

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022



students 

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INTRODUCTION

StudentsNS began the strategic planning process in 2008 and has since produced three strategic plans (2009-2012, 2013-2016 and 2016-2019). This strategic plan is the fourth produced by StudentsNS and covers 2019-2022.

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 the implementation of strategic plans, as informed by their student body.

The strategic planning process, as well as the implementation of a strategic plan itself, sets the stage for StudentsNS' work to occur.

It anchors the organization in specific themes, goals, and action items and holds each Board accountable--both to StudentsNS, but most importantly, to students. Transparency and accountability regarding the work of StudentsNS is paramount. Strategic planning demonstrates to student constituents and other stakeholders the values and intentions of the organization years in advance, and creates compliance for current and future Boards to fulfill this mandate.

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 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.



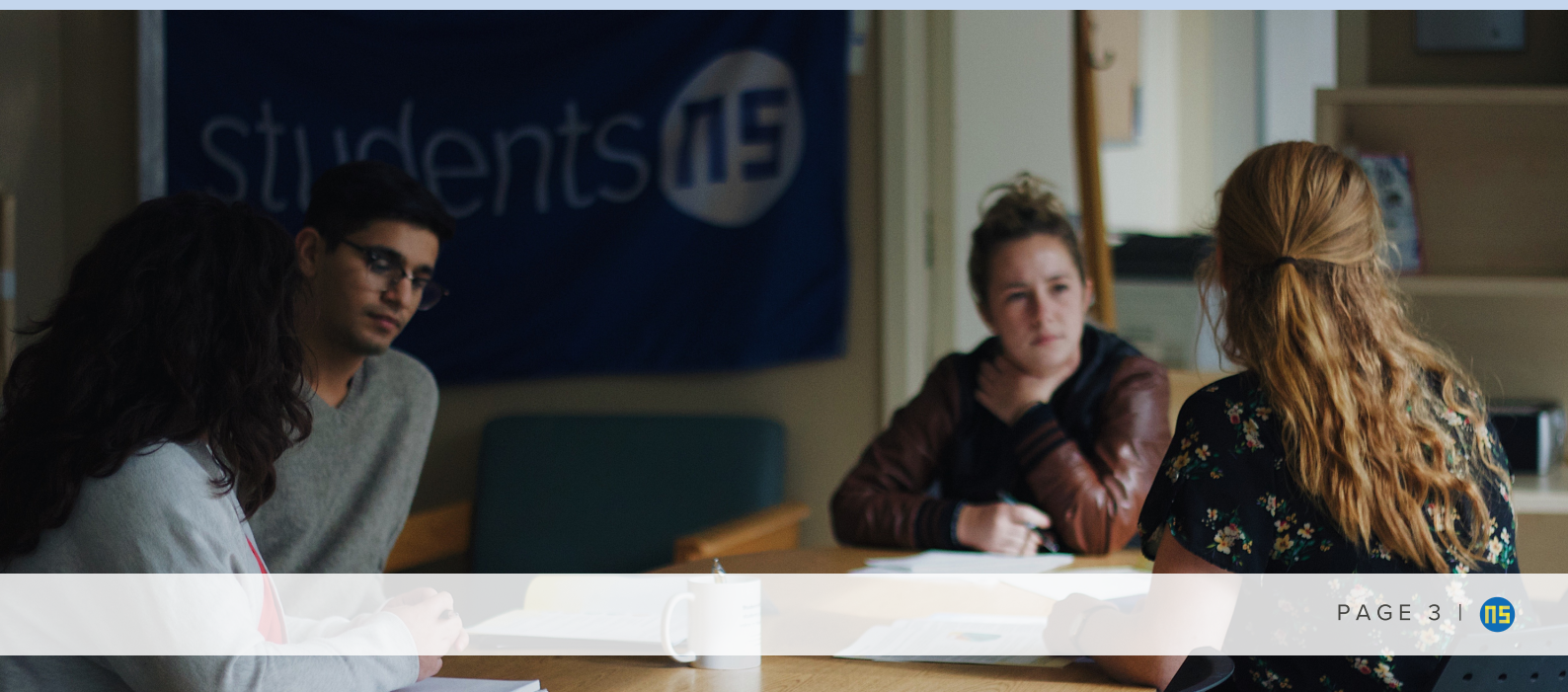
SCOPE

StudentsNS is dedicated to representing the collective interests and priorities of post-secondary students in Nova Scotia. This is central to every step of StudentsNS' decision making. The Board is expected to consult their respective student populations, as well as report back to their Councils routinely about the direction of StudentsNS. Advocacy priorities are informed by student feedback, as well as emerging campus concerns. The strategic planning process draws on this feedback to inform a long term strategy that encompasses all relevant stakeholders.

The strategic planning process included a facilitated two-day Board retreat, presentations from stakeholders, and weeks of revision at the Board level to accurately capture the direction StudentsNS should be moving toward. Careful analysis of the previous strategic plan, its successes, and its room for improvement played a large role in this process.

Similarly, gauging successes in recent annual plans was also helpful in informing potential action items.

As we move towards implementation, continual involvement of the StudentsNS membership will be key. Council presentations at each member campus, greater integration of NSCC members and mandated, robust student consultation were identified as important ways to keep students engaged with the work of the organization. As an organization run by students, for students, this is central to our mission. Over the next three years, the Board and Executive Director are excited to continue to work together with the StudentsNS membership to deliver high-quality advocacy reflective of student needs. The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan sets the direction for this to occur.



VISION

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

MISSION

It is the mission of Students Nova Scotia 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.



VALUES

The foundation upon which Students Nova Scotia 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. Students Nova Scotia's 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 in their citizenship, careers, and personal wellbeing.

STUDENT VOICE:

Nova Scotia students must be empowered to actively participate in setting their post-secondary system's direction via engagement through their representative student bodies, within the post-secondary institutions themselves, and through the broader democratic process.



PLANNING PROCESS

To that end, StudentsNS began working to create the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, based on the above stated values. The Board completed a multi-step, two-day retreat. First, the Board was asked to consider the above values and what they mean to students, as well as how StudentsNS can tangibly deliver our values back to our membership. Secondly, the Board engaged in a comprehensive review of our most recent strategic plan and its accompanying annual plans, noting areas of success and weakness. Combining both steps, the Board completed a SWOT (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of the organization as it stands. From here, goals for the following three years were devised. Board Members were expected to incorporate their students' feedback into each step of the planning process. Following the retreat, the Board and Executive Director worked collaboratively to refine the details of the plan.

Several rounds of edits occurred before the final language was presented at the StudentsNS Annual General Meeting of Members (AGM), as suggested by the previous strategic plan as best practice. StudentsNS has also been on track with delivering the below items, as is also considered a best practice.

These additional planning pieces help keep the Board and Executive Director

on track to reach the long-term milestones outlined in each strategic plan:

Annual Plan:

This document will lay out the yearly path towards achieving the long-term goals of the organization. This document will be set each year by the Board and will create reasonable expectations alongside achievable action items. Some discussion should be had about the resources, both fiscal and financial, that will be required to achieve these targets each year.

Annual Report:

Each year, at the Annual General Meeting, the Executive Director should present an annual report. This report should outline the previous year for the organization and highlight what actions were undertaken and what outcomes occurred in the pursuit of the strategic plan.

Three-Year Review:

The Executive Director, with the assistance of the Board and other stakeholders where necessary, should undertake a three-year review of the strategic plan. For planning purposes, this would be best to undertake after the final Annual Plan in the strategic planning cycle has been approved, but early enough in the year to ensure effective planning takes place for the creation of the new strategic plan.

2019-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

AFFORDABLE + ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

ACTION	OUTCOME
<p>Explore feasible mechanisms to create fairness for international students regarding their tuition and fees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International students gain financial predictability, which both discourages harmful recruiting practices and acts as a selling point for NS post-secondary.
<p>Advocate for up-front, needs-based grants for students from marginalized backgrounds, such as low-income, African Nova Scotian, rural, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who are underrepresented in NS post-secondary are incentivized to attend. Greater educational attainment among underrepresented groups in Nova Scotia.
<p>Advocate for closing the gap for students with unmet need in their financial assistance package.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-secondary is more affordable for students who statistically face the highest need.
<p>Begin conversations at the provincial level about merit versus needs-based scholarships, and tie to on-campus advocacy efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarships are focused on providing access to students who need it, rather than as a recruiting tool for universities.

2019-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN INNOVATIVE LEARNING

ACTION	OUTCOME
<p>Advocate for a provincially funded and administered Open-Educational Resource (OER) fund to reflect ongoing modernization in the post-secondary sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of textbooks is greatly reduced for students; course accessibility is increased. • Nova Scotia joins other provinces in taking an innovative approach to post-secondary.
<p>Advocate for the continuation and diversification within work-integrated learning (WIL) efforts so that students from all academic backgrounds can receive high-quality work experience in their degree.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to work-integrated learning opportunities for students outside of STEM fields. • Expanded access to work-integrated learning opportunities at campuses that currently run limited co-op opportunities.
<p>Encourage greater investment into work-integrated learning (WIL) efforts to create better labour-force attachment, boosting Nova Scotia's economy and enticing more grads to stay in-province post-graduation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of graduates staying in Nova Scotia post-graduation. • Increased number of international students staying in Nova Scotia post-graduation.
<p>Advocate for a greater emphasis on financial literacy in the primary and secondary education systems to prepare students appropriately for post-secondary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased post-secondary enrollment from Nova Scotia population. • Greater emphasis within the province on the importance of post-secondary education.

2019-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

ENGAGEMENT + REPRESENTATION

ACTION	OUTCOME
<p>Review the structure of the Board to determine how to better integrate underrepresented groups on campus directly into StudentsNS governance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification of current representation at the StudentsNS Board. • Better representation for those who have been traditionally excluded from StudentsNS governance.
<p>Create a mandatory consultation framework to guide Board Members on consulting various groups on campus about advocacy efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More students are brought into conversations about StudentsNS' advocacy efforts. • StudentNS diversifies policy viewpoints through consultation • Greater awareness of StudentsNS on campuses.
<p>Identify and work with established student groups on campus to create more opportunities for students to be directly involved with StudentsNS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • StudentsNS expands current campus outreach initiatives. • Stronger campus networks to support advocacy efforts at all levels. • Greater awareness of StudentsNS on campuses.
<p>Review current NSCC Membership and develop strategies to expand advocacy efforts on behalf of college students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved representation and, as a result, a stronger approach to advocacy for college students. • Formalized partnership agreement is developed to address needs.

2019-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN BRAND MANAGEMENT

ACTION	OUTCOME
<p>Integrate StudentsNS into on-campus activities and events on a routine basis, facilitated by both Board Members and the Executive Director.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Members and the Executive Director have a visible, dedicated presence on-campus. • StudentsNS becomes a part of campus cultures, rather than simply being an offshoot of student unions/associations
<p>Create more “swag” materials to hand to students directly, presence in key branding opportunities such as Orientation Week.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • StudentsNS promotes itself to students in a personal manner. • StudentsNS increases brand awareness from the moment students step foot on campus. • StudentsNS' brand is evident in campus life
<p>Create a social media strategy that prioritizes engagement directly with constituents and incorporates their feedback. Strategy should also promote regular and consistent posting on all social media platforms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand closer relations with constituents via social media. • Constituents have a greater awareness of StudentsNS.
<p>Develop a Brand Manual for all branded materials, including social media, website design, publications and “swag”. Brand Manual should cover fonts, colour codes, and other design elements to create cohesive branding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • StudentsNS' brand remains consistent and therefore, recognizable to stakeholders and students.

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STAKEHOLDER + ALUMNI OUTREACH

ACTION	OUTCOME
<p>Create an online and in-person network of former StudentsNS Board Members and affiliates to create ties back to the current work of StudentsNS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • StudentsNS maintains closer relations to alumni, who have gone onto work in various fields including government, public relations, and non-profit advocacy. • Creation of mentorship opportunities for incoming Board Members. • Creation of cross-generational knowledge transfer.
<p>Host alumni events, panels, and networking events where student leaders can learn from past Board Members and network to help advance StudentsNS Advocacy efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • StudentsNS builds connections between past and present Board members, to share knowledge and strengthen the organization as a whole.
<p>Create as many links as possible between advocacy goals and relevant external stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every advocacy goal, when appropriate, is supported by any external stakeholders who can help advance advocacy efforts. • StudentsNS expands its network to more community-based organizations and coalitions.
<p>Prioritize creating direct links between StudentsNS and new, community-based stakeholders to broaden the scope of current strategic partnerships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build connections with community-based stakeholders, to make certain that StudentsNS acquires a more multifaceted approach.



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AFFORDABILITY | ACCESSIBILITY | QUALITY | STUDENT VOICE

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