support seminars on campus could help familiarize international students with the Canadian labour market, provide them with the skills necessary to successfully apply for off-campus jobs, and link students with potential employers.

Recommendation Nine: The provincial government must take a more active role in ensuring employers have accurate information regarding the hiring of international students.

⁵¹ P. Johnston, *Opening the Door to International Students: An International Comparison of Immigration Policies and Practices*. (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 2000).

⁵² Canadian Bureau for International Education, *Northern Lights: International Graduates of Canadian Institutions and the National Workforce*, (Ottawa, 2007).

⁵³ Council of Ontario Universities, *The "Open Ontario" Strategy for Internationalizing Postsecondary Education*, (Toronto: Council of Ontario Universities. July 2010).

Employers have expressed that unclear information about hiring international students has led them to believe that hiring an international student is an unnecessary risk. The Ontario government should take a more active role in disseminating information about employing international students that clearly and concisely outlines the procedures necessary to hire an international student. Additionally, the government should work to make common knowledge of the fact that most international students are eligible to work during the school term and full-time during summers and school breaks. Through these steps, the Ontario government can help remove the stigma surrounding the hiring of international students by off-campus employers.

Recommendation Ten: The provincial government must extend eligibility for the Opportunities Ontario program to undergraduate students without pre-existing job offers.

Over half all international students indicate that they intend to apply for permanent resident status upon completion of their studies.⁵⁴ Extending the eligibility for the Opportunities Ontario program to undergraduate students who do not hold job offers, as was recently done for graduate students, will significantly improve their chances of gaining meaningful employment in Ontario. By removing the job offer requirement, the program can serve as an alternative to obtaining a work permit for students, which is often a barrier for receiving employment. The Opportunities Ontario program will help with international student retention in Ontario by providing Canadian-educated, skilled international students with the opportunity to remain in Ontario even if they do not have an immediate job offer.

Recommendation Eleven: The provincial government should expand the number of eligible candidates in the Opportunities Ontario program and create an award for high-achieving international students to offset the application cost.

Ontario has a vested interest in attracting the best and brightest students, and even if these students desire to remain in Ontario post-graduation they may be deterred from applying to Opportunities Ontario due to the excessive application fee and limited spaces. High-achieving students should be rewarded for their success. Waiving the cost of applying to Opportunities Ontario for these students will encourage them remain in Ontario and provide a meaningful social and economic contribution to this province. Furthermore, if the province is going to expand the number of international students by 50% over the next five years, then the province should work with the federal government to expand the number of candidates in the Opportunities Ontario program as well.

Student Support

Principles

Principle Twelve: Every international student in Ontario must be adequately supported during their studies through well-equipped international student offices that provide access to training and resources.

Like all students, international students require strong institutional support networks throughout their studies to ensure that they have the tools they need to succeed in Ontario's post-secondary education system and beyond. International students in particular have specific needs beyond domestic students, and require specialized support services. Students coming from abroad are new to Canada and may require assistance adjusting to an unfamiliar place and culture. In addition, some students may lack proficiency in English or French. Those students who have difficulty with the English language should have access to language training programs to ensure international students have the language skills to feel comfortable in the campus community. International students also benefit from education-to-career programming to ensure that they not only have the skills to compete for jobs, but are also

⁵⁴ Canadian Bureau for International Education, *Canada First: The 2009 Survey of International Students* (Ottawa, 2009).

well informed and aware of the specific hurdles they face. Finally, many international students require counselling and in-person support to navigate the often complex and unfamiliar regulations surrounding health insurance, taxes, visa and immigration, work permits, on- and off-campus housing, and needs- and merit-based financial aid. Without adequate student support, international students may find their education in Ontario less satisfactory than they had hoped, and experience undue hardship in integrating into the university or college environment.

Concerns

Concern Twelve: International students find it more difficult to participate in outside the classroom learning and volunteer experiences, making it harder to develop networks and skills necessary for employment.

Seven out of ten international students find it difficult to get involved in extra-curricular activities and volunteer experiences, with 2 of 10 finding it extremely or very difficult.⁵⁵ Student engagement has been demonstrated to be a key factor in academic persistence in university: students who report high levels of engagement are less likely to prematurely abandon their studies.⁵⁶ In addition, students who do not engage in extracurricular activities oftentimes do not develop the networks, skills and résumés to be competitive for jobs after graduation. More needs to be done to help international students get involved outside of the classroom so that they are better prepared to enter into the Canadian job market if they so desire.

Concern Thirteen: Though all Ontario institutions offer services to international students, the quality of programming varies at each institution, and some services are not offered at all institutions.

In addition to regular support services, all campuses offer international student resource centres. When comparing across post-secondary institutions, many of these resource centres have commonalities, but they are structured very differently at each institution, and the quality of the programming varies. All Ontario universities offer some degree of orientation, UHIP administration, and visa and permit assistance. Most institutions offer counselling, but the nature and extent of the counselling services offered varies extensively between universities. Peer networking, assistance with housing issues and programming on acclimatization are also offered at many, but not all, institutions. Fewer institutions offer English as a Second Language programs, financial assistance, and links to employment opportunities.

The inconsistency of the support available to international students at different universities means that students at some institutions are better supported than others. The high variability of program structure at different universities in Ontario also indicates that there may be a knowledge gap in the form of a lack of information, resources, and the sharing of best-practices between institutions.

Recommendations

Recommendation Twelve: The provincial government must ensure, through incentive or mandate, that international student offices provide a robust suite of international student support services. This should include but not be limited to: effective education-to-career programming, language training, acclimatization, transition and orientation programming, and counselling regarding health insurance, taxes, academics, visa and immigration, work permits, housing, and financial aid.

Specific support services are required to adequately attend to the needs of international students and further enhance their chances of success as a student in Ontario post-secondary institutions. Consequently, while allowing

⁵⁵ Canadian Bureau for International Education, *Northern Lights: International Graduates of Canadian Institutions and the National Workforce*, (Ottawa, 2007).

⁵⁶ Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, *Post-Secondary Student Access and Retention Strategies: Literature Review*, (Montreal: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, June 2009).

for institutional flexibility to deliver services in the manner that best suits the needs of their particular international student body, the same overall array of services should be available to all international students regardless of which institution they are studying at. If the government ensures that all international students receive a minimum level of service from institutions, an excellent student support system would be a strong selling point for Ontario as an international study destination in the recruitment process. The Ontario government and post-secondary institutions could also leverage current student services offered to all Ontario university students, such as academic guidance, athletics and recreation infrastructure, library and scholarly journal access, IT support, housing assistance, career counselling, and disability services to meet its obligation to provide international student services.

Branch Campuses and Recruitment

Principles

Principle Thirteen: International students must meet the equivalent academic standards as domestic students to gain admission to programs at Ontario post-secondary institutions.

Some universities have partnered with other institutions that are known to accept students with lower academic standards with a guarantee of future admission to a post-secondary institution they would otherwise have been unable to attend. While some of these international programs may produce some students of a high enough calibre to attend university in Ontario, there is no overarching regulatory body that ensures that this is the case for all international students entering the post-secondary education system. In order to maintain the integrity and quality of Ontario's universities, it is essential that comparable academic admissions standards be applied to all students. It is unfair to domestic students, as well as international students that have been held to higher admission standards, if some students are able to obtain entrance with lower qualifications because they have attended a particular international campus. Maintaining consistent admissions standards ensures that all students entering Ontario's PSE system can handle the rigors of post-secondary study.

Principle Fourteen: International campus expansion efforts must only be pursued if quality can be assured, and if there are clear benefits to both the host country and expanding institution.

In recent years, the number of Ontario institutions planning to establish one or more international branch campus has grown substantially. More universities are considering establishing international campuses as a means of attracting international students, generating university revenue, and enhancing the international brand of their institution. For example, the University of Calgary Qatar offers nursing programs at an international branch campus, the University of Waterloo has an agreement with Dubai, where students are taught by Waterloo faculty for two years in Dubai and for two years in Waterloo, and McMaster University has articulated plans to establish an international branch campus in China.

Many post-secondary institutions are strongly attracted to the idea of international campus expansion. McMaster's taskforce on internationalization expresses this appeal, stating, "An international footprint is no longer a matter of choice, but rather a necessity".⁵⁷ Nevertheless, there are several concerns with international campus expansion. There are few or no regulations concerning the quality of education and student support services offered at these campuses. In addition, the establishment of international branch campuses may take resources away from the development of domestic institutions.⁵⁸ International campuses should provide the same educational quality and

⁵⁷ International Revenue Generation Taskforce, *Report of International Revenue Generation Taskforce*, (Hamilton, ON: McMaster University, 2009),

⁵⁸ American Association of University Professors and the Canadian Association of University Teachers, *On Conditions of Employment at Overseas Campuses*, (Ottawa: AAUP/CAUT, April 2009).

quality of student support services as domestic institutions, and should only be pursued if it is clear that they benefit the host country and the expanding institution.

Concerns

Concern Fourteen: Some private, for-profit international colleges and programs allow international students to bypass academic requirements for university programs, and these programs are often sub-standard.

Some private, for-profit international study programs allow international students to bypass academic requirements for university programs by facilitating admission into university for all students who complete the program. This is concerning because there is no regulatory body ensuring that all students completing these programs are qualified to attend university and meet the Ontario post-secondary institution's entrance standards. Rather, agreements between private international colleges and universities are on a bilateral, ad-hoc basis, leaving assurances of competency to be self-regulated by the participating institutions. Further, it appears the primary motivation for these arrangements is not to provide a bridging program for international students, but to earn additional revenue for the universities.⁵⁹

For example, the Simon Fraser International College is run by a private corporation called Navitas. The corporation handles recruitment and administration of the college and accepts most students, even if they do not have high school diplomas. Once completing the program, most students are granted admission to Simon Fraser University. There are concerns that these corporations are utilizing dishonest recruitment practices, the quality of instruction is extremely poor, and that more qualified international students who have not attended affiliate private preparation programs are shut out.⁶⁰

Concern Fifteen: Due to a lack of domestic regulation, the creation of international branch campuses carries a host of potential risks which have implications for institutions and the province.

International branch campuses provide no guarantee that students will receive sufficient support services or that the quality of education expected of Ontario's post-secondary institutions will be maintained. For example, at Waterloo's Dubai branch campus, there is concern that the quality of student support services is lower than at the domestic campus. Another concern raised is that the academic staff at international branch campuses may frequently be hired on temporary, contract positions, resulting in a lower quality of teaching for students.⁶¹ In McMaster's assessment of the feasibility of an international branch campus in China, the institutional report notes that international branch campuses are often less expensive to run than domestic campuses.⁶² While this may be beneficial to the bottom line of institutions, if cost savings come at the expense of quality student experiences and teaching excellence, then international branch campuses compromise the international reputation of Ontario universities. Furthermore, Waterloo experienced initial difficulty in recruiting a sufficient number of students to their international branch campus, forcing the institution to divert additional funding from the operating budget that should have gone to other pursuits. This is particularly concerning the struggles that some institutions, such as Michigan State, George Mason University and the Rochester Institute of Technology, have had in maintaining international branch campuses as economically viable.

A related concern surrounding international branch campuses is whether campuses in host countries will enjoy the same degree of academic and personal freedom as domestic campuses. Particularly, as Canadian institutions

⁵⁹ Mark Mackinnon and Rod Mickleburgh, "Chinese students pay dearly for Canadian education", *Globe and Mail* (October 2010).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ American Association of University Professors and the Canadian Association of University Teachers, *On Conditions of Employment at Overseas Campuses*, (Ottawa: AAUP/CAUT, April 2009).

⁶² International Revenue Generation Taskforce, *Report of International Revenue Generation Taskforce*, (Hamilton, ON: McMaster University, 2009),

expand their educational involvement to countries with authoritarian governance systems, it becomes more difficult to ensure that academic freedom, non-discrimination, and institutional autonomy are maintained.

Recommendations

Recommendation Thirteen: The provincial government must work to ensure that universities do not partner with private, for-profit international colleges that allow international students to bypass academic standards.

Partnerships between universities and private, for-profit international colleges which guarantee students automatic admission to the partner institution upon completion of the college program are problematic for several reasons. Students admitted to the international colleges may have few academic qualifications, creating the perception that Ontario's post-secondary system is accessible to those who can afford to pay, rather than the best and brightest students. Moreover, there is a direct conflict of interest in evaluating student performance if the university is deriving revenue from the college. It is impossible to ensure academic standards are being upheld if the institution that runs the college program is closely affiliated with the university that automatically accepts all graduating students. International college preparatory programs are not a problem in and of themselves, rather the practice of allowing students participating to bypass academic standards is the cause of concern. The Ontario government should create a regulatory framework to ensure that all international students, regardless of preparatory program, are subject to the same admission standards for Ontario's post-secondary institutions.

Recommendation Fourteen: The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities must promote the creation of an international branch campus quality assurance strategy through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers recommends that standards and rule-based regimes govern the internationalization of post-secondary institutions.⁶³ Students support this as an important step in ensuring that international branch campuses of Ontario's universities and colleges meet the same academic and student support standards as domestic campuses. Considering that the federal government is responsible for foreign affairs and international development while education is the responsibility of provincial government, it is suggested that a regulation regime should be done through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to accommodate the intersecting provincial and federal jurisdiction.

Australia has a much longer history of implementing international branch campuses. As a result of a number of campus failures, the Australian government has created a transnational quality strategy aimed at guaranteeing the consistency and quality of post-secondary education services offered abroad. This strategy includes a good-practice guide, a quality assurance and accreditation framework, and comprehensive host country regulations.⁶⁴ As Canada's post-secondary institutions expand their research and teaching facilities across the world, it is essential that the government follow in the footsteps of Australia in creating a comprehensive quality strategy for international branch campuses that includes assurance of the provision of student services on these campuses.

⁶³ American Association of University Professors and the Canadian Association of University Teachers, *On Conditions of Employment at Overseas Campuses*, (Ottawa: AAUP/CAUT, April 2009).

⁶⁴ Australian Government. *Transnational Quality Strategy*. Accessed at <http://www.transnational.deewr.gov.au/>.

International Students Policy Statement

WHEREAS international students in Ontario should not be financially subsidized by the government, but should pay no more in tuition than the real cost of their education.

WHEREAS international student tuition must not be used as a tool to generate revenue for underfunded institutions.

WHEREAS the provincial government has a responsibility to ensure that international students are levied fairly.

WHEREAS any increases in international student tuition must be predictable for students, as well as reasonable, year-to-year.

WHEREAS Ontario should be attracting the best and brightest international students, regardless of socioeconomic status.

WHEREAS international students in Ontario must have access to affordable health care during their studies.

WHEREAS International students must have access to affordable health care from any doctor or hospital in Ontario.

WHEREAS if international students must buy into a private health plan, this plan must be governed and overseen by a body with significant representation from international students.

WHEREAS qualified international students in Ontario should be able to access meaningful employment during the course of their studies.

WHEREAS if they choose, qualified international students who seek employment in Canada should have an equal opportunity to find work post-graduation.

WHEREAS international students in Ontario should be equipped with the skills they need to succeed in the Canadian workforce during the course of their education.

WHEREAS every international student in Ontario must be adequately supported through well-equipped international student offices that provide access to training and resources.

WHEREAS students in Ontario must have opportunities to engage in meaningful study-abroad opportunities.

WHEREAS international students must meet the same academic standards as domestic students to gain admission to programs at Ontario post-secondary institutions.

WHEREAS international campus expansion efforts must only be pursued if quality can be assured, and if there are clear, guaranteed benefits to both the host country and expanding institution.

WHEREAS when international student tuition increases at a higher rate than the growth in revenue for domestic students, international students move further away from contributing the real cost of their education.

WHEREAS international student tuition is completely deregulated, making these students vulnerable to dramatic and unpredictable fee increases.

WHEREAS the vast majority of international students come from upper-middle and high-income backgrounds, indicating that studying in Canada is not an option for most international students from low-income backgrounds.

WHEREAS while a number of merit-based scholarships for international students exist, there is currently limited need-based financial aid available to international students.

WHEREAS: due to the private nature of the University Health Insurance Plan, premium increases are subject to market demand and thus can fluctuate significantly.

WHEREAS in some cases, students are forced to pay out-of-pocket for health care services that cost above what UHIP will cover.

WHEREAS the UHIP reimbursement system forces students to find the funds to pay up-front for expensive procedures.

WHEREAS international students often have difficulty obtaining meaningful employment during the course of their studies and face barriers to employment that domestic students do not experience.

WHEREAS international students are discouraged about employment prospects post-graduation, and complicated government policies often make it difficult to obtain employment.

WHEREAS employers often view hiring international students as more complicated than domestic students due to confusing policies.

WHEREAS programs designed to make it easier for international students to compete for jobs are not as accessible to undergraduates as they should be.

WHEREAS international students find it more difficult to participate in outside the classroom learning and volunteer experiences, making it harder to develop networks and skills necessary for employment.

WHEREAS though all Ontario institutions offer services to international students, the quality of programming varies at each institution, and some services are not offered at all institutions.

WHEREAS some private, for-profit international colleges and programs allow international students to bypass academic requirements for university programs, and these programs are often sub-standard.

WHEREAS due to a lack of domestic regulation, the creation of international branch campuses carries a host of potential risks which have implications for institutions and the province.

BIRT international student tuition must be regulated within the Ontario tuition framework to ensure fairness for students, such that international tuition is equal to the government and tuition revenue generated for a comparable domestic student.

BIFRT international tuition must be regulated in cohorts to maintain predictability for students, such that tuition increases beyond the first year would be capped at the domestic student growth rates.

BIFRT the provincial government must mandate that institutions adopt a set-aside of international tuition reserved for need-based financial aid for international students.

BIFRT the provincial government and post-secondary institutions should offer more merit-based and needs-based scholarships aimed at attracting high-achieving international students to Ontario.

BIFRT the provincial government should allow international students to enrol in the Ontario Health Insurance Plan without paying an additional premium.

BIFRT in the short-term, the provincial government should allow international students to pay insurance premiums directly to OHIP in return for the same comprehensive coverage given to domestic students.

BIFRT the UHIP Steering Committee must have significant international student representation.

BIFRT the barriers facing international students in gaining meaningful employment should be removed through a streamlining of government policy and the implementation of employment skills training specifically geared towards challenges facing international students.

BIFRT the provincial government must take a more active role in ensuring employers have accurate information regarding the hiring of international students.

BIFRT the provincial government must extend eligibility for the Opportunities Ontario program to undergraduate students without pre-existing job offers.

BIFRT the provincial government should expand the number of eligible candidates in the Opportunities Ontario program and create an award for high-achieving international students to offset the application cost.

BIFRT the provincial government must ensure, through incentive or mandate, that international student offices provide effective education-to-career programming, language training, acclimatization, transition and orientation programming, and counselling regarding health insurance, taxes, academics, visa and immigration, work permits, housing, and financial aid.

BIFRT the provincial government must work to ensure that universities do not partner with private, for-profit international colleges that allow international students to bypass academic standards.

BIFRT the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities must promote the creation of an international branch campus quality assurance strategy through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.