



NEWS RELEASE

March 1, 2021

For immediate release

EDMONTON, ALBERTA – The tabling of the 2021 Alberta Budget has left current and future MacEwan University students concerned about the financial viability of their education. With no increase to Alberta's stagnant student grant system, Budget 2021 has failed to remove barriers to the kind of economic stimulus needed by Albertans in the midst of a global pandemic.

Alberta's trend of underfunding student grants continued in Budget 2021, with no new funding added to the already limited pool available. For comparison, some other provinces like New Brunswick and Ontario now have two to three times Alberta's grant availability per student. As tuition increases, this lack of aid poses a financial threat to students.

The tuition hikes for MacEwan students have been considerable. For two years in a row, tuition increases averaging seven per cent across all programs have been approved, putting pressure on students. In fall of 2020 alone, SAMU's food support service, The Pantry, provided MacEwan students with over 800 days' worth of food assistance – one in five students accessing the service had dependents.

“From certificates, to diplomas, to degrees, a university education has empowered Albertans entering and re-entering the workforce for decades, and that kind of economic stimulus is needed now,” said Sean Waddingham, President of the Students' Association of MacEwan University. “More than ever, that investment needs to come through targeted funding for the post-secondary system.”

Students are also faced with an unfriendly job market, and may deal with increasing job uncertainty after graduation. With the cost of education continuing to increase, at the same time as record-high unemployment, students are left to contend with a harsh post-pandemic reality that has little in the way of government support.

“We hear about the desire to make our universities into drivers of economic growth, but when it comes to making that a reality, we're not seeing the needed support from the Government,” Ruan Bouwer said. Bouwer, the Vice President External at SAMU, added that even as students do all they can to pay

the mounting costs associated with their education, the job market that awaits them is an increasingly bleak one.

“The most skilled and passionate of Albertan graduates shouldn’t have to move a few provinces or countries over for opportunities to use the things they’ve learned at Albertan institutions”, Bouwer said, “investing in jobs means investing in education, and we’re not seeing that reflected in this budget.”

About SAMU: The Students’ Association of MacEwan University (SAMU) is a student-centered organization governed by students, for students. Providing many programs and services that serve the student body including but not limited to the The Pantry, Peer Support, Breakfast Club, and our emergency loan program. Acting within MacEwan, while maintaining independence from the University. It is an organization, serving students, inspired by students.

For more information visit www.samu.ca.

For media inquiries:

Sean Waddingham | SAMU President

sapresident@macewan.ca