

ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES: SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS



The Issue: International students have a vital role to play in contributing to Ontario's economic and social prosperity. As these students move to Ontario from around the world to study, live and work across the province, Ontario's universities remain committed to ensuring their success by providing them with the resources and supports they need throughout their studies and after they graduate.

Background

- International students play a vital role within the social and cultural fabric of Ontario. Their unique perspectives and insights from around the world help strengthen Ontario's diversity and help enrich university campuses and our local communities.
- International students are critical to Ontario's long-term competitiveness. By joining the workforce in their local communities, they are helping address critical labour and skills shortages – helping support the province's economic recovery.
- A 2022 international student report released by RBC Economics shows that international students are twice as likely as domestic students to study engineering and more than 2.5x as likely to study math and computer sciences – two top areas of projected labour shortages.

Ontario represents more than **38 per cent** of all international students in Canada, according to [Statistics Canada](#).

A growing number of international students join Ontario's universities each year. Over **100,000** international students were enrolled at Ontario's universities during the 2021-22 academic year, according to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

International students can help fill labour shortages

Post-secondary enrolment of international students with ESDC projected shortfalls (to 2028) by sector

	University Enrolment	College Enrolment	Projected Labour Shortfall
 Trades, services	10,143	17,325	-28,200
 Health care	7,359	7,632	-110,900
 STEM	96,522	38,139	-21,200

Source: Statistics Canada, RBC Economics Research

How Universities Are Supporting International Students

- Many Ontario universities maintain partnership agreements with international universities that help create pathways for international students to transfer to an Ontario university and study in high-demand fields, such as computer science and engineering.
- Through dedicated international student centres, Ontario's universities offer tailored resources, such as in-person and online counseling, mentorship and peer wellness programming to support student success.
- Additionally, universities continue to help international and domestic students find housing on campus and in their local community. Many universities support an off-campus housing service with dedicated staff that can help students search for rentals, review leases, as well as navigate the local rental market and landlord-tenant relations, according to a survey of 16 Ontario universities conducted by the Council of Senior Administrative Officers.
- The same survey shows that universities are also working with community-based groups and the private sector to identify opportunities to increase residence spaces, such as exploring new leasing opportunities, redeveloping university-owned off-campus properties and developing purpose-built student housing.
- Ontario's universities are also offering international students scholarships and bursaries to help ensure they have access to the financial supports they need throughout their studies. This includes entrance scholarships, as well as scholarships and bursaries based on academic standing and community engagement.

According to a survey of 16 Ontario universities conducted by the Council of Senior Administrative Officers, universities have added over **6,400** new residence spaces over the past five years. There are currently over **59,600** total residence spaces, and it is projected over **9,000** new spaces will be added over the next five years, with several universities developing plans for expansion beyond 2028.

"I have had a lot of support over the years as an international student, so to be able to work for Brock International to support students is great. It means a lot to be able to give back to the Brock community. Now that I am part of the Global Learning team, it feels even more rewarding because I understand how impactful international learning experiences can be."

– Brian Chan, psychology graduate, Brock University

PARTNERING TO CREATE AN ENRICHING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Ontario's international student community is one of the most vibrant across the country, with universities welcoming over 100,000 students from around the world annually – each contributing to the social, cultural and economic fiber of communities across the province.

As these students navigate a new country and university life, providing them with the resources and supports that address their unique needs is critical to setting them up for future success. Universities across the province continue to offer a wide-range of key supports tailored to international students, such as peer support programs, scholarships and awards, mental health and wellness resources, housing and immigration advising.



Below are just some of the ways Ontario's universities are supporting international students throughout their degree and helping them achieve their academic, personal and career goals.

● Supporting student success, mental health and well-being

● International students will play an important role in filling Ontario's labour and skills gaps, especially in Ontario's northern communities. To help international students find employment in the local community, **Algoma University** partnered with Devant to launch a customized, web-based platform that offers customized career development opportunities and resources. Through Devant, international students have access to immigration lawyers, virtual hiring expos, resume tools, and more, helping create pathways for success.

● Connecting international students with accessible and tailored mental health resources helps support their success. **Laurentian University** partnered with keep.meSAFE – an online mental wellness and student support program – that connects international students with a suite of virtual resources, as well as counsellors from around the world who can communicate in multiple languages.

● Providing services to enhance the well-being of international students is essential. At **OCAD University**, the International Student Wellness Community Worker provides critical services such as counselling to meet the intersectional and unique needs of international students, including health and wellness, social isolation and community connection.

● Access to visa and immigration information helps international students continue to meet their study requirements. Through its International Student Support Office, **Toronto Metropolitan University** connects students and their families with regulated international student advisors and consultants who can offer advice and help them navigate the visa and immigration process.

● Helping international students access university mental health supports when they need them is the goal of the YIFeel program at **York University**. YIFeel engages international students from various cultures to de-stigmatize mental health and provide progressive spaces that nurture and help students grow through activities, such as creative writing, blog posts and sharing experiences through video.

● Helping students find housing

● By partnering with Canada HomeShare, **Trent University** is helping international students find housing in the local community. Through the program, students are matched with a host family through a rigorous screening process that prioritizes their safety and a welcoming environment. Students also have access to HomeShare social workers throughout their stay who can help answer questions and provide support.

● To help international and domestic students search for off-campus housing at its Waterloo and Brantford campuses, **Wilfrid Laurier University** has partnered with Places4Students.com – an off-campus housing website specializing in providing students with a range of rental property listing services, including helping students find a roommate.

● By providing international students with a range of housing resources and supports, the **University of Windsor** is helping ensure students have access to the information they need to support a positive off-campus housing experience. Resources include free legal and regulatory information through the UWindsor Community Legal Aid office to help students understand their rights as a tenant.

● Finding affordable student housing options that are still close to campus can be challenging. Through the Mac Off-Campus Housing website, **McMaster University** connects students with an online portal that lists rental accommodations near campus that are exclusive to the McMaster community. McMaster also offers McMatch – a housemate connector program – that helps students connect with one another to find housemates for off-campus living.



● Creating connections to enhance the student experience

● Helping international students learn more about their new community is the goal of a welcome program launched by the **University of Guelph**.

Developed in partnership with Guelph's International Student Experience Office, the program, "Nature in our Backyard", hosts guided walks through local trails for international students so they can form friendships with other students and members of the community.

● Providing international students with dedicated space to connect with like-minded students helps them form meaningful social connections. The International Student Lounge at **Lakehead University** offers international students a dedicated space to study or meet with friends between classes. The lounge also hosts special events, such as movie screenings, to help foster friendships among international students.

● To help international students transition to university life in Ontario, **Nipissing University** connects international students with current students through the International Student Mentorship Program. Through the program, students are invited to participate in social activities in the local community, such as camping, skating and potlucks. Mentors also connect students with personal and academic supports at the university, ensuring they have access to the supports they need.

● Creating opportunities for international students to connect with other students is key to helping them find a sense of belonging in their new community. Over the last 30 years, the International Peer Guide program at **Western University** has been a valuable resource for international students. Through the program, international students are matched with an upper-year Peer Guide who provides support through a cultural adjustment, transition and diversity lens in order to best meet their unique needs.

● Supporting students through scholarships and bursaries

● In support of at-risk scholars and academic refugees who may need a safe haven, the Scholars at Risk (SAR) program at **Carleton University** hosts foreign academics and scholars, including students and faculty, who face threats because of their scholarship. The program helps scholars with resettlement, building connections and accessing a university education. SAR also supports students by establishing scholarships for new migrants and refugees and creating pathways for foreign credential recognition.

● To support international students in their studies and help them achieve their academic goals, the **University of Ottawa** offers a range of scholarships for incoming and current international students. For example, the Chancellor's Scholarship for International Students is awarded to an incoming international student who demonstrates leadership qualities and a commitment to academic excellence. The scholarship helps contribute to their tuition throughout their degree.

● In response to high levels of displacement as a result of worldwide conflicts, **Queen's University** launched the Principal's Global Scholars and Fellows program to help increase support for students, post-doctoral fellows and faculty members displaced by conflict, political instability and violence. The university has made an initial commitment of \$1.25 million to the program, which will offer sanctuary and assistance to international students and scholars.

● One way international students can help finance their studies is through university scholarships and bursaries. **Ontario Tech University** is helping support new and returning international students through a variety of scholarships and bursaries, including leadership-based scholarships, emergency bursaries and in-course scholarships for students who achieve high academic standing throughout their undergraduate studies.

● Making a difference across campuses and communities

● Providing opportunities for new and current international students to get involved in their campus community can help make a real difference in their lives. After graduating in 2022, one **Brock University** international student made it his focus to support other international students by joining the Brock International team as a student assistant. He wanted to continue to provide other international students with the same support he received and now works as a full-time member of Brock's Global Learning team.

● By getting involved in university life, international students make important contributions to their communities and empower others through their own experiences. Shortly after joining the **University of Toronto**, one international student worked for the university's career accelerator for self-identified Black, Indigenous and other women of colour in business and STEM. Now a business administration graduate, she supports other women by working within equity research and capital markets and has plans to create a pipeline for women to find opportunities in STEM and business out of high school.

● Creating an engaging and supportive learning environment can help international students achieve their career goals. As a graduate of the Master's of Public Service program at the **University of Waterloo**, one international student was able to hone her passion for societal impact and launched a career with the Ontario Public Service in the Ministry of Transportation emerging technologies office. In this role, she helps create policy around new vehicle technologies, including electric vehicles and road safety.

