

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

All Athabasca University students stand united in opposition to tuition increase

Edmonton, Alberta – December 17, 2019

Athabasca University students were disappointed to learn that a proposal to increase tuition by 7% was approved by the Board of Governors of Athabasca University, despite strong opposition to the increase being voiced by both undergraduate and graduate students at Canada's largest distance education university. The proposal was in response to the cut of \$1.6 million to Athabasca University's operating grant and \$1.7 million in infrastructure funding in the 2019 Government of Alberta budget in October.

"Students at Athabasca University are upset, this tuition increase will hit many of them hard," said Brandon Simmons, President of the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) and member of the Athabasca University Board of Governors. "Many of our students choose Athabasca University because a distance education and the AU model are all about removing barriers, but this tuition hike will just add a big financial barrier for the over 40,000 students who study here."

The increase was set at the largest possible increase allowable by the provincial government, at 7%. This increase was also applied to tuition fees paid by international and out-of-province students. Including the increase to the mandatory Learning Resources Fee, a single undergraduate course for Alberta students has increased by \$43. However, depending on a student's program, location of their residence, and the number of courses taken in a year, the increase can be substantially more – a degree program for out-of-province students, for example, will see tuition and fees rise from \$34,570 for the program to \$36,840, with the possibility of more increases next year.

The Board of Governors approved the increase after a brief consultation period with students, where the university's administration released the proposed increase to the student representatives the same day it went to the university's Board Finance and Property Committee. Past tuition increases, including increases to out-of-province students and international students during the Alberta tuition freeze that started in 2015, followed much longer and extensive consultation periods that allowed the proposals to be refined to work better for Athabasca University and students.

"Going to school is not cheap, especially for groups like Indigenous students who are often left out of post-secondary education," said Natasha Donahue, AUSU Vice-President External and Student Affairs and also one of the three Athabasca University board members who voted against the tuition hike. "Indigenous students in particular will face big challenges. These students have faced countless barriers in the colonial history of Canada, and Athabasca University has a responsibility to remove barriers for Indigenous student populations. This tuition increase only heightens those barriers."

The Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) is an independent, student-run society representing the undergraduate students of Athabasca University. We serve over 35,000 members annually in home-study locations across Canada and internationally. In any given month, our membership is in the order of 26,000 active students. Our mandate is to provide advocacy, support, and student services to our membership, and to foster the support, promotion, and excellence of distance education at AU and globally.

Media Contact:

Brandon Simmons, AUSU President
president@ausu.org / 780-668-2952

For more information on AUSU and its programs:

www.ausu.org or contact our office at ausu@ausu.org