

## 2022 Tuition Survey for Students – Report on Findings November 2022

### **Background:**

In keeping with the University of Saskatchewan's goal to have robust discussions with students about tuition on an annual basis, USask undertook a second Tuition Consultation Survey in October 2022. This was the second year for the survey. In Year 1 (2021), students responded to open-ended questions asking them to describe areas for investment and disinvestment within the university, with a view to supporting the quality of education, supports for students, and student experience at USask. These open-ended responses were themed and a full report was provided. One of the criticisms of this first survey was that it took time to generate and write responses and students sought a simpler response approach. Accordingly, this year's survey employed the themes developed by students in the 2021 survey, making them into closed-ended questions that required a much shorter time to complete.

The invitation also included a reminder that participation was voluntary, and responses were anonymous. The invitation expressed that the goal was to develop key points of action from responses that would be shared with university leaders.

### **Who responded?**

A total of 3,600 students responded to the invitation to provide feedback sent out to all undergraduate and graduate students, and the survey was open for two weeks. This represents a response rate of 16%. Complete data were available for **2,889** students (13% of those students invited to participate). Given that a smaller number of students completed the entire survey, proportions for investment items (described below) were compared between the full (but survey incomplete) sample and the reduced (survey completed) sample. No substantive differences were observed in the findings.

The demographics for the responding student group are as follows:

- 82% domestic; 18% international
- 77% undergraduate (including 67% direct entry and 10% professional programs); 22% graduate (13% masters and 9% doctoral)
- 28% of responding students reported being in the first year of studies, 24% in second year, and 22% in third year; the remaining participants (26%) reported having been pursuing a degree for four or more years
- More than a third of students responding (37%) were registered in the College of Arts and Science, with four other direct-entry colleges showing similar proportions of representation, including: Edwards School of Business (10%), Education (9%), Engineering (9%), and Agriculture and Bioresources (9%). The proportion of the sample from other colleges and schools can be seen in Appendix A.
- More than half of the students responding were financing their studies through personal savings (54%). The second most-common source of financing was scholarships, grants, or bursaries from the university (39%), followed by support from family, extended family, or friends (38%). Details on other sources of tuition payments can be found in Appendix B.

### **Areas of investment that are important to students**

Students were asked to consider a range of 32 possible areas where they believe their college, and the university as a whole, should consider investing resources to improve education quality, student experience, and/or student supports that are provided. Responses were provided on a scale ranging from 1 "not at all important" to 5 "very important." Following each cluster of items, students were given the opportunity to provide any additional ideas about investments.

- **Investments into facilities and infrastructure**
  - Enhancement to study rooms
  - Maintenance and renovation of buildings
  - Upgrades to classroom technology
  - Improvements to lab facilities
  - Improvements to studio/performance spaces
  - More comfortable/flexible seating in classrooms
  - Additional renovation to libraries
  - Enhancement to the PAC gym
  - Improved parking options
- **Investments into services and programs**
  - Offer more scholarships and bursaries
  - Increase the availability of learning resources to support greater understanding of sustainability
  - Improve student extracurricular and sport activities
  - Increase opportunities for internships and work-integrated learning
  - Enhance career support to help students transition out of university
  - Improve availability of academic advising
  - Increase open-access textbooks and digital online resources
  - Improve activities related to orientation and the transition into university
  - Increase assistance to students in navigating the university processes, such as registering for classes or finding out about financial awards
  - Increase employment opportunities for students on campus
  - Expand the hours of operation for libraries
  - Improve safety and security on campus
- **Investments into course delivery and quality of instruction**
  - Increase the availability of online classes
  - More hands-on experience in courses
  - Improve the quality of instruction by providing better learning technology tools such as Canvas
  - Increase access to tutors
  - Provide workshops on such things as study skills
  - Improve quality of instruction through expanded training opportunities for instructors
- **Investments focused on student wellness and equity, diversity, and inclusion**
  - Increase mental health supports
  - Make improvements to student wellness services (in general)
  - Increase availability of learning resources to support greater understanding and awareness of anti-racism
  - Provide healthier food options or more choices
  - Improve accessibility, particularly supports provided through access and Equity Services (AES)

The table below shows the proportion of students who rated an item as important. The first column reflects those who indicated that an item was “Important” or “Very Important.” The second column indicates those items for which there was at least 10% difference between graduate (G) and undergraduate (UG) students and between international (I) and domestic students (D).

<b>Investment Area</b>	<b>Important + Very Important %</b>	<b>Differences (at least 10%)</b>
<i>Increase open access textbooks and digital online resources</i>	83	
<i>Offer more scholarships and bursaries</i>	81	I > D
<i>Increase mental health supports</i>	71	
<i>More hands-on experience in courses</i>	67	I > D
<i>Enhance career support to help students transition out of university</i>	67	I > D
<i>Increase opportunities for internships and work-integrated learning</i>	66	I > D
<i>Improve the quality of instruction through expanded training opportunities for instructors</i>	65	
<i>Make improvements to student wellness services (in general)</i>	64	I > D
<i>Improve availability of academic advising</i>	64	I > D
<i>Provide healthier food options or more choices</i>	64	I > D
<i>Improved parking options</i>	64	UG > G D > I
<i>Improve the quality of instruction by providing better learning technology tools (such as Canvas)</i>	62	
<i>Increase employment opportunities for students on campus</i>	61	I > D
<i>Increase assistance to students in navigating the university processes, such as registering for classes or finding out</i>	60	I > D
<i>Improve safety and security on campus</i>	57	I > D
<i>More comfortable/flexible seating in classrooms</i>	57	UG > G
<i>Increase the availability of online classes</i>	57	
<i>Increase the availability of learning resources to support greater understanding and awareness of anti-racism</i>	56	I > D
<i>Improve accessibility, particularly supports provided through Access and Equity Services (AES)</i>	53	I > D
<i>Expand the hours of operation for libraries</i>	53	I > D
<i>Maintenance and renovation of buildings</i>	50	
<i>Increase access to tutors</i>	50	I > D
<i>Increase the availability of learning resources to support greater understanding of sustainability</i>	50	I > D
<i>Improvements to lab facilities</i>	45	G > UG I > D
<i>Enhancements to study rooms</i>	44	I > D
<i>Upgrades to classroom technology</i>	44	I > D
<i>Provide workshops on such things as study skills</i>	43	G > UG I > D
<i>Improve activities related to orientation and the transition to university</i>	37	G > UG I > D
<i>Improve student extracurricular and sport activities</i>	35	I > D
<i>Additional renovations to libraries</i>	33	I > D
<i>Enhancement to the PAC</i>	27	I > D
<i>Improvements to studio/performance spaces</i>	21	I > D

Among the cluster of desired investment areas with the highest proportions of importance ratings (up to 64%), almost half of the items pertain to services and programs where students believe more investment would be important (i.e., online textbooks, financial aid, support for career transition, internship opportunities, and academic advising). Three of the top items are from the student wellness cluster (i.e., mental health supports, wellness in general, healthier food). Some importance was also placed on course delivery and the quality of instruction (i.e., hands-on experience in classes, expanded training for faculty) and facilities and infrastructure (i.e., parking). For those items at the high end of importance, undergraduate and domestic respondents put more emphasis on improved parking. In general, a greater number of international students who participated in the survey endorsed these investments as important or very important when compared to the proportion of domestic students.

At the other end of the continuum, smaller proportions of students wanted to see service and program investments tied to student extracurricular and sport activities and facilities/infrastructure investments designed to improve studio/performance spaces, the PAC, and additional renovations to the Library. This may be a function of less use of these services and facilities by those responding in this manner. It was also observed that a larger proportion of international student respondents (as compared to domestic students) found these items to be important or very important.

In addition to rating the importance of specific investments, responses to open-ended questions included other exemplars of the investment categories. The examples below represent sub-themes that were raised by multiple students.

- *In facilities and infrastructure: AC in the classrooms; air ventilation/air quality in the buildings; indoor walkway that connects whole campus; bathrooms (cleanliness); improvements to other campuses (e.g., Regina, Prince Albert); improvements to residences; bike racks and lanes; lighting on campus, especially on parking lots; more student study spaces or common areas; more leisure seating across campus, including outdoors; more accessible study spaces and classrooms (especially for students using wheelchairs/experiencing mobility issues);*
- *In services and programs: Libraries open 24h/over the weekend; extended hours of food services; more assistance/support for international students;*
- *In course delivery and quality of instruction: recording of lectures; more hybrid courses; faculty positions focused on teaching only, (e.g., teaching stream; smaller class sizes); and*
- *In student wellness and equity, diversity, and inclusion: more food choices (e.g., halal options, more diverse cuisine) and more affordable food in general; international student events and advocacy; more resources for parents on campus; more spaces for student expression and gathering.*

### **Where should the university consider disinvestments of resources?**

Based on the items developed from the pilot survey in Year 1, students were asked to consider a smaller set of seven (7) areas for which the university might consider possible disinvestment. These were areas previously identified by students as places where their college and the university should look to disinvest or remove resources. These were previously reported as areas that may no longer be providing the intended value to the quality of education, student experience, and needed student supports. Specifically, students rated their level of agreement on a scale range from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree” with **investing less in on-campus services and programs**, as follows:

- Food Services
- Athletics and Physical Activities Complex (PAC)

- Books or journal articles in the libraries
- Extracurricular and social activities
- Parking services
- In-person convocation
- Museum and galleries

The table below shows the proportion of students who indicated they strongly agreed and somewhat agreed (second column) and the proportion of students who strongly disagreed and somewhat disagreed (third column) that the university should invest less in an array of areas.

<b>Disinvestment Area</b>	<b>Strongly Agree + Somewhat Agree %</b>	<b>Differences (at least 10%)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree + Somewhat Disagree %</b>	<b>Differences (at least 10%)</b>
<i>Museums and galleries</i>	39	UG > G	36	
<i>Athletics and the Physical Activities Complex (PAC)</i>	35	D > I	39	
<i>Extracurricular and social activities</i>	28		44	
<i>In-person convocation</i>	28		42	
<i>Parking Services</i>	27		56	D > I UG > G
<i>Books or journal articles in the libraries</i>	23		53	G > UG
<i>Food services</i>	20		56	

Responses to the question about disinvestments provide less clear answers and show discord among the responding student body. Based on the ratings, it seems that students are not interested in the university investing less in food services, books and journal articles in the libraries, or parking services. By contrast, more than one-third of students responding supported disinvestments in museums and galleries alongside athletics and the PAC.

Students had the opportunity to provide open-ended responses regarding disinvestments. Responses showed a pattern of theme areas, including services or other areas that were viewed as less important and where a college or the university should look to disinvest or remove resources. Generated themes included administrative salaries, sports teams, and parking enforcement.

As an addition to the survey this year, students were asked if they are aware of areas where the university might be duplicating services (e.g., places where the exact same or similar service appears to be available to students). Responses showed 89% of students selecting “No” and 11% responding “Yes.” Those who selected “yes” were asked to describe the duplication in services. Examples included:

- *Academic advising from separate colleges*
- *Career services provided within a college as well as within a central service*
- *The existence of both a College of Graduate Studies and a home college for graduate students*
- *Emails and the announcements/inbox areas in Canvas*
- *Multiple Tim Horton’s locations on campus (with the expressed desire for replacement with something different)*

## **Conclusions**

The 2022 Student Tuition Survey involved more than 3,000 students providing input on areas for greater investment as well as agreement or disagreement regarding where the university might draw down on resources in order to increase investments elsewhere. Not surprisingly, for students, there is much interest in and importance placed on areas where incremental investment is desirable. It is also clear that the university is making investments into many of these areas and needs to increase efforts to make students aware of these investments. There is less clarity or agreement from the student perspective on how the university might reduce the expenditure of resources. It was very helpful to see that only a small proportion of students are seeing duplication.

The largely closed-ended response design of this year's survey appears to have increased the desirability of completing the survey and will be maintained next year. The response rate for the 2022 survey was much better than what was observed in 2021. We will explore ways to further increase participation in 2023 (e.g., increasing the length of time that the survey is open). Given that so many of the items were considered important by students, next year's survey will also employ a ranking mechanism in an effort to gauge relative importance of investment areas from those who respond.

The findings from this survey provide helpful insights and guidance on where students would like to see incremental investments. The findings will inform ongoing and annual discussions about resource allocation, in general, and tuition discussions, in particular.

**Appendix A**  
**Distribution of Student Respondents from each College/School**

<b>College or Department</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Agriculture and Bioresources	9
Arts and Science	37
Dentistry	0.4
Education	9
Edwards School of Business	10
Engineering	9
Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies	4
Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy	1
Kinesiology	4
Law	2
Medicine	2
Nursing	5
Pharmacy and Nutrition	4
School of Environment and Sustainability	1
School of Public Health	1
School of Rehabilitation Science	0.3
Veterinary Medicine	3

Note: There were no colleges or schools with frequencies less than 10 students. The percentages sum to more than 100% due to rounding.

**Appendix B**  
**Distribution of Student Responses to the Question Regarding Sources of Tuition Payments**

<b>Source</b> (multiple sources possible)	<b>Percentage</b>
Personal savings	55
Scholarships, grants, or bursaries from the university	39
Family, extended family, or friends	38
Employment earnings during program of study, including summer jobs	37
Canada or Saskatchewan government student loans	35
Government scholarships, grants, or bursaries	19
RESP/RRSP	17
Bank loans or bank lines of credit	12
Credit cards	10
Research or teaching assistantships	6
Sponsorship by a First Nation band or Indigenous funding program	3
Sponsorship by an employer	2
Another financial source	2
Sponsorships, grants, or bursaries by a non-Canadian government	1

Note: Students could choose as many options as they considered applicable. Percentages represented the proportion of responding students who chose a particular option.