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CAUS & CAFA Comparison of Cost per Student

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EDMONTON, AB, December 8, 2021: As university students and faculty, we are dismayed by the fact the Government of Alberta continues to lay the blame of spiraling Advanced Education expenses at the universities' feet. Yesterday, Minister Nicolaidis tweeted out that University of Alberta and University of Calgary were among the most expensive universities in the U15 group. He used data from 2017-18, which is over four years old, and we believe that there will be more cuts coming that will drive us to the bottom of the rankings. As university students and faculty, we believe that all cuts to Alberta's post-secondary education institutions need to stop—regardless of whether they are a college, a polytechnic, or a university.

This is despite the fact the universities cost Albertan taxpayers less per student than the community colleges and polytechnics (regardless of the former's costly research agendas). This fact is the product of previous governments' decisions that strengthen rural regions' economies and increase accessibility. As university students and faculty, we support these decisions because we believe in providing accessible higher education to all citizens regardless of where they live.

“As students, we believe that all Albertans should have a pathway into PSE,” said Rachel Timmermans, CAUS Chair & VP External SAMRU. “All of these pathways deserve investment, but we need to talk about the real costs of these choices.”

Alberta's universities cost on average \$11,365 per Full Load Equivalent (FLE): this is \$4,923 or 43% less than the cost per FLE for the community colleges and polytechnics. This is despite the fact that universities have larger research budgets, have higher faculty costs, and have longer degree requirements than the colleges and polytechnics. One factor in this higher cost is the role *economies of scale* play in the smaller rural colleges. But even the large urban polytechnics cost the Albertan taxpayer \$324 more per FLE than the universities.

This is a choice to favour colleges and polytechnics over our universities. In a recent Parkland Institute report, *Road Map or Road Kill?*, they use a slightly different metric to point out that while Alberta's universities' total expenditure per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) are slightly higher than the Canadian average, it is our colleges and vocational schools that vastly exceed the Canadian average (P. 18). This study demonstrates that Alberta spends more per FTE than our comparator provinces on our colleges and polytechnics, and these costs are 50% higher than the average province spends per FTE on their colleges and polytechnics.

We believe that Albertans would be shocked to learn that the private or religious universities receive more funding per FLE than some of the public institutions. For example, all of Athabasca University, Bow Valley College and Norquest College all receive less funding per student than the average of the private institutions—the average of these three institutions is 24%, or \$1,173, less per FLE than the average of the private or religious schools. These inequalities of funding are obvious, and any public policy discussion should at least include these facts.

“These discrepancies show that our institutions are not treated equally,” notes Dr. Kevin Kane, CAFA President. “When the Government of Alberta talks about universities costs, they should be more transparent with the Alberta public.”

As Albertan university students and faculty, we are not calling for more cuts at our colleges or at our polytechnics. We support all levels and pathways of higher education for the citizens of Alberta. As scholars of today and tomorrow, we hope to inject some of the facts of what Albertans spend on our universities and colleges into the discussion. We believe that together, all Albertans, can have reasonable policy discussions and plan for our collective futures.

The Council of Alberta University Students and Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations represents the undergraduate and faculty from Athabasca University, Mount Royal University, Grant MacEwan University, the University of Alberta, the University of Lethbridge, and the undergraduate students from the University of Calgary.

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