

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Undergraduate Students Disappointed as Athabasca University Raises Tuition for Second Year in a Row

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Athabasca University students will have to dig deeper to pay for tuition starting in September 2021 with the Board of Governors approving a 5% tuition increase for all students, including out-of-province and international students. This increase comes on the heels of dramatic operating funding cuts from the Government of Alberta since 2018, along with increased costs from investments in digital infrastructure.

“Students are disappointed that in the face of a global pandemic, Athabasca University is turning to tuition hikes to balance the books for this coming year,” said Athabasca University Students’ Union (AUSU) President and Athabasca University Board of Governors member Stacey Hutchings. “We were relieved and want to acknowledge Athabasca University is one of the only institutions to not seek the maximum possible increase, but any increase will be difficult for many students.”

The Government of Alberta changed the rules starting last year, allowing Alberta universities and colleges to increase tuition by up to 7% each year for three years following a tuition freeze. Tuition increases were brought in to decrease the reliance of institutions on government funding. Athabasca University is already the least reliant university in Alberta on government funding, thanks to enrolment increases and an efficient distance education model.

“We asked students at the beginning of the month how much of an impact a 7% tuition increase would have on their studies, and 97% of students said it would have an impact, with 87% of those saying it would have a significant impact,” said AUSU Vice President External and Student Affairs Natalia Iwanek. “It is going to have an especially large impact on students outside of Alberta like myself, who already pay substantially more tuition for a course than Alberta residents.”

“At the end of the day, tuition increases are a direct result of government underfunding, which is acute here at Athabasca University when we receive less funding per student than other institutions,” concluded Hutchings. “We hope that in the midst of their Alberta 2030 review of the post-secondary system, the Government of Alberta realizes Athabasca University and AU students are a great investment for public dollars.”

The Athabasca University Students’ Union (AUSU) is an independent, student-run society representing the undergraduate students of Athabasca University. We serve over 38,000 members annually in home-study locations across Canada and internationally. In any given month, our membership is approximately 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. For more information about AUSU and its programs, please see www.ausu.org, or contact our office at ausu@ausu.org.

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