

ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES: SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS



The Issue: With a high demand for transferrable skills from employers and industry, coupled with a commitment to help students develop resiliency in a changing world, Ontario's universities are providing critical support to ensure students graduate job-ready, adaptable and resilient. Supporting the needs of students with a wide range of life experiences is critical to ensure they graduate equipped with the right tools for a changing today and tomorrow.

Background

- Today's students – the province's future makers – are entering an ever-evolving economic, technological and social landscape.
- At the same time, Ontario's universities continue to see growing needs for modernized programs and learning environments; increased campus services in areas such as student mental health; and more resources to foster a culture of innovation.
- In fact, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations recently found that 3 out of 4 students reported that their mental health had been negatively impacted by COVID-19.
- In addition, RBC's *Bridging the Gap: What Canadians Told Us About the Skills Revolution* found that 92 per cent of recruiters say soft skills, such as creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability and time management, matter as much or more than hard skills.
- Tools that foster resiliency are invaluable in helping ensure student success throughout university and beyond.

During the last four economic recessions, Canadians with a Bachelor's degree or higher were less than half as likely to experience job loss, according to Statistics Canada. Additionally, Statistics Canada found that university graduates were less likely than the general working population to draw on the federal Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) during the pandemic.

The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) has stated that more than one billion jobs – one third of all global jobs – will be transformed by technology in the next decade. Ensuring workers have critical, transferable skills will be crucial to weathering future shifts in the economy and labour market.



95.6%

Of university graduates are employed two years post-graduation, with 93% of graduates employed full-time considering their work is either closely or somewhat related to the skills they developed at university, according to the [Ministry of Colleges and Universities' Ontario's Universities Graduate Survey](#).

How Universities Are Supporting Ontario

To help students navigate economic, technological and social change, Ontario's universities continue to transform and adapt programming in areas, such as work-integrated learning, and provide additional resources for student mental health and well-being.

- In 2021-22, Ontario's universities spent more than **\$1.4 billion on student services**, including counselling, career guidance and placement, student health and athletics and more. In the past five years, overall spending on student services have increased by nearly 22%.
- In addition, universities provide supports to address inequities in participation and representation, as well as **more than \$1.2 billion** in grants, scholarships and bursaries annually to help ensure every willing and qualified student can access a university education.
- With more and more [international students](#) choosing an Ontario university for their studies, universities are providing a range of wraparound supports, including orientations, specialized scholarships, immigration assistance and cultural and social programming, which provide students with opportunities to engage with their communities.
- Ontario's universities are also playing a vital role in providing both domestic and international students with [access to housing](#). In 2022, a survey conducted by COU found that universities have added more than 6,400 new residence spaces over the past five years, bringing the total number of residence spaces to 59,600. That number will continue to grow with 9,000 new spaces to be added in the next five years.

Partnering for a Strong Ontario

A vibrant and healthy university sector is critical to meeting the needs of students, fostering community economic growth, driving research and innovation and developing the highly skilled talent critical to Ontario's economy.

It is why, in order to fully unleash their potential, Ontario's universities are asking for support – to allow greater flexibility to increase their revenue sources.

It is now more important than ever for government and universities to continue to work together to allow Ontario's universities to build the better and brighter future for our province that we all want to see.