



**Students' Association of Red Deer Polytechnic**

# **ADVOCACY GOALS**

**2025/2026**

**T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S**

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# ABOUT US

The Students' Association of Red Deer Polytechnic exists as per the Post-Secondary Learning Act and plays an important role in student life at our institution. We advocate for and represent students, provide a wide variety of important (and fun!) services and events, and we are one of the largest employers of students on campus.

The SA is built upon representation and advocacy and to accomplish that, advocacy priorities must first be identified. In March 2024, the Students' Association Council undertook the arduous assignment of setting the Association's long-term advocacy priorities. It was imperative to the 2023/2024 Council to ensure that the Association created long-term goals so that regardless of whoever is elected as the Executive Council in the coming years, they would have a clear objective and would be able to immediately continue the Association's 60-year history of representation and advocacy.

Council's task of creating advocacy goals was divided into three objectives:

1. Determine the priorities of the students of Red Deer Polytechnic.
2. Create a framework that will ensure continuity of advocacy work year-to-year.
3. Ensure that the advocacy of the Association never stops.

With the creation of this living advocacy document, the Association can ensure ongoing advocacy for our Members, with a clear direction.



2025/2026

# EXECUTIVE TEAM



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Red Deer Polytechnic recognizes that our campus is situated on Treaty 7 land, the traditional territory of the Blackfoot, Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda peoples, and that the central Alberta region we serve falls under Treaty 6, traditional Métis, Cree and Saulteaux territory. We honour the First Peoples who have lived here since time immemorial, and we give thanks for the land where RDP sits. This is where we will strive to honour and transform our relationships with one another.

## OUR MISSION:

The Students' Association is dedicated to elevating the student experience at Red Deer Polytechnic by offering essential services, effective political representation, and impactful opportunities to enrich their educational journey.

## OUR VISION:

The students at Red Deer Polytechnic are empowered to thrive in a learning environment where access and connection inspire transformative discovery, encourage a sense of community, and provide opportunities that foster a memorable experience.

## OUR VALUES:

### **Affordability & Accessibility**

We believe that access to quality education and essential student supports should be barrier free and affordable.

### **Community & Diversity**

We embrace and celebrate the individuality of our Members and foster an inclusive, accessible, and safe community, recognizing that diversity enriches our lives.

### **Transparency & Accountability**

We are accountable to our Members and transparent when making decisions on behalf of our Membership.

### **Sustainability & Continuity**

We are committed to sustaining our organizational continuity by building and maintaining strong relationships, practicing good governance, and prioritizing continuous growth.

### **Wellness & Inclusion**

We invest in the mental, spiritual, and physical wellness of our Members and foster a culture of inclusion, belonging, and growth.

2025/2026

# ADVOCACY GOALS

**Increase Funding to Post-Secondary Institutions**

**Transitional Support for International Students**

**Open Educational Resources**

**Access to Student Focused Care**

**Investment in the Sustainable Development Goals Accord**



# Increase Funding to Post-Secondary Institutions

Our PSIs have traditionally laid the groundwork for prosperity and kept our province ahead of the curve. Yet PSIs saw their funding reduced by nearly a third between Budgets 2019 and 2022, with more recent investments unadjusted for inflation. Now, our PSIs must rely on raising tuition and fees, or pursuing unreliable commercial ventures. Charging a premium to international students offset some of the shortfall, but study permit restrictions may spell an end to that arrangement.

Robust operating funds afford PSIs the flexibility required to provide an interdisciplinary education and quickly address evolving labour needs.

Since 2019... the cost of tuition for some diplomas, trades programs, and certificates rose anywhere from 20 Higher education yields a reliable return on investment that stretches beyond the recruitment process. A review of countries including Canada and the United States found that a 1% bump of graduate skills in the workforce can boost economic productivity by 0.5%. Graduates pay most of Canada's tax revenue, are less likely to need social assistance, and are more likely to start their own business than those with less formal education. With the proper tools, our students can contribute to Alberta in ways that benefit everyone. % to 70%, while the average cost of undergraduate tuition rose nearly 26%<sup>[3]</sup>.

- **31% of college students will graduate with an expected debt of at least \$25,000, while 60% of bachelor's students can expect the same<sup>[1]</sup>.**
- **100%+ more students accessed the food insecurity programs or food banks offered by some Albertan students' associations in 2024 compared to 2023.**
- **14,000 students left Alberta in 2019, as part of a trend since 2007 of disproportionately losing post-secondary students to other provinces<sup>[2]</sup>.**

## SARDP's Recommendations to the Ministry of Advanced Education

1. Public Post-Secondary Institutions must see renewed investment if we are to train and retain the best of the best. We recommend that Alberta begins working towards reinstating PSI operating grant funding to 2019 levels, accounting for inflation and enrollment growth, thus restoring meaning to the term of publicly funded post-secondary institutions<sup>[4]</sup>.

[1] Statistics Canada: Student debt from all sources, by province of study

[2] Macdonald-Laurier Institute: Alberta 2023 & Beyond.

[3] PSI calendars (2018-2024) & Statistics Canada: Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study.

[4] Quoted from Government of Alberta, You can't keep cutting class: An open letter from the Students' Associations of your province.

# Transitional Support for International Students

RDP's international student population is a wonderful addition to our community and culture. The diversity and perspective that International students bring to the academic environment is an unmatched learning opportunity for our domestic students, faculty, and staff.

It is no surprise that international students in the Canadian post-secondary system face various obstacles and challenges after arriving. Language barriers, loneliness, lack of social support, and a new academic system are a few of the challenges that the average international student might face, particularly during their first year while they are transitioning to living in a new country and culture. These factors can lead to stress on a student's physical and mental wellness<sup>[5]</sup>.

One crucial factor in assisting international students transition to living in Canada is finding a safe and affordable place to live. Often students are arriving to their post-secondary country after making arrangements for cheap accommodations, sight unseen, and arriving to find they were misled by the landlords. Predatory landlords will often take advantage of an international student's lack of knowledge of their tenant's rights, leaving them in unsafe environments, often too shy or unaware that they can ask for help.



## SARDP's Recommendations to Red Deer Polytechnic

1. As international students need time and safety not only adjust to RDP's policies, culture, and environment but Red Deer and Canada's as well, RDP should have three-month transitional housing for International students who choose not to live in RDP's residence to reside when they first arrive at RDP. This will give them time to adjust, build a community, and find a safe place to live for their remaining time at RDP.

[5] Mushfiq, Merab. 2023. "International Student Transition to Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions". *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* 15 (4):96-105. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jcihe.v15i4.4921>.

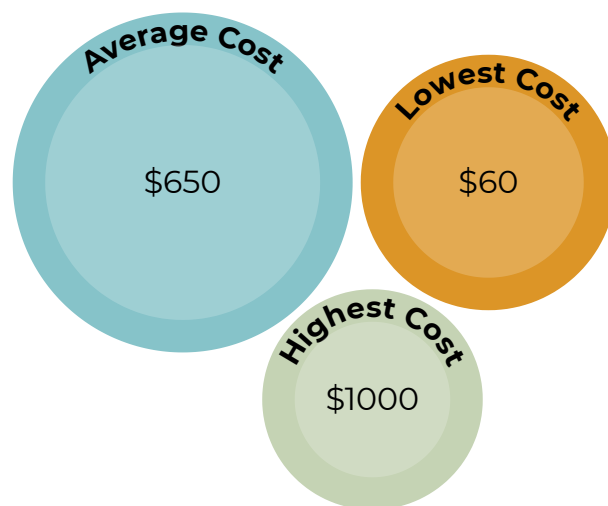
# Open Educational Resources

In the 2023/2024 academic year, the average cost of textbooks for RDP students was \$650. With the rising cost of living coupled with soaring inflation, this cost is a significant barrier to achieving academic success. Faced with difficult financial decisions, students will often forgo purchasing the required textbooks for a course in order to support themselves financially elsewhere. This can lead to students achieving lower grades and even failing their courses<sup>[6]</sup>. In multiple studies, the use of Open Educational Resources in classrooms does not result in statistically significant differences in educational outcomes for students (i.e., test scores, final grades, etc.). However, the use of OER's can often result in significantly lower course withdrawal rates<sup>[7]</sup>.

With the rising cost of tuition, prospective students may hesitate to take programs that have a heavy additional cost. RDP having an OER adoption first model would be an excellent tool to recruit prospective students and retain current students.

In addition, the adoption of Open Educational Resources aligns with goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all<sup>[8]</sup>. As a co-signatory of the Sustainable Development Goals Accord with Red Deer Polytechnic, the Students' Association of RDP has a vested interest in ensuring that we are living up to our commitment.

## Cost of Textbooks at RDP



## SARDP's Recommendations to Red Deer Polytechnic

1. Develop Institutional Policy for selection Course Instructional Material, that states that the adoption or the creation of OER's must be the first choice of Instructors when selecting supplemental material for their courses.
2. Create a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunity for RDP students to assist with the creation of a OER catalogue/archive.

[6] Hilton III, J. L., & Laman, C. (2012). One college's use of an open psychology textbook. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 27(3), 265–272.

[7] Fischer, L., Hilton, J., Robinson, T.J. et al. A multi-institutional study of the impact of open textbook adoption on the learning outcomes of post-secondary students. *J Comput High Educ* 27, 159–172 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-015-9101-x>

[8] UNESCO. 2019. "Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER) | UNESCO." [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org). November 25, 2019. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer>.

# Access to Student Focused Care

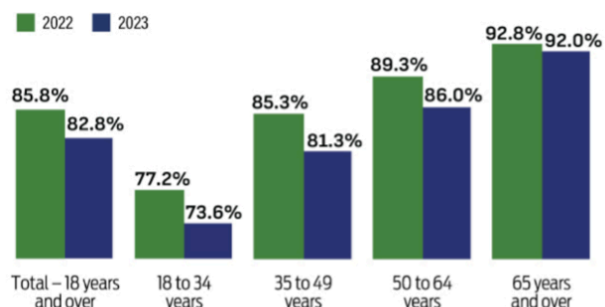
Having access to continuous medical care provides four ingredients essential to good care: continuity, access, comprehensiveness, and coordination<sup>[9]</sup>.

Adding family physicians to a population yields more health benefits than adding any other physician group. For every additional 10 family physicians per 100,000 population, there are 15 fewer deaths, 40 fewer hospitalizations<sup>[10]</sup>, and an average increase in life expectancy of 52 days<sup>[11]</sup>.

About 70% of Canadian health care is provided by family physicians<sup>[12]</sup>. In Alberta, for example, family physicians are the sole managers of most patients with common chronic conditions<sup>[13]</sup>. For students, both domestic and international a lack of primary care is a particular challenge.

In Canada, in the 18 – 34 years old age group it was reported that only 73.6% have a regular health provider. By adding and increasing student care on campus, we will be able to bridge some of this gap for our students.

The proportion of Canadians with a **regular health care provider fell** in all age groups, except those 65 and over, and remained lowest among young adults



## SARDP's Recommendations to Red Deer Polytechnic

1. Increased access to primary health services on campus including nurses, nurse practitioners, and physicians.
2. Create opportunities for our Nursing and Social Work students to complete their practicums on campus in the Counselling Centre, Student Connect Centre, Campus Health and Wellbeing Services Centre, Intake Coordination, and Accessibility Services.

[9] <https://brighterworld.mcmaster.ca/articles/analysis-the-impact-of-not-having-a-family-doctor-patients-are-worse-off-and-so-is-the-health-system/>

[10] Chang CH, O'Malley AJ, Goodman DC. Association between temporal changes in primary care workforce and patient outcomes. *Health Serv Res* 2017;52(2):634-55. Epub 2016 Jun 3

[11] Basu S, Berkowitz SA, Phillips RL, Bitton A, Landon BE, Phillips RS. Association of primary care physician supply with population mortality in the United States, 2005-2015. *JAMA Intern Med* 2019;179(4):506-

[12] Stewart M, Ryan B. Ecology of health care in Canada. *Can Fam Physician* 2015;61:449-53 (Eng), e249-54 (Fr).

[13] Kirkwood JEM, Ton J, Korownyk C, Kolber MR, Allan GM, Garrison SR. Where chronic disease management takes place. A population-based retrospective cohort study of the province of Alberta, Canada. *Can Fam Physician*.

# Investment in the Sustainable Development Goals Accord

On October 31st, 2022, Red Deer Polytechnic and the Students' Association of Red Deer Polytechnic joined 298 other Post-Secondary Institutions and 59 Student Unions around the world in signing the Sustainable Development Goals Accord. "The Accord is a commitment learning institutions are making to one another to do more to deliver the goals, to annually report on each signatory's progress, and to do so in ways which share the learning with each other both nationally and internationally"<sup>[14]</sup>.



## SARDP's Recommendations to Red Deer Polytechnic

1. Create a dedicated SDG Committee with a Terms of Reference and a budget line that empowers research, advocacy, programming, and initiatives for the Sustainable Development Goals on Campus.
2. Develop further green initiatives on campus such as composting, dark hours, dark sky friendly lighting, etc
3. Create a grant or scholarship for students who have demonstrated excellence and/or innovation towards one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals.

[14] "The SDG Accord: The University and College Sector's Collective Response to the Global Goals." The Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges, United Kingdom, 2017.



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