

Policy Statement III – FNMI Participation

Adopted: September 16, 2013

Expires:

Motion from the 3rd ULSU General Assembly meeting of 2013-2014:

MOTION [20227GA]

MSC: S. Glydon/B. Goodwin

BIMT that the General Assembly approve ULSU Policy Statement III: FNMI Participation.

Carried

Background

The term FNMI refers to individuals identified within the ethnicities of First Nations, Métis or Inuit. Individuals from an FNMI background face a variety of issues which limit their participation in post-secondary education across Alberta, and more specifically, within the Lethbridge region. The FNMI demographic is one of the fastest growing, and youngest demographics within Canada¹. The FNMI demographics' rate of replacement far outstrips that of the non-Aboriginal population². With this type of growth FNMI individuals will be entering the workforce and will be able to fill many occupations that will become vacant as a result of the retirement of the "Baby Boomer" Generation. However, often times this replacement requires some sort of post-secondary credential. The current national attainment of some form post-secondary educational among FNMI students aged 25-34 is only 45%³, whereas the overall Canadian post-secondary education (PSE) attainment rate stands at 61%⁴.

The Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) was a grant program which was implemented with the goal of providing increased access to PSE for FNMI individuals, who are financially unable to do so through conventional means. Since this program has been in place, larger numbers of FNMI individuals have accessed, and completed post-secondary training⁵. Unfortunately, the growth of this program is currently capped at 2% per year, which is limiting the number of individuals able to access it, and therefore limiting its effectiveness⁶.

WHEREAS The PSSSP is currently the primary source of funding for FNMI students in PSE; WHEREAS the growth of the PSSSP is capped at a 2% increase per year;

¹ Taking Action on Canada's Commitments: Adequate Funding for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, CASA - ACAE, 2012

² Ibid

³ The Educational Attainment of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada National Household Survey 2011, Statistics Canada, pp. 7

⁴ 2011 National Household Survey: Education in Canada: Attainment, Field and Location of Study, Statistics Canada, pp. 1

⁵ Taking Action on Canada's Commitments: Adequate Funding for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, CASA - ACAE, 2012

⁶ Ibid.

WHEREAS the current funding available under the PSSSP is inadequate for the amount of FNMI individuals who are seeking post-secondary education within the Canadian system, with 10 589 students ready to go into post-secondary, but do not have the financial means⁷;

WHEREAS the current participation of FNMI students in PSE is 16% lower than that of non-Aboriginal students⁸;
WHEREAS the Canadian FNMI population is one of the fastest growing and youngest demographics within Canada;

WHEREAS The City of Lethbridge is home to over 10 000 members of the Kainai Nation⁹;

WHEREAS The number of FNMI students at the University of Lethbridge totals 5% of the overall student population¹⁰.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Students' Union advocate for an FNMI policy that:

- a) Secures the removal of the 2% cap on the PSSSP and a onetime pay-out in funding to accommodate those prospective students on the waitlist;
- b) Secures an increase in the amount of non-repayable provincial grants and bursaries for FNMI individuals;
- c) Results in a greater priority placed upon the inclusion of FNMI individuals in post-secondary education;
- d) Recognizes the importance of providing opportunities for FNMI students in order to allow them to succeed in the pursuit of post-secondary education;
- e) Recognizes that the University of Lethbridge is situated on Blackfoot territory, emphasizing the need for the University of Lethbridge and the community to recognize all FNMI culture and heritage;
- f) Secures a greater importance on increasing FNMI participation in post-secondary education at the University of Lethbridge, as well as at a provincial and federal level.

⁷ Fact Sheet First Nations Post-Secondary Education, Assembly of First Nations, pp. 2

⁸ Aboriginal People in Canada: Growing Mutual Economic Interests Offer Significant Promise for Improving the Well-Being of the Aboriginal Population, TD Economics, June 2009, pp. 5

⁹ Lethbridge Urban Aboriginal Community Needs Assessment & Mapping of Services for Urban Aboriginal People, Suzanne Petryshyn, Petryshyn Holding Incorporated, 2012, pp.6

¹⁰ University of Lethbridge Spring Enrollment 2013 Student Attributes 5 Year Trend: First Nations Status Students, University of Lethbridge