

PREPARED BY :

Rachele Preston & Maleeka Thomas



CASA Policy & Strategy

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ULSU History in 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, college 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 representatives from different post secondary institutions apart of CASA for solutions.

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

CASA officially became a lobbying body on June 27, 1995. The ULSU became a member in 1998, and is considered one of the founding members as CASA. 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 part of CASA?

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 Overview

Day 01

- Conference Opening
- Code of Conduct Overview
- Opening Plenary
- Board Action Plan Presentation and Consultation

Day 02

- Political Climate Update
- History of CASA Advocacy
- 2023-24 Advocacy Priorities
- Media Training & Catch-Up session
- Committee Work Time

Day 03

- Board Action Plan Update
- Feedback Breakout Rooms
- Committee Updates
- Committee Work Time

Day 04

- Canadian Student Financial Aid Program (CSFAP) Overview
- CSFAP Consultation
- Copyright
- Committee Work Time

Day 05

- Final Board Action Plan Presentation
- Closing Plenary

Introduction

Vice President External Rachele Preston, and President Maleeka Thomas attended the annual Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) Policy and Strategy Conference as part of their duties as student representatives and their work in external advocacy efforts.

This conference was held over five days (July 17-21), and was hosted in Fredericton, NB on the St. Thomas University and University of New Brunswick campuses.

This conference was held to allow delegates to solidify CASA's advocacy priorities, as well as reviewing and approving work plans put in place by the Board of Directors and committee chairs. The work done during the week heavily informs the work that will be done through the remaining summer months and into the fall term to prepare delegates for Advocacy Week in Ottawa in November.



Day 1 - Monday, July 17

Day one of the conference began with an opening smudging ceremony, and a code of conduct review. Then delegates moved into the opening plenary, and board members presented their board action plans for the year.

Unfortunately, due to travel disruptions, we were unable to attend the first day of the conference. Delegates from the University of Alberta, as well as CASA staff were able to keep us updated on what was occurring throughout the day.

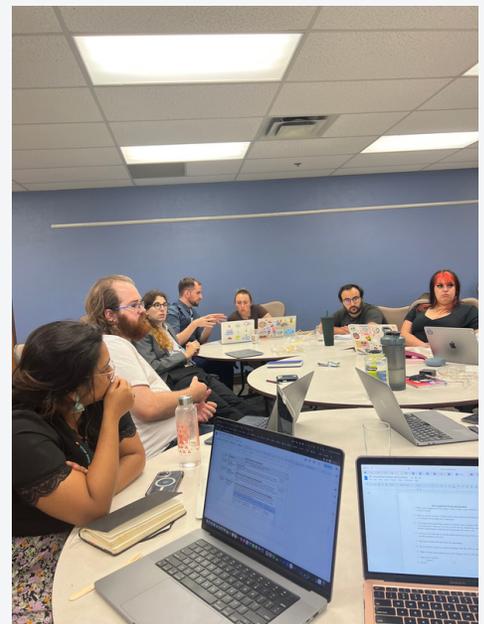
Day 2 - Tuesday, July 18

Day two started with a daily overview, and a presentation from CASA staff Matthew Gerrits on the current political climate for Post-Secondary Education, as well as a recap of the history of CASA Advocacy. The historical background of the advocacy work that CASA has done was important framing for the presentation we received on the proposed advocacy priorities for the year.

The proposed advocacy priorities were established through feedback from all of the members around the table. Through this feedback the priorities of Student Financial Aid (SFA), Mental Health, and Housing were proposed for approval from the membership.

In the afternoon, the membership received a presentation from Mike Brown from the University of Calgary. During this presentation, those that had missed the first day of the conference received a catch-up session from the Board of Directors and CASA Staff.

After the catch up session, members that were a part of committees had designated work time. Maleeka chaired the EDI committee work time, and Rachele attended the 45th General Election committee work time.

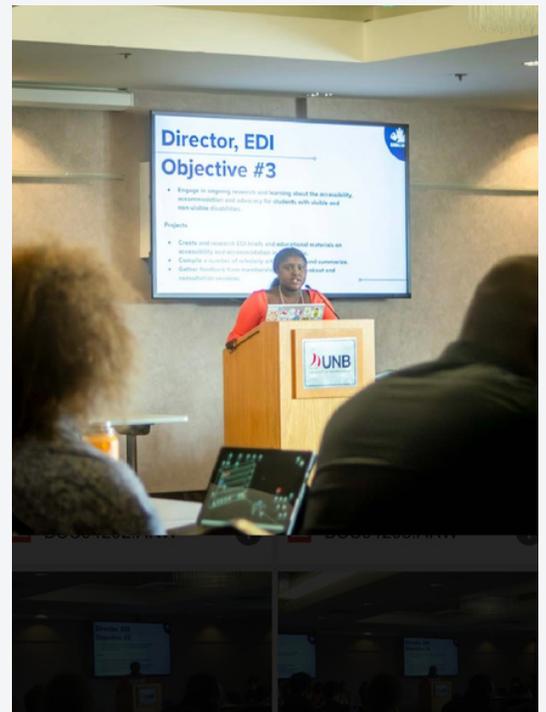


Day 3 - Wednesday, July 19

Day three started with another daily overview. Then members received an updated presentation from Board members on changes to their board action plans based on feedback they had received on the first two days of the conference. After the updates to their plans, board members engaged in breakout group conversations to gain more feedback from members, in order to further improve their action plans.

Members also received updates from the chairs of each committee, and a look into their committee work plans. The chairs then accepted questions and feedback on the work plans from the membership to review with their committees.

During committee work time, Rachele spent time with the Federal Policy Committee and Maleeka continued work with the EDI Committee.



Day 4 - Thursday, July 20

After the daily overview for day four, members received a presentation from representatives from the Canada Student Financial Assistance Program. The presenters discussed a range of topics related to funding associated with accessing post secondary education, including the role that things such as an RESP could have. Additionally, the presenters were open to feedback and suggestions from the lived student experience on how to make accessing CSFAP funding easier for students.

After lunch, we received a presentation on Copyright legislation. Brianna Workman, a Senior Policy Advisor at College & Institutes Canada (CICan), discussed with delegates the role that copyright plays in education. Additionally, discussed the importance of copyright legislation advocacy in order to work towards keeping education affordable.



Day 5 - Friday, July 21



There was a small closing by NIAC Co-Chair Shannon, to start off day five of the conference. We also received a daily overview of what to expect from the day.

The Board of Directors gave their final presentations on their Board Action Plans, and accepted any final questions from the floor. There was also a final presentation on the proposed advocacy priorities and what work on each priority could look like.

There was a presentation on how the work we will do will continue to develop from now until our Advocacy Week in November. We also received a financial update in regard to CASA's financial standing.

Prior to breaking for lunch, there were three presentations on bids for school's to host the Policy and Strategy Conference in 2024. Centennial College Student Associate Incorporated, University of Manitoba Students' Union, and the University of Lethbridge Students' Union all gave bid presentations. Rachele did an exceptional job representing the ULSU during the bid presentation. Unfortunately, ULSU was not chosen as the host.

After lunch, we moved in closing plenary. In this closing plenary, decisions regarding committee vacancies were made, as well as approving the proposed advocacy priorities and board action plans.

Overall Review

This conference allowed us to gain clarity on the federal advocacy work and goals we are engaging in. Additionally, it allowed us to continue to strengthen the connections with other Students' Union's and Student Associations across the country that we met with in May during our time in Ottawa.

This conference served a great importance in preparing us for the level of lobbying and advocacy work, we as delegates will have to participate in at the federal level throughout the year. Throughout the week, the feedback that was given to the board was taken into account in shaping the work plans and the goals for the year. This allowed us as delegates to ensure we felt as though our students needs were being effectively represented in the work moving forward.