



CASA FOUNDATION CONFERENCE REPORT 2023

May 15-19th 2023

WHAT IS CASA? & WHY ARE WE APART

Canadian Alliance of Student Association CASA

CASA is a national voice for Canada's post-secondary students. CASA is a non-partisan, not-for-profit student organization composed of student associations from across Canada. They represent undergraduate, graduate and polytechnic associations.

CASA advocates on behalf of post-secondary students to the federal government. When Canada's leaders make decisions affecting our post-secondary education system, they look to the student representative from the different post secondary institution apart CASA for solutions.

Currently CASA has 23 member schools and represents over 365,000 students across the country.

History of CASA & ULSU

CASA officially became a lobbying body on June 27, 1995. Upon being founded the ULSU was one of the 12 members of CASA when they were found. Since then, the ULSU has been active members and participants of CASA and have been instrumental in the ensuring that students are at the fore front of our advocacy efforts. Recently the ULSU has had delegates sit on CASA's Board of Directors, namely as Treasurer and Director of EDI.

→ Why are we apart?

The ULSU joined CASA to ensure that we are able to properly and effectively advocate to the federal government about issues that all students are faced with.

WEEK RUN DOWN

DAY 01

- Conference Opening
- Code of Conduct session
- How to effectively use Robert's Rules
- Opening Plenary
- Housecup announcement
- About CASA
- Strategic plans overview
- CASA Budget breakdown and explanation
- UEQ Overview
- Basecamp and slack
- Scavenger hunt

DAY 02

- Federal Political climate presentation
- CASA mentorship program introduction & presentation
- Elections Canada presentation
- Advocacy priorities and how to effectively do so
- Mock meeting based on Advocacy priorities presentation
- National Indigenous Advocacy Committee presentation

DAY 03

- CASA Policy library Overview
- Issues that matters to your Students' Union
- Visit to Parliament Hill
- Question Period in the House of Commons

WEEK RUN DOWN

DAY 04

- Cultural competency Training

DAY 05

- Conference Closing & Swag Swap
- Closing Plenary
- Karaoke

INTRODUCTION

Vice President External, Rachele Preston , and President Maleeka Thomas as part of their duties as ULSU representatives were able to attend the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) foundation week conference. This conference lasted 5 days (May 13th-19th 2023) in Ottawa, Ontario. This conference was held to allow for the transition of new delegates and determine advocacy priorities as well as learn about the respective committees that we are able to sit on and in what capacity we can participate and effectively advocate on behalf of University of Lethbridge undergraduate students.



CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

This conference while annual, was the first conference for the new delegates of the Canadian Alliance of Students Association (CASA). It served as a platform to discuss key issues, share best practices, foster collaboration, and promote the advocacy body's mission. Additionally, we had the opportunity to discuss priorities of our respective institutions and lay the foundation as to how we hope to move forward with our advocacy efforts to the Federal government.

IMPORTANCE OF TRIP & BENEFITS TO ULSU

Getting the chance to attend the CASA foundations conference allowed for the ULSU delegates to meet our counterparts and understand ways in which we can effectively work together in an efforts to advocacy for the needs of Post Secondary students. While some of our student advocacy priorities may differ in some ways, we were able to see the overlapping areas of concern for all student across Canada. It provided us are ULSU executive members to see and gain an understanding of the importance of fighting for the needs of all students on a collective level.

VALUABLE INSIGHTS

- Learn ways of advocacy and how to effectively do so at the federal level
- Connect and network with counterparts from other member schools
- Was able to learn best practices from other student leaders and so how and if we are able to explore the idea of implementing similar practices

VP-EXTERNAL'S MESSAGE



Rachele Preston
ULSU VP External

Hello Students!

Attending the CASA Foundations conference was a great opportunity to meet with counterparts from across the country and to advance the advocacy work being done on behalf of University of Lethbridge students. We were provided the ability to work and collaborate with student leaders from across Canada and learn about the similarities between the ULSU and their university student associations, as well as the challenges that students are facing. These interactions served as valuable insight into the work being done for students on difficulties similar to what our students at the University of Lethbridge are facing, including but not limited to, mental health resources, food (in)security, student financial aid funding and more.

This conference allowed me, as your Vice President External, the opportunity to learn more about lobbying governments for student issues, as well as how to effectively enter a lobbying meeting in order to have a high level of productivity. Being able to work with folks from other institutions allowed me to collaborate on ideas of possible solutions to present to stakeholders when advocating for students in the upcoming year.

As our secondary delegate, Maleeka Thomas ULSU President, did an amazing job representing the ULSU and the needs of students. The lived experience and knowledge of struggles students on our campus that she has was extremely valuable for the discussions that were had around the table. She represented the ULSU and University of Lethbridge students well enough, that she was elected as the Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for the CASA Board of Directors during our closing plenary.

If there are any questions you may have about my work as your Vice President External, or as the primary CASA delegate, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email at su.external@uleth.ca.

All the best,
Rachele

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Maleeka Thomas

ULSU President
CASA Director of EDI

Hello Students!

Attending the CASA foundations conference is was a great opportunity for the ULSU to ensure advocacy for our student body at the federal level. I was able to meet counterparts from other members schools and hear and understand how our advocacy aligns based on the overlapping issues that post-secondary students tend to face. I was able to provide context and present some of what the current pressing concerns for students for example: food insecurity, student financial aid, housing crisis, mental health and much more.

This conference provided me as your President to properly understand how to frame specific ask to both government officials/members as well as institutional administrations. In addition, it provided collaborative work and approach to come up with potential solutions to how we intend to frame our advocacy efforts this year in order to ensure that post-secondary education is accessible and affordable to all students.

Additionally, I am excited to share that I was elected to CASA Board of Directors at the Director at Large EDI.

As the primary delegate, Rachele Preston the ULSU VP-external did an extremely phenomenal job representing the ULSU and the UofL through the thought provoking questions she asked as well as through sharing the learnings from our university.

If you have any questions about this report, the work I do as a delegate or a board member or even general questions for me as your ULSU president. Please send me an email at su.president@uleth.ca or book an in person meeting with me at <https://calendly.com/maleeka-thomas/one-on-one>

Cheers,
Maleeka

DAY 1- MONDAY MAY 15TH

Day one of the CASA foundation conference began with an opening smudging ceremony and blessing from elder. We acknowledge the traditional lands of unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishaabeg People. The ceremony provide us with an opportunity to start of the conference on a good term and brought us clarity in terms ensure that we have an understanding and open mind how we will proceed with our advocacy efforts.

The morning continued with a Code of Conduct presentation and the election of the new Code of Conduct officers. This portion of the conference was to introduce new CASA delegates to the culture of CASA and provide us with an overview of how we actively contribute to the federal advocacy landscape to ensure we see necessary wins for our students.

We then had a Robert's rule review prior to getting into Open plenary.



DAY 2- TUESDAY MAY 16TH

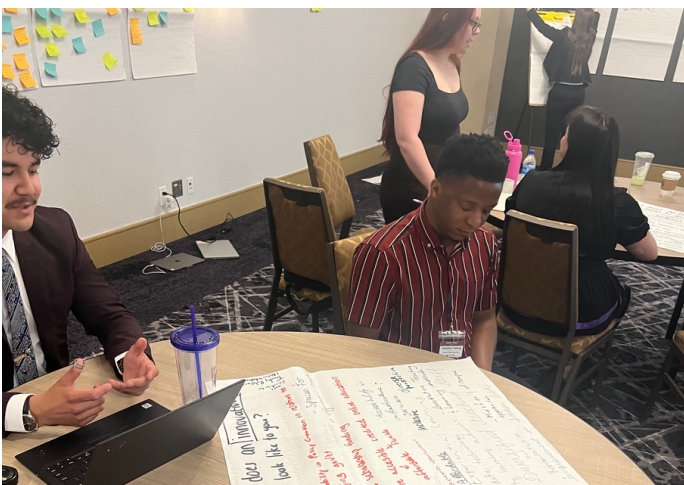
Day two kicked off with a discussion surrounding Federal political climate of the year and an elections Canada presentation. We then went into discussion surrounding our advocacy priorities for our different schools. For the ULSU our advocacy priorities centers student student grants and funding, food security, housing security, mental health, students and Open educational resources. Following this we had mock advocacy meetings to test how we operate when we advocate for our students on the specific needs. We then met the Co-chairs for the National Indigenous Advocacy Committee to discuss how we engage and advocate for our Indigenous students.



DAY 3- MAY 17TH

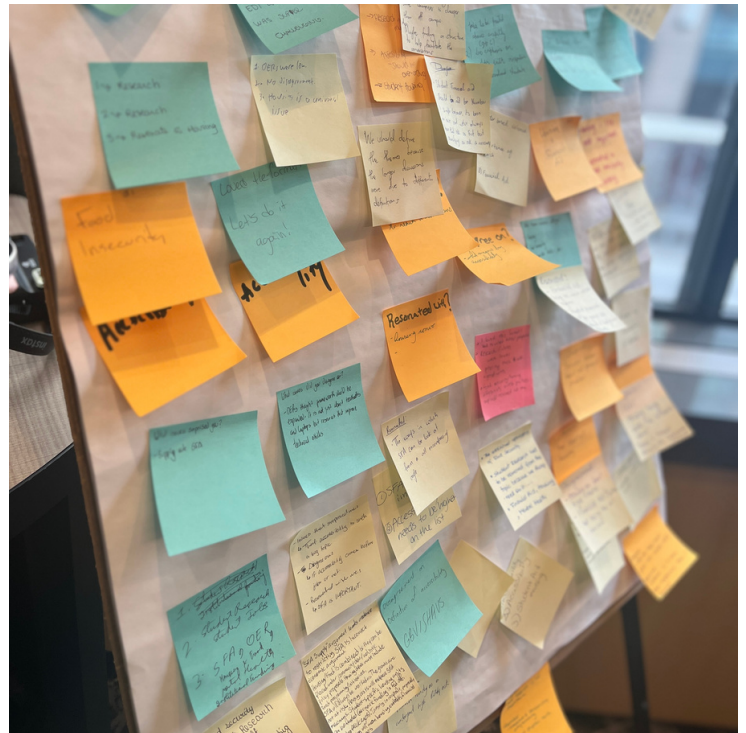


On day three, President Maleeka and VP External Rachele Preston engaged in meaningful discussions with other member schools surrounding policies and issues that our respective student body is facing. We also heard from Parliamentary Secretary Irek Kusmierczyk who gave us an overview as to federal advocating procedures and how to maximize meetings that we have with different governmental officials. Additionally, they were able to share insights on how to remain non-partisan and be student driven and focused especially when advocating to federal government. Lastly, CASA delegates got the opportunity to sit in on Question Period on Parliament Hill.



DAY 4- MAY 18TH

On Day 4 CASA Staff, delegates and observers engaged in a full day Cultural competency training. This training provided us with knowledge about Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility. It included activities that showed unconscious bias and how we should be mindful when we do our advocacy work. It also allowed for us to see the intersectional that exist within our different student groups and the complexities that surround this.



DAY 5- MAY 19TH

On the final day we had our closing plenary, Board of Directors election and committee selections. I am please to say that I was elected Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and VP External Rachele Preston was selected to be apart of the Federal Policy committee and 45th General Election committee.

