

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UCP Government picking the losers in the PSE sector

Edmonton AB, March 8, 2021 - The UCP government likes to claim that it is against picking the winners in their policy decisions, but with the 2021 budget they did pick the institutions they want to suffer the biggest losses in the PSE sector. The University of Alberta was given disproportionate cuts to their Campus Alberta Grants: the U of A received a -11% cut, compared to the average of -6.2%, and their \$60 million dollar cut is more than one third of the total dollars cut across all colleges and universities. While CAFA does not believe the UCP government picked any winners among the public universities and colleges, the UCP government definitely picked the losers— with the University of Alberta taking far more than their share of the damaging cuts.

“CAFA believes that this round of cuts to the Campus Alberta Grants must be reversed,” states Dr. Kevin Kane, president of CAFA and Professor of Medical Microbiology & Immunology at the University of Alberta. “These differential cuts to our institutions will mean that some of them will only continue to exist as a diminished version of themselves.”

This is the third budget in a row that the UCP has decided to ignore their own rhetoric of an even playing field and gave differential cuts across our prized institutions. Each year the UCP have refused to release the Campus Alberta Grant numbers, breaking from the long standing tradition of providing those on budget day by all previous governments. This hiding of information makes it difficult to evaluate the UCP cuts. For example, last year the UCP government claimed that the cuts were based on comparator institutions but have refused to state what schools we are being compared to and what methodology is used to create these comparators. This year, CAFA can find no reason or explanation as to why the UCP government has made different cuts to the institutions in any of their budget documents.

“The UCP government continues to attempt to confuse the public because they will not release their own rationale for these damaging cuts to our schools,” observed Dr. Kevin Kane. “As academic staff, we believe that Albertans should have access to the information used when the UCP thought up these punitive cuts.”

These drastic cuts to Campus Alberta Grants do not just choose the winners and losers in the post-secondary sector, but also the communities in which they are located. The larger than expected cuts will mean that some institutions will have to lay off more workers and continue with the hiring freezes in effect. This means that some communities will have more unemployed people and have less disposable income circulating in the small businesses of their communities. CAFA believes this will make economic recovery more difficult in certain regions of the province because the UCP felt it needed to punish certain universities and the communities in which they are located.