



Students Nova Scotia
2023 - 2024 Annual Plan



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 2023-24 Annual Plan.

Planning Process

The 2023-24 Annual Planning Retreat took place July 29-30, 2023. The Board first reviewed the 2022-23 Annual Plan, as well as the 2022-2025 Strategic 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' 2023-24 Annual Plan was approved by the Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting on July 30, 2023.

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.



2023-2024 Annual Plan

StudentsNS' 2023-2024 Annual Plan was formally approved at StudentsNS' Annual General Meeting on July 30, 2023.

- **Goals** are the overarching objectives that work to achieve StudentsNS' 2023-2024 Strategic 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 and demonstrate how the **Outcomes** advance the **Goals**.

The 2023-2024 Annual Plan presents goals across six primary domains:

1. Policy and Research Development
2. Organizational Sustainability and Growth
3. Postsecondary Advocacy
4. Student Engagement
5. Building Community

PILLAR: Policy and Research Development

This goal aims to further develop the research and policy of StudentsNS by defining clear targets, topics and projects for the year.

Action Items	Outcome	Measure
Outline policy priorities and create 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
Publish at least 3 new position policies for the StudentsNS policy library	New advocacy priorities and stances continue to be informed by research and policy	Board approves new policy positions; policies are made available in the library on StudentsNS website
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
Review 3 existing position policies from the StudentsNS library	Existing StudentNS position policies are relevant and updated with new research	Board approves the reviewed policy positions; policies are dated and made available in the library on StudentsNS website

PILLAR: Organizational Sustainability and Growth

This goal aims to revitalize StudentsNS’ organizational sustainability by reviewing and updating the current structure and processes of StudentsNS governance, while ensuring that our organizational practices are inclusive of a diverse range of student voices.

Action Items	Outcome	Measure
Develop transition guides for Board Officers, Committee Chairs and Board Members	Maintenance of institutional memory and increased Board awareness of their responsibilities	Onboarding transition “guide” including role responsibilities, organizational overview and ongoing Board and/or committee work provided to the incoming Board
Expand the StudentsNS alumni network	Outreach to known alumni to inform best practices for Alumni engagement with StudentsNS	Survey sent out to all known alumni once per semester
Establish an institutional memory platform for maintenance and records of all StudentsNS documents	Identify best practices for saving important information and maintain a platform with internal records and documents	File location is created with documents organized to facilitate information retrieval for incoming Board members
Develop StudentsNS observership promotions	Create infographics and promotional materials to present to potential StudentsNS observers	Observership presentation is made available through Home Office and Observership 101 infographic is made available on the StudentsNS website
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
Expand community and government stakeholder databases with alignment and profiles	Policy priorities are supported through partnership with relevant stakeholders	Database of stakeholders expanded and shared with the Board

PILLAR: Postsecondary Advocacy

This goal aims to improve StudentsNS' advocacy efforts by defining relevant post-secondary issues and building relationships with government and political parties.

Action Items	Outcome	Measure
Advocate for the expansion of Work-Integrated Learning programs across degrees and campuses and work to reduce identified program barriers	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 regional postsecondary housing supports and provide tenancy education for students	Increased student awareness of tenancy rights and avenues for self-advocacy; increased collaboration between student housing stakeholders	Development of off-campus housing officers, regional student housing networks, and educational materials on tenancy rights for students
Advocate for international tuition framework that ensures upfront short term predictability and sustainable long term regulation	Increased consistency and financial predictability for international students	Development of an international student tuition framework that increases regulation and predictability
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
Advocate for the province to encourage an institutional emphasis upon needs-based funding	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
Meet with different government stakeholders to increase awareness provincially	StudentsNS priorities and recommendations are shared widely across government stakeholders	Meet with at least 2/3 of MLAs over the course of the year
Advocate for reduced barriers in International Student access to MSI	International students have increased access to crucial health services	Government eliminates 13-month rule for international students living in Nova Scotia

PILLAR: Student Engagement

This goal aims to increase student awareness and participation with StudentsNS by creating new information channels and resources for student engagement.

Action Items	Outcome	Measure
Increase available StudentsNS resources and materials for students on-campus	Students on-campus have increased awareness and engagement with StudentsNS	StudentsNS informational material is available on each member institution's campus
Conduct at least 1 campaign on key student issues	Increased awareness of StudentsNS' advocacy work, and increased institutional and government awareness of student priorities	Campaign conducted online and in person across member campuses
Develop an engagement calendar and strategy for on-campus students	Increased StudentsNS presence on campus, increased student awareness of StudentsNS	Shared StudentsNS engagement calendar amongst the Board; 1-2 visits from SNS to campus each year
Increase student consultation across the province	Increased student consultation engagement with StudentsNS	Share a widespread student survey and consult with elected student union councils/directors to increase student engagement with StudentsNS

PILLAR: Building Community

This goal aims to expand StudentsNS' working relationships by engaging with advocacy partners, specifically those from historically marginalized groups in postsecondary education in Nova Scotia.

Action Items	Outcome	Measure
Develop and expand on connections with Indigenous and African Nova Scotian organizations, particularly those with an emphasis on educational access	StudentsNS expands relations with Indigenous and African Nova Scotian students and support organizations	Advocacy informed by priorities and perspectives of African Nova Scotian and Indigenous learners
Connect with campus supports for underrepresented students; including 2SLGBTQIA+	StudentsNS expands its network for underrepresented students and connects with campus supports	Advocacy informed by priorities and perspectives of underrepresented students and their campus supports
Invite guest speakers to meetings and conferences to educate the Board on specific priorities	Inform specific Board priorities with the support of advocacy and organizational educators	StudentsNS invites at least 1 external guest speaker to present at an internal conference
Work with provincial organizations that focus on international student supports and education	Collaborate with external organizations to expand the support network for international student advocacy	Advocacy and engagement partnership with specific support organizations for international student in the province
Engage with provincial organizations that focus on student housing supports and education	Collaborate with external organizations to expand the information for housing advocacy	Advocacy and engagement partnership with specific organizations for student housing in the province