



Students' Association of Red Deer Polytechnic

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

2026/2027

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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 set long-term goals so that, regardless of who is elected to 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.

In the summer of 2025, the Association Council established the Advocacy Ad-hoc Committee with the primary goal of strengthening the relationship between the Association and its Membership while focusing on internal advocacy.

The members of the Ad-hoc Committee consulted over 1000 Red Deer Polytechnic students between September and April to identify the wants and needs of the Membership, which assisted the Association in setting advocacy priorities based on student feedback.

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



2026/2027

EXECUTIVE TEAM



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We are honoured to acknowledge the traditional territories of the Blackfoot, Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda People of Treaty 7, as well as the Cree and Saulteaux People of Treaty 6. We recognize the Métis People and the shared history of the Métis homelands in Region 4. We also recognize that the Members we serve are from many Lands, Territories, and Treaties from across Turtle Island.

As the Students' Association of Red Deer Polytechnic, we recognize the lasting harm caused by colonial systems and commit to learning this history, honouring Indigenous resilience, and creating a future rooted in mutual respect, relationship building, learning, and accountability.

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.

2026/2027

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Increase Funding to Post-Secondary Institutions

Open Educational Resources

Work Integrated Learning



Increase Funding to Post-Secondary Institutions

Our PSIs have historically laid the groundwork for prosperity and kept Alberta 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 federal policy changes have changed the landscape, etc.

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% to 70%, while the average cost of undergraduate tuition rose nearly 26%^[3]. 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% increase in 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.

- **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^[1].**
- **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^[2].**

SARDP's Recommendations to the Government of Alberta

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^[4].

[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.

Open Educational Resources

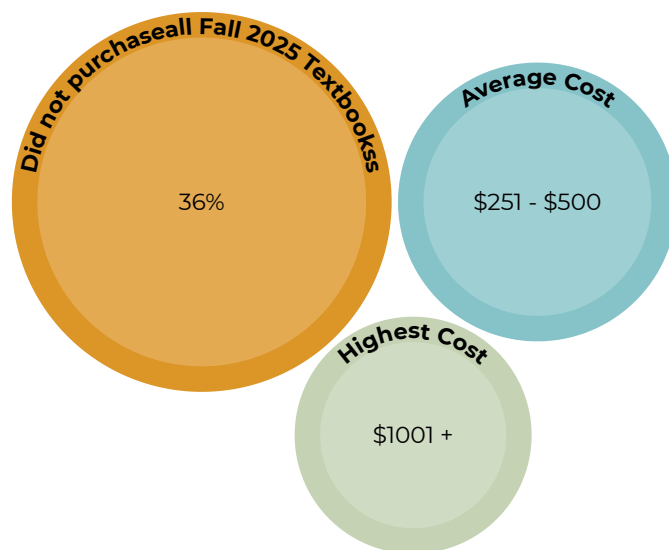
In Fall 2025, 30.3% of RDP students spent between \$251 to \$500 on textbooks, and notably, 3.4% of students spent more than \$1001 on textbooks. In addition, 36% of students reported not purchasing all their required textbooks with the high cost identified as a factor. Students reported that the high cost of textbooks led to them seeking financial assistance, working additional hours, and alarmingly, missing bill payments or meals.

This can lead to students achieving lower grades and even failing their courses^[6]. 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^[7].

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^[8]. 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/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer. November 25, 2019. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer>.

Work Integrated Learning

In 2023, the government of Alberta laid out a strategic plan to ensure that “Alberta’s world-class post-secondary system will equip Albertans with the skills, knowledge, and competencies they need to succeed in their lifelong pursuits”^[1]. As a part of this vision, the Ministry of Advanced Education informed Alberta Post-Secondary Institutions that all new and updated program proposals that are sent for approval to the Ministry must include an element of Work Integrated Learning^[2].

Work-integrated learning is a term used by PSIs to describe a type of experiential learning where students are engaged in meaningful work in their field and supervised by someone in their field.

In compliance with this direction, RDP’s 2030 Strategic Plan 2025 Progress Report under Strategic Driver #1: Learner Impact, the first Performance Metric is that 100% of Learners in eligible programs have a work-integrated learning experience by 2030, with the initial 2023 benchmark date being 87%. As of June 30, 2025 88% of learners have completed a WIL element in their program^[3].

However, despite this goal, RDP has not completed a comprehensive Work Integrated Learning Policy review. Currently, there is not clear policy regarding remuneration for placements, intellectual property rights for students, or workplace safety training responsibility. Nor is there a clear delineation between practicums and work placements.

While this is an admirable goal, currently, long commutes due to a lack of accessible placement locations is proving to be debilitatingly expensive for RDP students when considering the high inflation, the cost of gas and potential distance traveled, and the potential for having to obtain accommodations while completing Work Integrated Learning.

SARDP’s Recommendations to Red Deer Polytechnic and the Government of Alberta

1. Complete a comprehensive Work Integrated Learning Policy that includes student-focused issues, including, but not limited to, remuneration for placements, intellectual property rights for students, and workplace safety training responsibility with direct student input.
2. Explore options for sustainable and accessible funding for all students who are experiencing financial hardship due to a Work Integrated Learning placement beyond current offerings.

[1] <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-2030-building-skills-for-jobs>

[2] <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1332390.pdf>

[3] <https://rdpolytech.ca/2030-strategic-plan>



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