



Students Nova Scotia  
**2022 - 2023 Annual Plan**

**AFFORDABILITY • ACCESSIBILITY • QUALITY • STUDENT VOICE**



**Students Nova Scotia (StudentsNS) is a not for profit and nonpartisan advocacy group that represents Nova Scotia post-secondary students. Our members study at Acadia, Cape Breton, Saint Mary's, and St. Francis Xavier Universities.**

### **Mission**

It is the mission of StudentsNS to represent the collective interests and priorities of post-secondary students in Nova Scotia. In pursuit of this mission, StudentsNS will:

- Conduct research to identify issues affecting the accessibility, affordability, accountability and quality of post secondary education in Nova Scotia;
- Develop credible and constructive policy to address these challenges
- Communicate research and policy to both educate and affect the opinions of stakeholders, Nova Scotians and government;
- Lobby the government to affect their post-secondary education policy;
- Organize campaigns to effectively articulate the needs and interests of our members; and
- Build partnerships to accomplish our vision.

### **Vision**

StudentsNS envisions a Nova Scotia post-secondary education system that is *accessible, affordable*, of the highest *quality*, and that includes *student voices* in decision-making.

### **Values**

The foundation upon which StudentsNS is built is the belief that post-secondary education can play a fundamental role in allowing both the individual and society to realize their full potential. StudentsNS' values are pillars built on this foundation, and the organization shapes its decision-making around these values.

- **Accessibility:** Every qualified Nova Scotia resident who wishes to pursue post-secondary education should be able to do so, irrespective of their financial situation, socioeconomic or ethnic background, physical, psychological or mental disability, age, sexual orientation, geographic location, or any other factor exogenous to qualification.
- **Affordability:** The cost of post-secondary education in Nova Scotia should not cause undue hardship upon any student, restrict their ability to pursue the career path they choose, or make them financially unable to live in the community that they choose.
- **Quality:** Policies, programs and services in post-secondary education should meet student expectations to help prepare them for lifelong success, including their citizenship, careers and personal wellbeing.
- **Student Voice:** Nova Scotia students must be empowered to actively participate in setting their post-secondary systems' direction via engagement through their representative student bodies, within the post-secondary institutions themselves, and through the broader democratic process.

## **Introduction**

Successful student advocacy requires long-term planning and execution. StudentsNS finds its strengths through consistency in approach, while being flexible and listening to the needs of students. As an organization, yearly turnover brings both challenges and successes. While individuals may not be able to move mountains, the collective voices of student leaders, year after year, create meaningful change. Despite typically serving for only a year, each Board Member is able to bring creativity and innovation to their roles, as informed by their student body.

Our 3-year Strategic Plan sets the long-term direction for the organization. This direction is mirrored within our Annual Plans, created each year during the Board Annual Planning Retreat. Annual Planning is key to StudentsNS' organizational success for a number of reasons. Most significantly, it ensures Board Members are held accountable to each other and to the students they serve. By identifying our yearly goals and providing updates on progress, we demonstrate transparency and accountability and highlight our commitment to a long-term organizational vision.

StudentsNS remains a committed advocate for student interests in the Post-Secondary education (PSE) sector. Our continuous goal is to represent these interests in a professional, well-researched and fiscally responsible manner. StudentsNS is guided by our values of affordability, accessibility, quality, and the role of student voice, and commits to advancing these themes through the goals laid out in the 2022-23 Annual Plan.

## **Planning Process**

The 2022-23 Annual Planning Retreat took place August 20-21, 2022. The Board first reviewed the draft Strategic Plan for 2022-25, as well as the 2021-22 Annual Plan, to identify potential strengths or carryover items. Board Members then identified high level goals and subsequent action items they hoped to accomplish within the upcoming year.

StudentsNS' 2022-23 Annual Plan was approved by the Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting on August 21, 2022.

## **Plan Review**

The Annual Plan should be reviewed by Home Office on a monthly basis to identify projects, priorities and areas for improvement. As well, a more comprehensive review of the Annual Plan and Committee Work Plans should occur during StudentsNS' annual Transitions Conference, ensuring transfer of knowledge to the incoming team.

**StudentsNS' 2022-23 Annual Plan presents goals across 5 domains:**

1. Consultation and Student Engagement
2. Governance and Organizational Sustainability
3. Research and Policy Development
4. Stakeholder and Alumni Engagement
5. Postsecondary Advocacy

→ **Goals** are the overarching objectives that work to achieve StudentsNS' Plan.

→ **Action Items** are direct actions taken by StudentsNS in pursuit of **Goals**.

→ **Outcomes** are the immediate results of the **Action Items**.

→ **Measures** provide an evaluation & demonstrate how **Outcomes** advance **Goals**.

PILLAR: Consultation and Student Engagement

Action	Outcomes	Measure
Conduct at least one campaign on a key student issue.	Increased awareness of StudentsNS' advocacy work, and increased institutional and government awareness of student priorities	Campaign conducted online and in person across member campuses.
Creation of a Social Media Strategy and/or Guidelines as a framework for StudentsNS communications, consultation and online engagement	Increased engagement with StudentsNS via social media, increased campus promotion of StudentsNS and increased student awareness of StudentsNS' work	Implementation of a formal social media plan and guidelines to guide brand management and engagement
Build meaningful relationships and identify opportunities for collaboration with NSCC students/staff and graduate students.	Increased college and graduate student engagement with StudentsNS	College and graduate student perspectives/priorities reflected in our policy and advocacy
Develop a consultation plan for provincial and campus-specific feedback collection, including consultation mechanisms, timelines, approaches across student/stakeholder groups and how feedback should be synthesized or incorporated into policy and advocacy.	Increased feedback from a diverse range of student and stakeholders perspectives within StudentsNS research and policy, informing a primary-research advocacy focus.	Consultation Plan presented and approved by Board.
Develop an engagement calendar for on campus events, branding presence, campaigns/focus groups, and engagement with councils and societies.	Increased StudentsNS presence on campus, increased student awareness of StudentsNS	1-2 visits from SNS to campus each year.

PILLAR: Governance and Organizational Sustainability

Action	Outcomes	Measure
Creation of transition resources for incoming Board Members, Officers, and Committee Chairs	Carryover of knowledge, and increased Board awareness of their responsibilities	Onboarding “guide” including role responsibilities, organizational overview and carryover priorities provided to the incoming Board.
Conduct a Staffing Review to identify best practices and allocation of responsibilities	Role clarity for Board Members and Officers	Staffing report presented to the Board of Directors.
Review voting and fee structures	Ensure that voting structures within the Board are representative, and fee structures are equitable and promote organizational sustainability.	Fee and voting structure report presented to the Board of Directors.
Informal review of all governing policies including updates to consistent format/style, and more substantial review of 1-2 policies	Governing policies are consistent in format and structure Policies are up-to-date and reflective of current best practices	Revised policies approved by the Board
Review Committee Structure alongside staffing review, with an emphasis on expanding the range of student voices, particularly for those underrepresented within our membership.	A range of student voices and perspectives are represented within Board decisionmaking and policy development.	Recommendations presented to the Board of Directors on how best to ensure the Board can best represent a diverse range of student perspectives (i.e. committees, caucuses and/or advisory groups)

PILLAR: Research and Policy Development

Action	Outcomes	Measure
Develop and maintain an internal research library on relevant postsecondary policy and issues, as identified by Home Office and Board.	Research sources are accessible to Board and committees.	Database of up-to-date research on key student issues accessible for all Board Members through Home Office.
Publish at least 5 new or revised position policies	New advocacy priorities and stances continue to be informed by research and policy.	Board approves new policy positions. Policy library available on StudentsNS website.
Ensure all position papers and policies incorporate a GBA+ focus.	Further highlighting regional variation and varied impacts of student issues across different demographics	Implementation of a GBA+ framework for policy development.
Release a regional student issues paper featuring submissions from each campus.	Increased awareness of campus-specific priorities	StudentsNS publishes a high quality submission that is circulated and shared with stakeholders institutionally and provincially
Release a research paper highlighting a key student issue	StudentsNS continues to produce high-quality, relevant research on key postsecondary issues	StudentsNS publishes a high quality research submission that is circulated and shared with stakeholders.
Seek to create executive summaries or briefs for new and existing policies and research papers.	StudentsNS research is easily accessible for the general public.	Shortened research and policy summaries shared alongside policy library and through social channels.

PILLAR: Stakeholder and Alumni Engagement

Action	Outcomes	Measure
Create database of advocacy partners and community stakeholders	Each policy priority is supported by at least one external stakeholder	Database of stakeholders developed and shared with the Board
Create database to record details of stakeholder and government meetings		Meeting database created and shared with the Board.
Develop and expand on connections with Indigenous and African Nova Scotian organizations, particularly those with an emphasis on educational access		Policy and advocacy informed by feedback and perspectives of African Nova Scotian and Indigenous learners.
Provide regular updates to stakeholders, government and alumni through newsletters and related communications		Newsletters released once per semester
Meet with as many government stakeholders as possible from across all parties both one-on-one and through formal advocacy		Meet with at least 2/3 of MLAs over the course of the year
Events to engage and collect feedback from stakeholders (i.e. symposiums, think tanks, summits) and to engage with StudentsNS (i.e. end of year event)		StudentsNS hosts at least one event that engages stakeholder and alumni throughout the year
Create opportunities for alumni to engage with StudentsNS through formalized networks		Each campus invites their alumni to engage with StudentsNS' network.



## PILLAR: Postsecondary Advocacy

Action	Outcomes	Measure
Advocate for reduced barriers in International Student access to MSI	International students have increased access to crucial health services	Government eliminates 31-day rule for international students traveling outside Nova Scotia
Advocate for increased access to on-campus health resources & increased capacity of student health and counseling centers.	Students can access high quality health care within their campus community.	Development of postsecondary on-campus healthcare standards highlighting supports, gaps
Advocate for the expansion of existing Work-Integrated Learning programs across degrees and campuses and increased provincial funding of employment programs	Increased accessibility of work-integrated learning opportunities across all of degrees and programs	COOP or Work-Integrated Learning options available for all students, regardless of program of study.
Advocate for increased provincial financial assistance funding to address student unmet need	Financial barriers to postsecondary access are reduced for the students with highest financial need.	Government increases Student Financial Assistance program maximums and updates housing allocations.
Advocate for the province to encourage an institutional emphasis upon needs-based funding, with a focus on equitable international student supports	Decreased institutional emphasis on merit-based funding and increased supports for students with greatest financial need	Government works with institutions to develop bursaries and loans framework emphasizing needs-based funding, including international-student-specific recommendations.
Advocate for regional postsecondary housing networks to provide education and connect students with housing options and supports.	Increased student awareness of tenancy rights and avenues for self-advocacy; increased collaboration between student housing stakeholders	Development of regional housing networks
Advocate for sustainable funding of provincial OER repository and expansion of OER incentives and uptake on individual campuses.	Increased institutional uptake of Open Educational Resources; increased affordability of educational materials for students.	Government supports the funding and implementation of a provincial OER repository
Advocate for review of postsecondary processes, including course delivery, options for experiential learning, degree structure/pathways and accessibility for mature or non-traditional learners	Increased flexibility in course delivery and degree structure, greater accessibility for mature/non-traditional students. Increased accessibility of educational delivery and pedagogy, Nova Scotia continues to innovate educational quality.	Government considers adopting our recommendations in collaboration with other relevant PSE stakeholders.

