



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
STUDENTS' UNION

Report on the Canadian Federation of Students

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Prepared by:

2020-2021 *ad hoc* Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students

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Executive Summary

This report is divided into five primary sections, each aiming to provide a particular lense to the relationship between the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) and the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS).

The “Introduction & Background” section provides the context for this report, and provides background information on what the CFS is, its origins, how it's structured, and what its mission and stated goals are as an organization. It also provides some preliminary background information on the historical relationship between the Students' Administrative Council (SAC; UTSU's former name) and the CFS, as well as a note on the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU).

The “Governance” section provides a comprehensive overview of the governance structure of the CFS, including executive structures, general meetings, and governance administration. It also provides a detailed overview on the processes for membership in the CFS, a history of the UTSU's membership in the CFS, the fracturing of the CFS within the context of the UTSU's own recent history on campus, and the provincial component, CFS-Ontario.

The “Services & Finances” section reviews the funding model of the CFS and briefly looks into its financial practices, including its handling of a “hidden” bank account. It also provides an analysis of the various services offered by the CFS to its member locals, and reviews the UTSU's own programs and services in comparison.

The “Advocacy” section provides an overview of the high-level campaigns of the CFS, as well as the government relations strategy of the CFS, and an analysis of both. It also provides an overview of the history of the UTSU's own advocacy apparatus, and an analysis of the UTSU's own advocacy strategies.

The “Conclusion” section draws conclusions from the “Governance,” “Services & Finances,” and “Advocacy” sections, and draws conclusions on the UTSU's membership in the CFS, with recommendations for the UTSU Board of Directors.

Appendix A contains the written submission from the Students' Law Society at the University of Toronto.

Appendix B contains the written submission from the at-large national executives of the Canadian Federation of Students.

Finally, Appendix C contains the written submission from the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union.



Introduction & Background

This report was commissioned by the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) Board of Directors on September 26, 2020. The Board of Directors struck an *ad hoc* committee to investigate the UTSU's eighteen-year-old relationship with the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), and produce a report that "outlines the overall impact of the CFS upon the UTSU's members, and analyzes the various failures and accomplishments of the CFS across the country." A similar draft report was commissioned by the 2015-2016 UTSU Board of Directors; this report seeks to build upon the work of the 2016 draft report.

Throughout this report, we have endeavoured to provide references and research that has guided the committee's work. This report endeavours to present a factual account of the CFS and its relationship to the UTSU, and we have done our due diligence to consult a variety of stakeholders and sources, including the CFS. However, similar to the 2016 draft report, we acknowledge that the facts are not neutral, and that it would be irresponsible to refrain from criticizing particular elements of the UTSU's relationship with the CFS. Above all, we have endeavoured to be fair.

The 2016 draft report did not take a stance on decertification from the UTSU.¹ However, in 2017, the UTSU released a statement that criticized the CFS as "beyond reform" and endorsed decertification.² Successive UTSU Executive Committees have also supported decertification from the CFS. However, the CFS bylaws require that any attempt to leave the Federation be initiated by UTSU members, and not by the UTSU itself. This report, in reviewing the CFS' impact on our members, seeks to take a stance on the UTSU's membership in the CFS, and highlights the barriers that have prevented the UTSU from decertifying in recent years.

The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) was founded in 1981 through the dissolution of former national and provincial predecessors to enable the students of Canada to democratically assemble in order to "speak with one voice."³ At the national level, the CFS is composed of two organizations that operate as one: the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS, or CFS National), which advocates for its

¹ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

² University of Toronto Students' Union. (2017, January 24). Statement on Continued Membership of the Canadian Federation of Students. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/uoftsu/posts/1336668326405932>.

³ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 3. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.



membership, and Canadian Federation of Students-Services (CFS-Services), which provides services such as supplementary health care insurance.⁴ The CFS also has provincial components in Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland & Labrador, and these provincial components perform both functions (advocacy and service provision).⁵ The provincial and national organizations are fully independent of each other, but it is not possible to be a member of one and not the other.⁶

Students are represented in the Federation by their local student association.⁷ Each local student association is a “member” of the federation, and are referred to as “member locals” or simply “locals.”⁸ There are currently 62 member locals, and each local is assigned a number. Throughout their submission to the committee, the CFS claims repeatedly that individual students hold membership in the Federation.⁹ This is not true. While individual students may be able to access services and campaign materials offered by the Federation and pay a membership fee each semester, the bylaws of the Federation clearly state that “the students collectively belonging to a local student association have the right to have their interests represented collectively in the Federation through their local student association, but, for greater certainty, are not members of the Federation or the Canadian Federation of Students-Services and accordingly will not have voting rights at Federation or Canadian Federation of Students-Services general meetings.”¹⁰

The UTSU, known as Local 98, is one of five CFS locals at the University of Toronto. The others are the Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students (Local 97), the University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union (Local 19), the Scarborough Campus Students' Union (Local 99), and the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (Local 109). The UTSU, then known as the Students' Administrative Council (SAC) joined the CFS in 2003, after a controversial referendum was held in 2002.¹¹

⁴ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 9. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.

¹⁰ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 10. <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

¹¹ Artful-Dodger, A. (2002). SAC Membership Agreement - CFS & CFS-Services [Letter written November 19, 2002 to Ian Byoko]. Toronto, Ontario: Students' Administrative Council of the University of Toronto.; Artful-Dodger, A. (2002). SAC Membership Agreement -



While 65.5% of SAC's members voted in favour of joining, the University of Toronto administration concluded that the referendum was not conducted fairly, was not conducted in accordance with the SAC's bylaws, and that there "may have been an unbalanced playing field in favor of a 'yes' vote in the referenda."¹² As a result, the U of T University Affairs Board declined to approve a CFS fee for the UTSU until 2005—regardless, the CFS has recognized the UTSU as a member local since 2003.¹³

This referendum was not the first referendum held by the University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council on membership in the Canadian Federation of Students. SAC was a founding member of the Federation's two national predecessor organizations: the Association of Student Councils in 1969, and the National Union of Students in 1972, along with the Ontario Federation of Students in 1969.¹⁴ Of particular note is that SAC was a founding member of the Canadian Federation of Students.¹⁵ However, when SAC held a referendum in 1983 on permanent membership in the Federation, U of T students voted against joining.¹⁶ Another referendum was held in 1992, however that also failed.¹⁷ On January 30, 2002, a chaotic SAC annual general meeting saw arguments made for SAC to join either the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) or the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS).¹⁸ After a bitter debate, hundreds of proxy votes collected by SAC executives, and a walkout, the members present voted to become prospective members of the CFS.¹⁹ This set the stage for the referendum in November 2002, which is explored in greater detail later in this report.

CFS-Ontario [Letter written November 19, 2002 to Joel Duff]. Toronto, Ontario: Students' Administrative Council of the University of Toronto.; Kennedy, R. (2002, November 12). We say (tentative) yes to CFS. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2002/11/12/we-say-tentative-yes-to-cfs/>.

¹² Delaney, J. (2003, February 25). SAC, APUS, SCSU - Fee Increase Requests to Support CFS Membership [Letter to Alexandra Artful-Dodger, Emily Sadowski, and Dan Bandurka]. University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario.

¹³ Governing Council of the University of Toronto. (2005, January 18). *Report Number 125 of the University Affairs Board* (Rep.). Retrieved from <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/system/files/import-files/r01183346.pdf>.

¹⁴ Canadian Federation of Students. (2002). *National Executive Report: May 9 to November 19, 2002* (pp. 29-33, Rep.). Ottawa, Ontario.

¹⁵ Canadian Federation of Students. (1981, October 14-19). *CFS 1st Semi-Annual Meeting*. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/cfs/1981/1981-10-minutes.pdf>.

¹⁶ Canadian Federation of Students. (2002). *National Executive Report: May 9 to November 19, 2002* (pp. 29-33, Rep.). Ottawa, Ontario.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Ferguson, I. (2002, January 31). Undergrads now members of national student lobby group CFS. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2002/01/31/undergrads-now-members-of-national-student-lobby-group-cfs/>.

¹⁹ *ibid.*



The ultimate goal of the Federation is a nationally planned and accessible system of post-secondary education that recognizes student representation and validates students' rights.²⁰ For decades, the CFS has campaigned to advance the interests of students, its primary goal being the total abolition of tuition fees, and a free and accessible post-secondary education for all students.²¹ To this end, it lobbies the federal and provincial governments, as well as university administrations. The CFS regularly appears before parliamentary committees, and CFS leaders often comment on student issues in the national media. More focused campaigns are led by the Circle of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Students, the Graduate Students' Caucus, the Colleges and Institutes' Caucus, and the Black Students Caucus, which exist to provide institutional representation for Indigenous students, graduate students, students from colleges and institutes, and Black students, respectively.²² CFS-Ontario also has four permanent advocacy caucuses: the Northern Region Caucus, the Ontario Graduate Caucus, the Francophone and Bilingual Caucus, and the Part Time and Continuing Education Caucus.²³

The CFS is a complicated network of not-for-profit corporations. The national organization, the Canadian Federation of Students, is led by a board of directors called the National Executive, which includes three officers.²⁴ The same people serve as the board of directors for CFS-Services, although the two are distinct corporations.²⁵ CFS-Ontario has a much larger board of directors called the Executive Committee, often referred to as the Ontario Executive Committee or "OEC."²⁶ It is analogous to

²⁰ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 3. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

²¹ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf; Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.

²² Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.

²³ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2019). *Operations Policy, as amended at the 2019 Annual General Meeting*, page 7. Retrieved from <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Operations-Policy-2019.08.pdf>.

²⁴ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 33. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

²⁵ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

²⁶ Riches, T., Ahmed, M., Reuter, F., & Hemrajani, N. (2020). *Report on the Canadian Federation of Students - Ontario Annual General Meeting August 2020* (Rep.). Retrieved from <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Report-on-the-CFS-Ontario-Annual-General-Meeting-August-2020.pdf>.



the National Executive but includes a representative from each Ontario member local.²⁷ Most major elections occur at annual general meetings. National General Meetings are held in the Ottawa region while Ontario General Meetings are held in Toronto, although during the COVID-19 pandemic, all general meetings were held virtually over Zoom.²⁸

It is also important to note for the purposes of this report that the UTSU has been a member of the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-intensive Universities (UCRU), formerly known as ADVOCAN, since the mid-2010s.²⁹ UCRU is an informal coalition of student unions from U15 institutions that pursues federal lobbying, and unlike CFS and CASA, has no membership fee or membership agreement at the time of writing this report, although UCRU has been pursuing incorporation during the 2020-2021 year.³⁰

In writing this report, the *ad hoc* committee reached out to divisional student societies at the U of T St. George campus, the at-large executives of CFS-National, and the at-large executives of CFS-Ontario, inviting them to provide written submissions to the committee highlighting the relationship between the UTSU and the CFS, and the impact of the Federation on the UTSU's members. The committee also invited the Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students (APUS), the University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union (UTGSU), the Scarborough Campus Students' Union (SCSU), and the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU) to provide written submissions to the committee highlighting the impact the Federation has had on their respective memberships.

The UTSU would like to thank the Students' Law Society, the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU), and the at-large executives of CFS-National for providing the committee with submissions. These submissions can be found in the appendices of this report.

The UTSU would also like to thank the 2015-2016 UTSU Board of Directors for investigating the UTSU's relationship with the CFS, and writing their draft report,

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *ibid.*; Riches, T., & Ahmed, M. (2021). *Report on the Canadian Federation of Students Annual General Meeting November 2020* (Rep.). Retrieved from <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Report-on-the-CFS-Annual-General-Meeting-November-2020.pdf>.

²⁹ Scott, J. (2016, November 21). UTSU joins ADVOCAN in Ottawa. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2016/11/21/utsu-joins-advocan-in-ottawa/>.

³⁰ Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities. (n.d.). Retrieved March 02, 2021, from <https://www.ucru.info/>; Riches, T. (2021, February). *Report of the Vice-President, Public & University Affairs* (Rep.). Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hRE-UmFeaqvhoRxdZaKjBYmobXCST5TG/view?usp=sharing>.



which laid the groundwork for this report and helped start the conversation on our campus regarding the UTSU's membership in the CFS.

For any questions regarding this report, please contact Tyler Riches, Vice-President Public & University Affairs at vppublicuniversityaffairs@utsu.ca.



Governance

The following section presents a detailed account of the CFS and CFS Ontario's internal governance structures, namely the scale and powers of the organizations' executive branches, their general meeting proceedings, and certification and decertification processes. The section includes a broad history of the evolution of the CFS' internal governance structures and proceedings such as the development of Bylaw I, the bylaw governing membership. We describe the ongoing fracturing of the student movement by looking into the history of relations between the Federation, its provincial components, and rival organizations. We also review the UTSU and CFS' relationship beginning with looking at the events surrounding the UTSU's certification as member Local 98 and culminating in the negative sentiments towards the CFS that arose in subsequent years.

The National Executive

The National Executive, which serves as the board of directors of the Federation, is composed of three officers elected by the National Plenary: the National Chairperson, National Deputy Chairperson, and National Treasurer; as well as a number of representative directors.³¹ Those wishing to be elected as one of the three officer positions must originate from a member local but can be an incumbent member of the National Executive or a delegate of a member local.³² These individuals must also show proficiency in French and/or a First Nations language.³³ They are elected at general meetings of the National Plenary by a simple majority of members present and can be re-elected.³⁴ The election process includes a nominees forum conducted by the Chief Returning Officer.³⁵ Officers of the National Executive are full-time salaried employees of the Federation.³⁶ Remuneration of the National Executive is generally determined by the National Plenary. Officers are not allowed to receive any additional remuneration from the Federation.³⁷ Officers are allowed to be employed by additional firms or companies, however, the Federation is not

³¹ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 33. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

³² *ibid.*, 41.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*, 42 ; Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 125. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

³⁵ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 42. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 36

³⁷ *ibid.*

permitted to engage with said firms or companies if an officer is a shareholder, director, or officer of any sort.³⁸

The National Executive is composed of members representing the provinces; provinces such as Alberta, and Quebec are supposed to have seats on the National Executive but do not in practice.³⁹ The National Executive is also composed of representatives on behalf of a number of its identity based caucuses including the Circle of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Students, the Caucus of Colleges and Institutes, the National Graduate Caucus, and the Black Students' Caucus.⁴⁰ Moreover, representatives on behalf of identity based constituency groups such as those for Student Disability Justice, International Students, Francophone Students, Racialized Students, Women, and 2Spirit and Trans Students also sit on the Executive.⁴¹ The aforementioned positions are elected by each caucus or constituency group at the annual general meeting in the fall each year. Constituency groups only meet during annual general meetings, however, caucuses may often meet throughout the course of the year, and have more complex internal structures. There are also some constituency groups that do not have a member on the National Executive; more information on this can be found in the general meetings section of this report. The Constituency Group Commission is meant to provide a forum for commissioners of each constituency group and caucus to discuss plans, budgetary concerns, and campaigns at least once per year between annual general meetings.⁴² It is comprised of every representative or commissioner of a constituency group, including those who do not have representation on the National Executive.⁴³

A vote to remove a member of the National Executive from office can be triggered by a petition of three member locals or $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote of the National Executive.⁴⁴ A member of the National Executive is then only removed from office by a majority vote of the National Plenary.⁴⁵ The National Chairperson position is considered

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). Structure. Retrieved April 3, 2021, from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/about/structure>; Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 33. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*; Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). Structure. Retrieved April 3, 2021, from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/about/structure>.

⁴² Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Standing Resolutions, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, pages 66-67. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standing-Res-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 33. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*



vacant if the elected individual is not able to demonstrate second language proficiency 5 weeks before the annual general meeting at which they are meant to take office.⁴⁶ Vacancies are filled temporarily by the National Executive for the three officer positions as well as for the directorship positions upon consultation with the necessary constituent groups, until the next general meeting can vote on a replacement.⁴⁷ The term of the National Executive runs from May 1 to April 30 of the following year, meaning that although individuals are elected or appointed to their positions at the annual general meeting which usually takes place in the fall, they assume office a few months later on May 1.⁴⁸

The National Executive is responsible for executing all decisions of the Federation, the management and coordination of office(s) and staff of the Federation, and representing the Federation in any and all external functions.⁴⁹ It is also responsible for preparing agendas for general meetings and for administering a report to each meeting regarding any “activities undertaken on its authority since the previous general meeting” including updates to any directives given to them by the National Plenary at the previous meeting.⁵⁰ The National Executive is empowered to deal with the financial and legal affairs of the Federation on behalf of the Federation as a whole. Moreover, it is allowed to circumvent the will of the National Plenary if it deems that the “Federation would be adversely affected” by acting in line with the will of the National Plenary.⁵¹

Specifically, the at-large members of the National Executive are responsible for coordinating each general meeting of the Federation as well as ensuring that reports and governing documents are regularly submitted and updated for the membership.⁵² The at-large members of the National Executive “receive a salary of \$2, 750 per month” which is adjusted each year “by the rate of change of the Consumer Price Index,” and have access to an extended health and dental plan; this information can be found in the budgets presented to each annual general meeting.

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⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 43

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 42

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 33

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 33

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 34

⁵² Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Standing Resolutions, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, pages 94-95. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standing-Res-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁵³ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Standing Resolutions, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 134. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standing-Res-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

The National Executive is required to meet at least four times “between each annual general meeting.” Notice of meetings of the National Executive are given to both members of the National Executive as well as member local student associations, although member locals are not permitted to attend.⁵⁴ The National Executive is permitted to hold a meeting without giving notice to the wider membership as long as a majority of National Executive members agree.⁵⁵ National Executive meetings are minuted which are nominally provided to the membership at general meetings for ratification.⁵⁶ Moreover, all open session meetings of the National Executive are made public on the Federation’s website.⁵⁷

Members of the National Executive are required to submit reports to their relevant constituency group following each meeting of the National Executive.⁵⁸ Many constituency heads are responsible for maintaining communications with their communities beyond submitting reports throughout the course of the year in other ways such as via email. They must also submit at least one full report each quarter of their activities including other relevant meetings they may have attended.⁵⁹ The National Executive as a whole compiles a report each year before the annual general meeting to be distributed to members regarding the activities of the past year including campaigns, membership issues, the status of the budget, goals for the remainder of their time in office, the work of staff, the business of National Executive meetings, and anything relevant to the Federation’s structure or internal affairs.⁶⁰

The National Executive’s agenda is aided by a dozen or so staff members known in one standing resolution as the “office collective” responsible for the budget,

⁵⁴ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 35. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2019). *Operations Policy, as amended at the 2019 Annual General Meeting*, page 32. Retrieved from <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Operations-Policy-2019.08.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 35. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>; Canadian Federation of Students (2020). *Meeting Minutes*. Retrieved April 3, 2021, from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/about/meeting-minutes/>.

⁵⁸ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2019). *Operations Policy, as amended at the 2019 Annual General Meeting*, page 34. Retrieved from <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Operations-Policy-2019.08.pdf>.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Standing Resolutions, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 122. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standing-Res-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.



communications, government relations, and organizing.⁶¹ A list of these staff members and what their roles entail is not currently readily available on the Federation's website. However, the national staff team is cited in the National Executive's report that was presented at the November 2020 AGM.⁶² The staff team includes an Executive Director, a Campaigns Coordinator, Communications Coordinator, Finance Director, Director of Services, Membership & Services Coordinator, and a Research & Government Relations Coordinator.⁶³ The national staff team also includes organizers for the Federation in the Maritimes, Manitoba, and Newfoundland & Labrador.⁶⁴ CFS' provincial components in those areas are not large and as such, do not have extensive staff teams whereas the CFS-Ontario is comparably larger and therefore has a staff team of its own.⁶⁵

The National Executive's three at-large members are responsible for managing the staff of the Federation on "a day-to-day basis" and regularly ensures that their work is reflective of the National Executive and the National Plenary's desires and mandate.⁶⁶ There is a history of staff coming from backgrounds in student politics, specifically as former members of the National Executive.⁶⁷ This is something that is prevalent in many student societies due to such individuals having more knowledge about internal governance processes than most students, however it can also help perpetuate an insular and single-minded culture. The unions of the CFS' staff have strong relationships with the Federation and play a significant role in determining working conditions, employment, and job descriptions.⁶⁸ The CFS National Office is located in Ottawa and was recently relocated to a smaller location due to the former office's ballooning costs.⁶⁹

⁶¹ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, pages 125-126. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

⁶² Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). *39th Annual National General Meeting November 17-21, 2020- National Executive Report (Rep.)*, page 33. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NE-Report-Nov-2020-EN.pdf>.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). *Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE*, page 6.

⁶⁶ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Standing Resolutions, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 94. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standing-Res-Amended-2019-11.pdf>

⁶⁷ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 128. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). *39th Annual National General Meeting November 17-21, 2020- National Executive Report (Rep.)*, page 32. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NE-Report-Nov-2020-EN.pdf>.



General Meetings

The Federation holds an annual general meeting of the members each fall at a “date determined by the National Executive”.⁷⁰ In 2020, the CFS moved to hold only one general meeting due to presumed decreases in finances as a result of the Student Choice Initiative, which took place in November 2020.⁷¹ The minutes of that meeting will not be available until they are ratified at the next general meeting, presumably in the fall of 2021.

Students in and of themselves are not members of the Federation and do not have voting rights at Federation general meetings.⁷² Member locals of the Federation have the exclusive right to vote at meetings of the Federation; each local has one vote, regardless of the size and scope of their local student association or post-secondary institution. This allows smaller member locals that contribute less funds as a result of having fewer students to have the same power of far larger member locals, creating a disproportionality. In the past, amendments have been proposed to change the “one member, one vote” policy to institute a weighted system where the size of locals would factor into their influence in votes at a general meeting.⁷³ Member locals also have the right to appoint a proxy as long as it is sanctioned by the local association’s executive and/or board of directors. Amendments can be made to the Federation Constitution and Bylaws by a two thirds majority votes at a general meeting; member-locals must communicate the substance of their potential amendments 6 weeks before a general meeting.⁷⁴

A meeting of member locals constitutes the “National Plenary”, the “final and absolute decision-making authority of the organization”.⁷⁵ The National Plenary can overturn any decisions of the National Executive so long as the Executive decision(s) in question have not been “implemented and resulted in a legal contract”.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 25. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁷¹ Bowman, J., Granger, L., Jama, I., & Maragha, L. (2019). *Report on the Canadian Federation of Students - Semi-Annual General Meeting June 2019* (Rep.). Retrieved from <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CFS-Report-June-2019-S-AGM.pdf>

⁷² Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 10. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁷³ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 30. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 60. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 26

⁷⁶ *ibid.*



However, the National Plenary is not the Board of Directors of the Federation as that role is held exclusively by the National Executive. The National Executive tends to be given a significant platform at general meetings by member locals, but time to keep its officers accountable through discussions on the budget or its ongoing campaigns is often limited. While the National Plenary has the constitutional authority and voting power to keep the National Executive to account, it is often simply a rubber stamp body to the will of the National Executive and the three primary officers in particular.

Representatives of a member local at a general meeting are known as delegates and are registered as such by member locals sometime after the notice of a general meeting is sent. The CFS charges fees for in-person general meetings for every additional delegate attending; it is permitted to charge reduced fees to potential delegates of smaller member locals which it uses a formula to calculate.⁷⁷ The first delegate from all member locals is fully covered.⁷⁸ The CFS is required to provide notice of a general meeting at least 28 days before it is scheduled to occur.⁷⁹ Notices include the elected National Executive positions that are to be considered and a deadline for members to submit any motions they wish to be considered.⁸⁰ The CFS also notifies members of any motions that are scheduled to be considered, and sends the meeting's agenda, draft minutes of previous meetings, and budget documents a few weeks prior to the meeting itself to provide time for delegations to consider them in advance.⁸¹ The CFS is not, however, mandated to send the report of the National Executive until the first day of a general meeting.⁸² The report of the National Executive from the November 2020 general meeting is currently accessible on the Federation's website.⁸³

⁷⁷ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Standing Resolutions, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 118. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standing-Res-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 158.

⁷⁹ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 25. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2019). *Operations Policy, as amended at the 2019 Annual General Meeting*, page 42. Retrieved from <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Operations-Policy-2019.08.pdf>; Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 120. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). *39th Annual National General Meeting November 17-21, 2020- National Executive (Rep.)*. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NE-Report-Nov-2020-EN.pdf>.



In discussions of the National Plenary, often in opening or closing sessions, only “three speakers in favour and three speakers against” are entertained for any given motion.⁸⁴ The speaker can choose to not entertain a point of information, but if they do, it circumvents the normal speaking order of a motion.⁸⁵ Delegates from member locals have first priority to speak on motions, followed by members of the National Executive and national caucus representatives, and finally national and provincial staff of the Federation.⁸⁶ Each Committee, Constituency group, and Caucus are allocated at least 15 minutes each at a closing plenary to present a report and any motions they may have.⁸⁷ There is also a 30-minute period allocated for questions to the National Executive.⁸⁸

Constituency Groups

A general meeting's primary components are: plenary sessions with all members, meetings of constituency groups and caucuses, provincial and regional meetings, standing committee meetings, the government relations forum, elections proceedings, and workshops.⁸⁹ Constituency groups are associations of the Federation that are recognized by the Federation as sharing a common characteristic; they can be thought of as working groups and are not in and of themselves members of the Federation.⁹⁰ Constituency groups come together at each general meeting to discuss the meeting's issues from their unique perspective as well as to elect the commissioner(s) responsible for administering their groups. Constituency groups include those for Student with Disabilities, Francophone Students', International Students', Part-time and Mature Students', Two-Spirit/Queer Students', Racialized Students', Two-Spirit/Trans Students', and women.⁹¹ The Part-time and Mature Students' and Two-Spirit/Queer Students' constituencies elect co-commissioners at the annual general meeting that act as spokespeople for their communities on the national level but are not on the National Executive. The remainder of the commissioners and representatives of each constituency are

⁸⁴ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Standing Resolutions, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 14. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standing-Res-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020, November). Block Agenda Draft.

⁹⁰ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Standing Resolutions, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 166. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standing-Res-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁹¹ Riches, T., & Ahmed, M. (2021). *Report on the Canadian Federation of Students Annual General Meeting November 2020* (Rep.), page 4. Retrieved from <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Report-on-the-CFS-Annual-General-Meeting-November-2020.pdf>.

elected at meetings of their respective constituencies to hold positions on the National Executive at the annual general meeting. Delegates are usually identified as belonging to one or more constituency groups before a general meeting and subsequently receive one vote within such meetings to elect their commissioner(s).⁹² The Federation's caucus groups, as described in the National Executive section, often also meet at general meetings although it isn't the exclusive location of caucus meetings. For example, the Black Students' Caucus meets at least once between annual general meetings.⁹³ Caucus groups also have more robust internal structures with multiple executive members.

The 2016 draft report noted that Indigenous students have unique needs, and that the CFS works to address these needs through what is now known as the Circle of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Students and, at the provincial level, what is now known as the Ontario Circle of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Students.⁹⁴ However, the report pointed out that these bodies were often constrained by *Robert's Rules of Order*, which is poorly suited to activist spaces.⁹⁵ In their submission to the committee, the CFS informed the committee that Caucus and Constituency spaces may choose to conduct their meetings according to what works best within their respective spaces, and that the Circle chooses to forgo *Robert's Rules of Order* in favour of "a more community-led and conversational approach."⁹⁶ This is a welcome change; aside from this point, we would only like to highlight the good work of the Circle.

Committees

There are three standing committees at general meetings that are meant to provide forums for debate on a smaller scale given the large and monotonous nature of the entire plenary. These committees are the Budget Committee, the Organizational and Services Development Committee (OSD), and the Policy Review and Development Committee.⁹⁷ The Campaigns and Government Relations Forum operates in much of the same way as the standing committees.⁹⁸ The Budget Committee "reviews and

⁹² Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Standing Resolutions, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 166. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standing-Res-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

⁹³ *ibid.*, 183.

⁹⁴ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 10



recommends adjustments for the remainder of the fiscal year” and reviews the previous years audited financial statements.⁹⁹ The OSD Committee reviews and recommends any potential changes to the Federation’s governing documents, operations, services, and membership.¹⁰⁰ The Policy Review and Development Committee reviews and recommends changes to the Federation’s Issues Policy.¹⁰¹ Finally, the Campaigns & Government Relations Forum assesses the status of the Federation’s campaigns and its government relations guides.¹⁰² Standing committees create reports with their recommendations to the closing plenary for final consideration.¹⁰³

Within each committee, each provincial component gets one vote, and each recognized constituency group or caucus gets one vote.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, minutes are not taken from these meetings.¹⁰⁵ The structure of the committee voting system lumps delegates from a given province into one vote and oftentimes a member local’s delegates will not be assigned to all four committees, meaning that debate on critical issues such as the Federation’s budget can often pass the committee stage without a majority vote of member locals.

The UTSU at General Meetings

General meetings are where the CFS derives its democratic mandate from, as it is the only place where all member locals are present at once. However, representatives of member locals who voice dissent in and out of general meetings are looked down upon, as it is seen to be detrimental to the Federation’s legitimacy to carry out the work of the student movement.¹⁰⁶ This includes motions that would be perceived as making it easier for local student associations to decertify, even if there are constructive motivations guiding those who propose potential changes. Recently, the UTSU presented five motions to the CFS’ annual general meetings aimed at making the certification and decertification processes more accessible.¹⁰⁷ Most significantly, two motions called on the CFS to look into the feasibility of online

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁰⁴ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 121. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 85.

¹⁰⁷ Riches, T., & Ahmed, M. (2021). *Report on the Canadian Federation of Students Annual General Meeting November 2020* (Rep.). Retrieved from <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Report-on-the-CFS-Annual-General-Meeting-November-2020.pdf>.



voting and petitioning systems in light of the pandemic and online learning. At the 2020 annual general meeting, the plenary forwarded all non-emergency motions to the National Executive and as a result, these motions did not come up for discussion.

¹⁰⁸

In 2016, the UTSU saw some success in its efforts towards internal reform of the decertification process in particular. At a 2016 general meeting, a UTSU-led amendment to lower the number of signatures on a petition to trigger a decertification referendum from 20% of a member local's student population to 15% was carried.¹⁰⁹ This was a major 'victory' for proponents of decertification around the country and a rare one at that given how the Federation has worked to make it more difficult for members to separate, as detailed in the following section regarding certification and decertification processes. The UTSU also proposed a number of other changes to the 2016 general meeting which were not supported by the Plenary. These included barring non-students, such as staff members, from being sent by members as delegates for general meetings, and to implement online voting for decertification processes.¹¹⁰ The CFS refused to debate these motions, asserting that they are unnecessary or detrimental to the work of the student movement. UTSU delegates to this 2016 general meeting discussed the ways in which the CFS actively works to design meetings that avoid serious discussions about the merits and structures of the organization itself.

UTSU delegates at the 2018 and 2019 general meetings reported that the Federation entertains discussion on the general meeting floor as needed, however added that any discussion veering too far outside what is considered acceptable by the establishment is often curtailed either by the speaker or by the plenary as a whole.¹¹¹ The 2018 delegation reported that if a member's delegates are perceived to be voicing too much dissent to the general consensus, "genuine contributions to discussion" that they may offer are interpreted as suspicious.¹¹² The 2019 SAGM delegation reported that the National Executive would make certain member locals aware of its plans over others in an effort to guide the outcome of a committee meeting to prevent dissenting locals from having too much influence over the

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰⁹ Yun, T. (2016, November 27). Threshold for CFS defederation referendum petitions lowered to 15 per cent at National General Meeting. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2016/11/27/threshold-for-cfs-defederation-referendum-petitions-lowered-to-15-per-cent-at-national-general-meeting/>.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Boucher, A., Biswurm, T., Bowman, J., & Alfaro, Y. (2018, November). *Report on the National General Meeting of the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.), page 6. Retrieved from https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AppendixA_CFS-NGM_Report.pdf.

¹¹² *ibid.*



process.¹¹³ The 2019 SAGM delegation also reported that Roberts' Rules of Order were weaponized in order to stifle debate on certain motions that the establishment was not in favor of.¹¹⁴

This demonstrates how the National Executive and establishment parties within the CFS actively work to further their own goals at the expense of meaningfully engaging with all members within the organization.¹¹⁵ Although the CFS has argued that the proceedings of general meetings described by UTSU executives is just the norm in such a massive deliberative democratic body, dissent or constructive criticism is often met with allegations of conservatism or bad faith efforts to distract from the issues that it deems more important.¹¹⁶ For instance, the UTSU may very well concur with most, if not all, of the Federation's advocacy priorities, but because of its desire to see more drastic structural change, it has been often considered an unacceptable outsider at general meetings and in the organization as a whole.

Influence of Staff at General Meetings

A member local can choose that unelected staff join their delegation to a general meeting.¹¹⁷ As a result, staff representatives can vote on behalf of their delegation if so chosen by their member local association.¹¹⁸ Whereas elected representatives may only attend a handful of general meetings during their term(s), staff could theoretically have attended numerous meetings and thus have more adept experience in understanding the CFS' structure and norms.¹¹⁹ In some cases, collective agreements between local student associations and their staff unions stipulate that they have the authority to appoint a staff delegate to general meetings without the direct consent of the local student associations' board of directors.¹²⁰ The CFS emphasizes that it does not interfere with how members choose their delegates to general meetings or in internal conversations to determine how they ought to

¹¹³ Bowman, J., Granger, L., Jama, I., & Maragha, L. (2019). *Report on the Canadian Federation of Students - Semi-Annual General Meeting June 2019* (Rep.), pages 9-10. Retrieved from <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CFS-Report-June-2019-S-AGM.pdf>

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, 10-11.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, 9-10.

¹¹⁶ Yun, T. (2016, November 27). Threshold for CFS defederation referendum petitions lowered to 15 per cent at National General Meeting. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2016/11/27/threshold-for-cfs-defederation-referendum-petitions-lowered-to-15-per-cent-at-national-general-meeting/>.

¹¹⁷ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 117. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ *ibid.*



vote.¹²¹ Moreover, proponents of continued staff involvement in this process point out that staff tend to be the community members responsible for implementing the CFS' services and campaigns on the local level and thus have a vested interest in being present in the forum designated for making decisions about such things.¹²² However, critics describe how the credibility of general meetings comes into question due to the significant involvement of unelected staff in the proceedings of the National Plenary given that it is the primary deliberative body of a multi-million dollar organization meant to be the ultimate manifestation of student-centered advocacy.

Minutes & Media

National General Meetings are minuted and are made publicly available 60 days following their ratification at the next general meeting.¹²³ Since there is only one meeting of the National Plenary each year, minutes from the last general meeting are often ratified with an entirely new crop of representatives that are presumably not completely aware of the last year's issues and debates. However, the Federation states that it is committed to making minutes from the past six general meetings as well as the past five years of audited financial statements publicly accessible on its website at any given time.¹²⁴ Currently, the CFS' website has the minutes of six general meetings, with the most recent one being from November 2019.¹²⁵ Minutes are not incredibly detailed, which is especially apparent when it comes to the discussion of motions, as any mention of the parties involved is omitted for the most part.

Members of the media are permitted to attend general meetings. The CFS recognizes "one English and one French representative from the Canadian University Press" as well as any representatives from "student-led publications" that are recognized as such prior to the beginning of the meeting.¹²⁶ Media is not, however, permitted to listen in on committee, constituency, or caucus meetings, cannot record audio or video, and do not have speaking rights of any sort.¹²⁷

¹²¹ *ibid.*, 118.

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2019). *Operations Policy, as amended at the 2019 Annual General Meeting*, page 32. Retrieved from <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Operations-Policy-2019.08.pdf>.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁵ Canadian Federation of Students (2020). *Meeting Minutes*. Retrieved April 3, 2021, from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/about/meeting-minutes/>.

¹²⁶ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2019). *Operations Policy, as amended at the 2019 Annual General Meeting*, page 43. Retrieved from <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Operations-Policy-2019.08.pdf>.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*



Processes for Certification & Decertification

Official Procedures of Bylaw I

The collective students of a local student association have the exclusive right to initiate a vote on certification via a petition that must have 15% of students' signatures.¹²⁸ A local student association can become a member of the Federation once they have approved a vote of certification to both the national organization and appropriate provincial component.¹²⁹ A local student association's membership application, once accepted, constitutes a "binding contract" that accepts the "rights and responsibilities" of membership within the Federation and appropriate provincial component, including an obligation to submit membership fees.¹³⁰ The National Executive reviews applications within 90 days of their submission and makes a recommendation to Federation members accordingly.¹³¹ Membership applicants require a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote at a general meeting to be admitted.¹³²

A local student association also has the right to apply for prospective membership which affords them all the rights and responsibilities of regular membership under the condition that a vote on certification in the Federation is held within 12 months of its admittance.¹³³ Prospective members are obligated to pay 5% of regular federation membership fees although this fee can also be waived by a majority vote at a general meeting.¹³⁴ If the vote on certification passes, the prospective member becomes a regular member.¹³⁵ If a vote on certification fails or one isn't conducted, even after a possible extension, prospective membership is revoked.¹³⁶

The collective students of a member local student association have the exclusive right to initiate a vote on decertification via a petition that must have 15% of students signed in favour.¹³⁷ The original copies of the petition documents must be transmitted to the National Executive via registered mail.¹³⁸ "A name on a petition must be reasonably legible, include the proper full name, be accompanied by a valid

¹²⁸ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 10. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, 9.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ *ibid.*, 10.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, 14.



and corresponding student identification number, and a unique signature”.¹³⁹ These specific requirements are not stated for the stipulation surrounding a petition for certification. The National Executive is the sole body tasked with determining if a petition is valid and must make a determination within 90 days of receiving the appropriate documentation; it also holds the power in deciding when a referendum takes place.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, a vote on decertification cannot be held at a member university or college until 5 years and 3 years have elapsed, respectively, since certifying as a member or since the last decertification vote.¹⁴¹ Critics have pointed out that this makes it so that the vast majority of the student body that voted on decertification originally, would have already graduated before a new vote could be conducted, making it difficult for students to retain institutional memory regarding the history of their school’s relationship with the CFS. If a vote to decertify proves to be successful, the associated member local must send a letter to the National Executive who will then examine it and recommend the next course of action to Federation members.¹⁴² The ratification of a decertification referendum is put to a vote at the next general meeting of the Federation; if passed, the decertification takes effect on the June 30th following such ratification.¹⁴³

Voting is conducted exclusively via paper ballots either in-person at voting stations, at a general meeting, or by mail. The local student association must provide a list of valid voters 7 days prior to the vote; if they cannot, “voting shall be conducted through a double envelope system” and compared to a list of voters after the fact.¹⁴⁴ Quorum for a vote of certification is either the figure established by the local student association or 10% of the population, “whichever is higher”.¹⁴⁵ The vote must take place while classes are in session and not during the summer. For a vote to decertify, the voting period must be between 2 and 5 days and the campaigning period must be between 7 and 21 days.¹⁴⁶ For a vote to certify, the voting period must be at least 2 days and the campaigning period must be 10 days.¹⁴⁷ There cannot be more than two votes to certify or two votes to decertify taking place anywhere in the Federation within one 90 day period.¹⁴⁸

One poll clerk each from the CFS and the local student association respectively must be present at each polling station during voting; the same goes for poll scrutinizers

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 12, 14.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, 16.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 12, 15.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 11-12.

that must be present during ballot counting.¹⁴⁹ While this seems equitable on the surface, critics point out that the local student association can be biased towards remaining in the CFS, meaning that the voting process and ballot counting can be effectively controlled by pro-CFS actors. Moreover, the CFS also holds control in that it can instruct its clerks to leave their posts to stop the proceedings of a referendum, if it deems it necessary, with few repercussions.¹⁵⁰

History of Bylaw I

The rules that govern certification and decertification processes are contained in the Federation's Bylaw I. The history and development of Bylaw I is imperative to understanding why the CFS' culture, in relation to the UTSU and as a whole, is the way that it is today. Originally, the only main stipulation in the CFS' governing documents for locals who wished to join or leave the organization was that they had to do so through referenda.¹⁵¹ Soon after its formation, the CFS came to represent 400 000 students; although no local chose to decertify in these early years, the organization began to institute a number of reforms to Bylaw I.¹⁵² Part of these reforms required locals to give a lengthy notice if they were planning to hold decertification referenda, "that such notice would have to be delivered by registered mail", and that fees would still be collected "until the end of the fiscal year in which they withdraw".¹⁵³ By 1995, the different elements of Bylaw I began to be shaped for the first time, most notably with the introduction of the Referendum Oversight Committee (ROC). Additionally, referenda for decertification had to meet a 5% quorum of members' student populations for the first time.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, the requirements that a member could not hold another referendum for a certain period of time after the first was also instituted, with the time span between them being initially set at two years.¹⁵⁵

In 2008, multiple members decided to run decertification referenda within a few weeks of one another.¹⁵⁶ In response, the CFS passed a number of amendments to Bylaw I, part of which gave the National Executive more power to schedule referenda and space them out so that multiple referenda couldn't happen in rapid succession.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 12, 15.

¹⁵⁰ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 65. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵² *ibid.*

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, 26-27.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 46.

¹⁵⁷ The changes also made it clear that a local student association would not be permitted to have any role in the administration of a referendum at their school.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, the specific wording to be included in a petition package as well as on a referendum ballot was mandated.¹⁵⁹ A similar and much larger threat occurred in 2009 when a dozen schools began collecting signatures for decertification petitions at the same time.¹⁶⁰

In response, the CFS adopted a number of new amendments to the decertification process at the next general meeting. The amendments increased the percentage of signatures required for a decertification petition from 10% to 20%, although this was later reduced to 15%.¹⁶¹ They also implemented the rule that decertification referenda could only occur during the school year, with only two being permitted per semester, and increased the number of years that a school would be required to wait after a referendum to hold another from two to five years.¹⁶² Proponents of these changes argued that it would be impossible for the CFS to present its case to students properly if too many schools tried to decertify at the same time and would distract from its ability to administer its services.¹⁶³ Notably, this resolution was just shy of the two thirds majority that CFS bylaw amendments require, but was considered valid based on a definition of a super majority that did not include abstaining members in the vote tally.¹⁶⁴ Critics say that the CFS has not historically paid much attention to being even handed in its campaigning tactics during decertification referenda, often blocking attempts to implement limits on its spending power which is usually considerably higher than the funds available to local groups of students.¹⁶⁵

The Referendum Oversight Committee (ROC)

The implementation of the ROC in the 1995 amendments proved to be a turning point in the CFS' relationships with many of its member locals. The ROC served as both the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) and appeals committee for elections and referenda; meaning, it had the exclusive right and responsibility to control the

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 47.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*; Yun, T. (2016, November 27). Threshold for CFS defederation referendum petitions lowered to 15 per cent at National General Meeting. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2016/11/27/threshold-for-cfs-defederation-referendum-petitions-lowered-to-15-per-cent-at-national-general-meeting/>.

¹⁶² Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 47. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 49.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 56.



election voting and campaign rules, the materials involved, and arbitrate on any issues that arose from the process.¹⁶⁶ The ROC was made up of four members, two appointed by the CFS itself and two from the member local engaging in a decertification referendum.¹⁶⁷ Critics noted that this marked a notable change in the CFS' relationship with its member locals as they would have 50% decision making power in potential decertification referenda from then on.¹⁶⁸ Originally, the concept of the ROC was presented with an independent ombudsperson responsible for arbitrating on issues where the committee would find itself deadlocked, however this was not included when the ROC was eventually put into practice.¹⁶⁹ The ROC concept was expanded to include all referenda, including those on certification in 1997.¹⁷⁰

There was no practice of recording conversations of ROC meetings, which created challenges in keeping committee members transparent and accountable to their tasks during referenda campaigns.¹⁷¹ ROCs were also hyperpartisan bodies that could only claim impartiality because both sides' voices held equal weight in the committee; however, members of ROCs were not explicitly barred from participating in campaigning or from supporting one of the sides in other ways and often did.¹⁷² ROCs determined further rules of a given referendum on their own, such as what constitutes permissible campaign materials; some ROCs required that all campaign materials be reviewed by the committee prior to their distribution.¹⁷³ This created contention when proponents of decertification published material that the committee, which could often be biased towards the Federation, deemed defamatory. It is for many reasons, these among them, that the introduction of a CRO and appeals process was deemed more appropriate and professional, especially considering it being standard practice at most student associations.

The Chief Returning Officer (CRO)

Today, the National Executive recommends the CRO who is in turn ratified by a general meeting of the Federation to oversee elections and referenda.¹⁷⁴ The CRO has wide reaching power to decide when the campaign period of a vote to certify or decertify will take place, approve and when necessary, remove campaign materials,

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 34.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 31, 34.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 35.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 31, 34.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 39

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, 61

¹⁷² *ibid.*, 63-64.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, 72-74.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 11, 14.



set the number and locations of voting stations as well as their hours, and oversee ballot counting.¹⁷⁵

Campaign materials may include that which is produced by the Federation as long as it has information relevant to the specific campaign.¹⁷⁶ In addition to students and representatives of the prospective local student association, representatives of the Federation and representatives of other member local student associations are permitted to take part.¹⁷⁷ Critics point out that the CFS regularly spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on flying in staff to campaign on their behalf armed with full communications and legal teams during decertification referenda, infringing on decisions that are meant to be determined independently.¹⁷⁸ Pre-campaigning is expressly forbidden, however, CFS documents and posters that do not reference the referendum in question are not considered campaign materials.¹⁷⁹ This means that CFS actors can produce and proliferate generalized material on the benefits to membership, giving the pro-CFS side a leg up over the side in favor of decertification before a referendum campaign even begins.

The CRO can remove campaign materials if they deem that they are “misleading, defamatory, or false”.¹⁸⁰ An Appeals Committee is formed upon each vote of certification or decertification to rule on any disputes related to the vote or decisions by the CRO.¹⁸¹ Appeals Committees are composed of three Federation members, one of which is reserved for a member of the National Executive or their designate, with the other two being reserved for other federation members that are appointed at a general meeting.¹⁸² Although members of the Appeals Committee are not permitted to campaign, critics have pointed out that the committee has no explicit representation from the local student association conducting a vote to certify or decerify. Instead, the remaining two seats on an Appeals Committee are filled by any Federation member and those chosen can often come with a bias towards remaining in the Federation. Although students have the opportunity to appeal decisions of the CRO, the CRO still has considerable power to determine what is considered “defamatory” and the appeals committee is not necessarily unbiased as noted above.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 12, 15.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 12, 14.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 12, 15.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸² *ibid.*, 12-13.



Referenda at U of T, 2002

There is some ambiguity when it comes to whether the CFS' Bylaws or the bylaws of a member local should be followed first in a situation of decertification. The CFS claims that its bylaws must supersede those of its members on this issue and many others. However, local student associations have an independent fiduciary duty to themselves as corporations for the most part, meaning that they are legally obligated to follow their bylaws to a tee. For example, the requirement that a referendum would be conducted by the CFS, right down to the wording of the referendum question, seemingly ignores the individual guidelines for elections and referenda that a given local may have.¹⁸³ When the Students' Administrative Council (SAC), the UTSU's former name, became a member of the CFS in 2002, this tension between which set of bylaws should take precedence was highlighted.

Additionally, the SAC-CFS referendum was particularly controversial. SAC executives had collected hundreds of proxies, with President Alex Kerner collecting over 500, in preparation of the 2002 SAC AGM at which joining the CFS as a prospective member was on the agenda.¹⁸⁴ The executives argued that membership in an organization such as the CFS would give U of T students a national voice however, many students protested the SAC Executives' proxy collection as undemocratic.¹⁸⁵ After SAC became a prospective member, the Association of Part Time Undergraduates Students (APUS), the Scarbrough Students' Union (SCSU), and SAC all ran referenda on certification in the Federation in a joint fashion.¹⁸⁶

The University of Toronto's relationship with independent student groups is derived from *the Policy for Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees* which stipulates that the university will collect fees for student unions so long as they "operate in an open, accessible and democratic fashion, following the terms of their constitutions".¹⁸⁷ This duty to the members of student societies means that the university can legally refuse to change students' fee structures according to referenda if it deems that they were not conducted in line with this policy. In 2003, the Assistant Director to the Office of Student Affairs, Jim Delaney, was tasked with conducting an investigation

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, 53.

¹⁸⁴ Ferguson, I. (2002, January 31). Undergrads now members of national student lobby group CFS. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2002/01/31/undergrads-now-members-of-national-student-lobby-group-cfs/>.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Farrar, D. (2003, May 27). Canadian Federation of Students Referendum [Letter to University Affairs Board]. University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario.

¹⁸⁷ Delaney, J. (2003, February 25). SAC, APUS, SCSU - Fee Increase Requests to Support CFS Membership [Letter to Alexandra Artful-Dodger, Emily Sadowski, and Dan Bandurka, page 5]. University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario.



to determine whether the proceedings of the referenda met this condition.¹⁸⁸ Mr. Delaney concluded “that the oversight and management of the referenda did not match the characteristics of a fair and democratic electoral process”, “that there were a number of failures to comply with duly approved procedures”, and that “there may have been systemic advantage given to the ‘YES’ side in the referenda.”¹⁸⁹ In light of these findings, administration declined to recommend approving any increases to the unions’ fees “to support the cost of membership in the CFS” to the University Affairs Board until they hold fair referenda.¹⁹⁰ In a letter to the aforementioned student unions, Mr. Delaney acknowledged that the CFS may have expectations from them based on its governing documents, but stated that that the university is not and can not be concerned with the “actions or expectations of external organizations” and must follow its own processes.¹⁹¹ This means that the unions may have followed the appropriate policies for pursuing referenda on the CFS’ terms; however, in the university’s opinion, they did not follow the proper local policies to warrant the university to consent to officially increasing student fees.¹⁹²

Mr. Delaney specifically criticized the Federation’s elections management processes, namely the structure and purview of the Referendum Oversight Committees (ROC), which was called the “Joint Referendum Committee” (JRC) at the time.¹⁹³ He argued that an election management body should be independent, non-partisan, and professional—conditions that in his opinion, were not met by the Federation’s established processes.¹⁹⁴ This is something that can be squared with our aforementioned analysis of the ROC’s large pro-CFS bias, failure of its members to refrain from campaigning, failure to be transparent with the membership, failure to have an established and independent appeals process, and the use of the committee instead of a Chief Returning Officer (although this was later rectified). Mr. Delaney specifically pointed out a report that the JRC “deliberately blocked or delayed the approval of ‘NO’ committee publicity materials”.¹⁹⁵ He was also concerned about the conduct of poll clerks after receiving reports of potential improprieties as well as the fact that campaigning on voting days was allowed.¹⁹⁶ Therefore he stated that for these reasons, although the ‘NO’ campaign did specifically undermine the validity of the process by questioning the processes’

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹² *ibid.*

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, 15.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 12-13.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*, 19.



supposed bias in favor of the CFS, the 'YES' campaign did seem to have a systemic advantage.¹⁹⁷

The minutes of the University Affairs Board (UAB), a subsidiary of Governing Council, further details the debate that ensued regarding the details of Mr. Delaney's report. The President of the SCSU at the time, Dan Banurka, was in attendance and argued that the referendum was not in conflict with the SCSU Bylaws and that membership in the Federation was shown to be something that the vast majority of students supported.¹⁹⁸ The VP Operations of SAC, Alexandra Artful-Dodger, also spoke, arguing that a decision on fee increases should, in principle, not be made by the university's governing bodies.¹⁹⁹ Whereas Mr. Delaney argued that the systems governing referenda had a strong pro-CFS bias, Ms. Artful-Dodger argued that the Governing Council's perceived anti-CFS bias was also influencing the process and distorting or delegitimizing the desires of students.²⁰⁰

In 2005, the UAB reconsidered the SCSU's and SAC's certification referenda and requests for their fees to be increased after APUS saw their fee increase approved following a trip to an Ontario Divisional Court.²⁰¹ In light of this development, the UAB didn't see a reason to hold the fee increases back any longer and recommended to Governing Council that they would go forward.²⁰² It is important to note that national student lobbying organizations such as the CFS sit in natural opposition to established institutions of power such as university administrations. As such, a university's administration may have a vested interest in ensuring that their processes override those of such an organization. It is undoubtable that the university does so because they have an interest in protecting students. However, it is also undoubtable that the university is interested in using whatever powers are available to them to protect their own interests, especially in light of a particularly anti-establishment institution such as the CFS having the opportunity to entrench itself on university campuses, as was the case with these referenda. The eventual victory of APUS, and the SCSU and SAC by extension, in its dispute with the university on this manner showed how the student movement could go toe to toe with university administrations that are often otherwise directly unaccountable to students, and win. However, the issues surrounding the Federation's referendum

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*, 21.

¹⁹⁸ Governing Council of the University of Toronto. (2003, June 3). *Report Number 115 of the University Affairs Board* (Rep.), page 8. Retrieved from <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/system/files/import-files/r06033570.pdf>

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 9

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 9.

²⁰¹ Farrar, D. (2005, January 3). Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees: Request for Fee Increases- Students' Administrative Council (SAC) and Scarborough Students' Union (SCSU) [Letter to University Affairs Board, page 3]. University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario.

²⁰² *ibid.*

processes, as demonstrated throughout these documents, call into question if the potential of the movement to help students is overshadowed by the seemingly pervasive nature of the organization's democratic deficit.

The YouDecide U of T Decertification Campaign

In 2016, U of T - St. George campus students launched the 'YouDecide' campaign aimed at amassing enough petition signatures to trigger a referendum on decertification.²⁰³ The YouDecide campaign arose partly as a result of the victory of the Brighter UofT slate in UTSU elections in 2015, the first group of candidates to win on a platform recognizing the CFS-UTSU establishment's shortcomings and failures. That year, the UTSU Board of Directors worked to release the 2016 Draft Report on the Canadian Federation of Students which helped increase awareness about the issues present within the Federation amongst students.²⁰⁴ It is in this context that the YouDecide campaign was launched the following year, independently from the UTSU as prescribed in the CFS' bylaws. At the time, the number of petition signatures that the campaign had to reach was 20% of the UTSU membership, although it was later reduced to 15% due to the passing of a motion moved by UTSU officials that year at a CFS general meeting.²⁰⁵

YouDecide claimed that it didn't have an vested interest in an outcome one way or another and simply wished to allow students the opportunity to have their voices heard on the subject.²⁰⁶ The campaign was endorsed by the Engineering Society, the St. Michael's College Student Union (SMCSU), and the University College Literary & Athletic Society (UC Lit), among others. The petition begun by the campaign in 2016 for decertifying from CFS-O ended up being invalid once the 2017/2018 school year had begun, as the date indicated for the potential referendum on the petition, as required by the CFS-O's Bylaws, had already passed.²⁰⁷ Although at this point they

²⁰³ Simpson, K. (2016, September 3). Petition for referendum on UTSU membership with the CFS launched. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2016/09/03/petition-for-referendum-on-utsu-membership-with-the-cfs-launched/>.

²⁰⁴ Yun, T. (2016, May 23). CFS "too large and bureaucratic," says ad-hoc UTSU report. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2016/05/23/cfs-too-large-and-bureaucratic-says-ad-hoc-utsu-report/>.

²⁰⁵ Simpson, K. (2016, September 3). Petition for referendum on UTSU membership with the CFS launched. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2016/09/03/petition-for-referendum-on-utsu-membership-with-the-cfs-launched/>.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Davis, C. (2017, October 2). YouDecide provincial petition fails to meet required signatures, must reset. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2017/10/02/youdecide-provincial-petition-fails-to-meet-required-signatures-must-reset/>.



were working towards achieving the newly amended 15% signatures threshold, as a result of the Bylaw stipulation, they still had to restart the petition.²⁰⁸ This was a big hit to the campaign and not long after, its presence in student politics and the feasibility of its project had greatly diminished. The YouDecide campaign was the last time UTSU members' had a realistic opportunity at triggering a decertification referendum. Although other petitions had been organized in subsequent years, none got too far off the ground, with boundaries systemic to the CFS' processes on decertification being a significant hindrance.

Litigation Surrounding Decertification

There is a robust history of the CFS engaging in litigation with member locals who wish to run a decertification referenda. There are many common issues that arise in the process of decertification. The CFS often accuses member locals of not abiding by the appropriate processes and leverages its power over referenda dates and administration to favor the Federation's preferred outcome. For example, they may drag out the decertification process to wait until a new term of executives are elected who may not be as aware of the processes as the previous executives that helped trigger the original referenda. Or, the Federation may argue that a referendum was never valid and thus still consider a member local as such even if the member ceases to pay membership fees. This can lead to a legal battle where the Federation attempts to fight for the fees it believes it is entitled to while the student union involved has to fight to justify its referendum. Over time, the Federation has proven skilled at settling cases with unions where these types of problems occur, often resulting in the unions in question either paying their owed membership fees and/or running secondary referenda to rectify the original invalidated vote.

When the Kwantlen University College Student Association (KSA) voted to leave the CFS in 1991, the Federation refused to recognize the referendum and sued them six years later.²⁰⁹ The KSA stopped paying membership fees due to the referendum but because the CFS claimed that they had never ceased membership, they sued the KSA for six years of outstanding membership fees. By 1997, the KSA's student population had matured and much of the documentation proving the referendum's validity, such as that the petitioning documents sent by registered mail, were lost.²¹⁰ In 1999, the two parties settled without going to court and the KSA agreed to hold another referendum; however, KSA executives and staff were barred from

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 175. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

²¹⁰ *ibid.*



participating in the proceedings while the CFS brought extensive resources to the campus for the purpose of the campaign.²¹¹ This coupled with the fact that almost a decade had passed since the original referendum resulted in the student body voting overwhelmingly to stay in the Federation.²¹² A similar situation occurred at the Douglas Student's Union (DSU) when a majority of students voted to leave the Federation in 1992, only for a second referendum to be held in 1998 alongside a pro-CFS DSU administration where a majority of students voted in favor of remaining.²¹³

Litigation also often arises when the bylaws and policies of a student union don't align with the Federation's. In the UTSU's context, a dispute occurred when the U of T administration challenged whether or not the UTSU's certification referendum for membership in the CFS actually abided by its relevant bylaws and policies. In 2005, the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) voted to trigger the process of pursuing prospective membership with the CFS.²¹⁴ However, it was only after they had submitted their intention to become a prospective member when they realized that the CFS' Bylaw I, specifically regarding the powers afforded to the Federation through the Referendum Oversight Committee (ROC), would contradict the USSU's own policies surrounding the responsibilities of its Elections Board.²¹⁵ The USSU amended its Elections and Referenda Policy to recognize the CFS' jurisdiction over the referendum process and a referendum was held where a majority of students voted for prospective membership.²¹⁶ However, similar to the conclusion of U of T's University Affairs Board in the aftermath of the UTSU's certification referendum, the USSU's Elections Board argued that "it could not ratify the result" of the referendum, mainly due to what they saw as the Federation's systematic advantage through the set up of the ROC.²¹⁷ Both the Federation and the USSU council disregarded the Elections Board's conclusions but an individual previously involved in the USSU and invested in the 'NO' campaign sued the USSU regarding this decision.²¹⁸ The court later concluded that the referendum had no force because in disregarding the ruling of its Elections Board, the USSU "breached its obligation to act in good faith and conducted itself in a fashion inconsistent with natural justice".²¹⁹

²¹¹ *ibid.*

²¹² *ibid.*

²¹³ *ibid.*, 176.

²¹⁴ *ibid.* 180.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*, 181.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*, 182.

²¹⁷ *ibid.*, 183.

²¹⁸ *ibid.*, 184-185.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*, 185.



A similar scenario took place at Cariboo College in 2006 when two students challenged the validity of their student society's referendum to certify as a member of the CFS, arguing that the student society's bylaws were not followed in the process of the referendum.²²⁰ In this situation, the court eventually ruled that "it is typically the organization in which membership is sought which sets the rules upon which it is prepared to grant membership."²²¹ They also concluded that there was no significant evidence of irregularities at play in the ROC's administration of the referendum.²²² This demonstrates the ambiguous nature of the relationship between the CFS' bylaws and policies and the bylaws and policies of various student unions. Whereas one court determined that the CFS held jurisdiction over referendum processes, another argued that a referendum could not be valid if the applicable student union's bylaws and policies were contradicted in the process.

Fracturing of the Federation

By the late 80s and early 90s, the CFS was experiencing an increasingly tense political climate. They sat in stark opposition to Liberal and Conservative federal politicians wishing to cut back on provincial transfers for post-secondary education and student loan payments.²²³ Those supporting the establishment on post-secondary campuses often worked to delegitimize the CFS by organizing robust campaigns against it, not all of which occurred in good faith.²²⁴ It is in this context that the CFS felt it necessary to tighten bylaws surrounding decertification referenda as it was deemed more important than ever for students to show a united front towards actors perpetuating the work of the establishment on campuses and at large. However, in this same context, many students felt that CFS decision-making was becoming increasingly centralized and undemocratic, and as a consequence, corrupt, secretive, and financially untrustworthy, thereby undermining the national student movement. This helped foster the climate of distrust that many associate with the CFS today and aided in the development of rival student associations such as the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA). This also contributed to the loss of trust between CFS' provincial components in Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia as well as individual member locals in remaining provincial components such as the UTSU.

²²⁰ *ibid.*, 186.

²²¹ *ibid.*, 188.

²²² *ibid.*

²²³ *ibid.*, 28.

²²⁴ *ibid.*, 29.

Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)

CASA is a national organization formed in 1995 by a handful of student unions, some of which had never been part of the CFS as well as some which had decertified.²²⁵ CASA's policy priorities are often backed by its own research, arguing that creating more comprehensive and realistic policy proposals lend more credibility to the student movement. CASA often lobbies and advocates for similar issues to the CFS such as increasing the affordability and accessibility of post-secondary education however, the CFS has historically not placed too much emphasis on conducting research or engaging in regular lobbying practices.²²⁶ The CFS often leads with its values first, arguing that the policy priorities of establishment politics will never be sufficient for students regardless of the tactics used to lobby for change. Thus, the organization works to advocate for what it thinks students deserve, first and foremost, by focusing on the mass mobilization of the student movement. For example, the CFS has been committed to advocating for the abolition of tuition fees since its inception. Although there is little chance of that occurring in the near future, the CFS engages in lobbying intent on pushing for more while recognizing that the political sphere will only concede so much. CASA, on the other hand, balances its values with what its members deem to be realistic given the political climate and works to create concrete policy proposals with that in mind.

Another central difference between the CFS and CASA lies in their organizational outlooks. Whereas the CFS sees itself as the primary legitimate representative for students in Canada, with its members as merely parts of a whole, CASA emphasizes local independence and autonomy. CASA is a strictly “non-partisan” and “member-driven” organization.²²⁷ While one could say the same for the CFS, CASA was formed partially in response to the CFS’ centralization and changes to Bylaw I that were making it more difficult for local student associations to decertify. Above all else, CASA’s goal is to ensure that students can assert their own local autonomy, allowing individual members to steer the course of the student movement on their own terms. Additionally, CASA has a specific operating policy on non-partisanship to ensure that advocacy is centered around policy priorities rather than how they factor into the partisan political framework and to prevent its directors from engaging in partisan activities as well.²²⁸

²²⁵ *ibid.*, 89-90.

²²⁶ Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. (2020). *Mission, Vision & Values*. Retrieved from https://www.casa-acae.com/mission_vision_values.

²²⁷ *ibid.*

²²⁸ Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. (2020). *Bylaws and Operating Procedures 2020-2021*, pages 42-43. Retrieved from



Student associations at post-secondary institutions can apply for either full membership or observer status to CASA.²²⁹ Similar to OUSA and contrary to the CFS, CASA members can withdraw from the organization with relative ease by providing written notice of their intention to withdraw at least 30 days in advance of the official decision.²³⁰ Membership is terminated 90 days after the receipt of the certified resolution confirming termination.²³¹ CASA holds four general meetings per year, one of which is designated as the AGM.²³² Meetings of the members is the ultimate decision making body of the organization.²³³ Each year, the AGM plenary elects the next term's Board of Directors and approves the policy priorities and financial documents prepared by existing board members.²³⁴ Members are only allowed to have one delegate run for the Board or sit on a committee at a given AGM.²³⁵

The Board is composed of a Chair, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and four at-large directors responsible for advocacy, policy, member-relations, and equity.²³⁶ The Board employs and oversees an Executive Director to manage its staff complement and the day to day operations of the organization.²³⁷ The Executive Director also sits on the Board in an ex-officio capacity.²³⁸ CASA's staff complement includes a number of individuals responsible for government relations, communications, bookkeeping, research, and member-relations.²³⁹ CASA has five main committees on Federal Policy, National Advocacy, Internal Governance, Member Relations, and Equity.²⁴⁰ It also has three main advisory boards such as the National Indigenous Advisory Committee, the Graduate Advisory Group, and the College and Polytechnic Advisory Group.²⁴¹

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/casaacae/pages/2780/attachments/original/1600100274/Bylaws_OPs_2020-2021.pdf?1600100274.

²²⁹ *ibid.*, 4-5.

²³⁰ *ibid.*, 7.

²³¹ *ibid.*, 8.

²³² *ibid.*, 34.

²³³ *ibid.*

²³⁴ *ibid.*, 9.

²³⁵ *ibid.*, 21, 24.

²³⁶ *ibid.*, 22.

²³⁷ Canadian Alliance of Students Associations. (2020). *Staff*. Retrieved from <https://www.casa-acae.com/staff>.

²³⁸ Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. (2020). *Bylaws and Operating Procedures 2020-2021*, page 21. Retrieved from https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/casaacae/pages/2780/attachments/original/1600100274/Bylaws_OPs_2020-2021.pdf?1600100274.

²³⁹ Canadian Alliance of Students Associations. (2020). *Staff*. Retrieved from <https://www.casa-acae.com/staff>.

²⁴⁰ Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. (2020). *Bylaws and Operating Procedures 2020-2021*, pages 25-26. Retrieved from https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/casaacae/pages/2780/attachments/original/1600100274/Bylaws_OPs_2020-2021.pdf?1600100274.

²⁴¹ *ibid.*, 52-59.

However, the Board is also entitled to form additional committees and advisory boards from time to time if it deems it to be necessary.²⁴²

Alberta

In the context of CASA's growth in the 90s, many Alberta student unions were members of the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS) and Alberta College and Technical Institute Student Executive Council (ACTISEC), both of which were unaffiliated with the CFS.²⁴³ These organizations continue to be active today, however, the CFS has declined to officially recognize them based on its philosophy of being the only legitimate movement for students, despite not having a robust or active presence of its own in the province.²⁴⁴ Student unions like the University of Alberta Students' Union were pivotal in the growth of CAUS, ACTISEC, and on a more informal basis, CASA.²⁴⁵ The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) was formed in a similar context. Alberta student unions' efforts to build up organizations like CASA made it more possible for unions dissatisfied with the CFS to find an alternative platform to pursue advocacy on the national level. The growth of these organizations helped fracture the national student movement and made it more feasible for members of the Federation to decertify.²⁴⁶ Additionally, Alberta student unions' in particular may have preferred to be a part of organizations such as these because of their focus on a more pragmatic advocacy strategy versus the CFS' approach.

Quebec

Although the CFS' original bylaws included space for every provincial student association to become component members of the Federation, only British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan had CFS affiliated unions while other provinces had unions organizationally disconnected from the Federation.²⁴⁷ Originally, out of respect for Quebec's desire for recognition as a nation hand in hand with Canada, the CFS mandated that a non-voting member representing organized students of Quebec be added to the Federation's central committee.²⁴⁸ However, in

²⁴² *ibid.*, 12.

²⁴³ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 29. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

²⁴⁴ Council of Alberta University Students. (2020). Home Page. Retrieved April 3, 2021, from <https://www.caus.net/>; Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 89. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 29, 42.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 29.

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 29-30.

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 37.



the early 1990s, a handful of influential student unions were certified as members of the CFS.²⁴⁹ The Mouvement pour le Droit à l'Éducation (MDE) was formed in opposition to more conservative organizations Fédération Étudiante Universitaire du Québec (FEUQ) and the Fédération Étudiante Collégiale du Québec (FECQ).²⁵⁰ The MDE worked in tandem with the smaller CFS-Quebec in the 1990s, and even entertained a merger, however those plans fell through.²⁵¹ By the early 2000s, the MDE's successor, the Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ) did not have as close of a relationship with the CFS.²⁵² Instead, the Federation had closer ties to the FEUQ.²⁵³

In 2009, the CFS adopted a new set of amendments to the decertification process in light of a number of members attempting to trigger decertification at the same time. The changes increased the amount of time that a school could vote on decertification from two to five years, increased the percentage of signatures for a valid petition, and restricted the number of referenda to two per semester and four per year.²⁵⁴ The Federation argued that this is necessary to ensure they can make their case to each union that wishes to decertify and prevent unnecessarily frequent fracturing to maintain a unified front for the benefit of students. Although it only represented a handful of student unions, the CFS-Quebec had been very loyal to the national Federation for many years until a change of leadership around this time.²⁵⁵ They vocally opposed these changes to the decertification process and supported counter amendments from other members that would have made the process easier instead.²⁵⁶ They went as far as to say they would "aid member locals and/or their individual members in evaluating their continued membership in the CFS", arguing that the 2009 amendments was a step away from bottom up, grassroots, engagement.²⁵⁷

In response to this, the CFS declared that the CFS-Quebec would no longer be affiliated with the Canadian Federation of Students.²⁵⁸ However, they continued to force student unions in Quebec affiliated with the provincial organization to pay fees to the national organization, despite not being able to hold any power in general meetings to hold the National Executive accountable.²⁵⁹ Critics of this move saw it as

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*

²⁵¹ *ibid.*, 38.

²⁵² *ibid.*, 42.

²⁵³ *ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 47-48.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 91.

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 48.

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 48, 91.

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 91.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*

a way for the CFS to maintain its grip on power while disenfranchising Québec students from the national student movement. The CFS-Québec later reorganized itself as Rassemblement des associations étudiantes (RAE) in 2010.²⁶⁰ As the CFS-Quebec, and later as RAE, the organization attempted to win back the membership fees that the CFS-National took from students in the period when the organization was shut out of the national movement. In 2014, the Quebec Supreme Court ordered the CFS-National to release the funds collected to the RAE for the period of time that they remained legally part of the national movement.²⁶¹ Individual student unions and members of the RAE such as those at McGill University and Concordia University continued to attempt decertification from the national organization in the succeeding years, often resulting in similarly drawn out litigatory actions. In 2013, the CFS-National officially lost all its affiliated members within the province of Quebec.²⁶²

British Columbia

In a similar context to the tumultuous period described above surrounding rival student movements in Alberta, Quebec, and on the national level in the 1990s, students from a handful of student unions in British Columbia attempted to create a rival to the CFS-British Columbia. The rival did not see a lot of long term success, in-part due to some meddling by the CFS-BC affiliated actors.²⁶³ Negative sentiments towards the Federation's national component remained, eventually resulting in the CFS-BC's complete separation from the Federation in 2018.²⁶⁴ Both the CFS-BC, or its newer name, the BCFS, and the CFS argued that the conflict arose when one withheld fees from the other, stemming back to 2014, but there was no consensus as to which side started it.²⁶⁵ BC members had communicated their

²⁶⁰ Wrobel, M. (2014, September 11). Canadian Federation of Students Loses in Court to Former Provincial Wing. *The Link*. Retrieved from <https://thelinknewspaper.ca/article/canadian-federation-of-students-loses-in-court-to-former-provincial-wing>.

²⁶¹ *ibid.*

²⁶² McKeen, A. (2018, June 20). B.C.'s association of student unions calls it quits with Canadian Federation of Students. *The Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/vancouver/2018/06/20/bcs-association-of-student-unions-calls-it-quits-with-canadian-federation-of-students.html>.

²⁶³ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 89. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

²⁶⁴ McKeen, A. (2018, June 20). B.C.'s association of student unions calls it quits with Canadian Federation of Students. *The Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/vancouver/2018/06/20/bcs-association-of-student-unions-calls-it-quits-with-canadian-federation-of-students.html>.

²⁶⁵ Kao, J. (2018, June 14). Canadian Federation of Students votes to expel 12 BC student unions. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from



concerns to the national office before its 2016 AGM in attempts to mend the relationship between the organizations, amounting to little success.²⁶⁶

The BCFS stated that the development was a failure on the Federation's part to incorporate the BCFS' recommendations of improving transparency and democracy at the national level.²⁶⁷ In the years leading up to 2018, all 12 members of the BCFS filed decertification petitions while recognizing that the Federation's Bylaw I would only allow four referenda per year.²⁶⁸ Thus, while characterized as regrettable by the BCFS' leadership, the CFS' move to disconnect the component was desirable by all of its British Columbia members. Neither the CFS-BC or the CFS saw this turn of events as a victory, although they recognized that it was necessary in order to enable both organizations to continue to achieve their respective goals.²⁶⁹

At the CFS-BC's Annual General Meeting in 2016, the organization passed motions to change its name to the BC Federation of Students (BCFS), enabling unions to join the provincial organization without becoming members of the CFS-National separately, and to create a strategy to separate from the national body.²⁷⁰ BC members argued that they hadn't seen sufficient financial and organizational transparency from the CFS; moreover, they stated that most BC members had moved away from utilizing the CFS services model and thus were not benefiting much from continued membership.²⁷¹ The loss of the BCFS can be seen as a relatively large failure of the national student movement, even larger than the loss of the CFS-Quebec, costing the CFS over 18% of its student membership and 10% of its total revenue.²⁷² Moreover, the issues necessitating this split arose from allegations of

<https://thevarsity.ca/2018/06/14/canadian-federation-of-students-votes-to-expel-12-bc-student-unions/>.

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Armutlu, A. (2018, June 9). Canadian Federation of Students expels BCFS members. *BC Federation of Students*. Retrieved from

https://www.wearebcstudents.ca/canadian_federation_of_students_expels_bcfs_members.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*

²⁶⁹ McKeen, A. (2018, June 20). B.C.'s association of student unions calls it quits with Canadian Federation of Students. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from

<https://www.thestar.com/vancouver/2018/06/20/bcs-association-of-student-unions-calls-it-quits-with-canadian-federation-of-students.html>.

²⁷⁰ Archibald, P. (2016, February 3). Motions to separate from national Canadian Federation of Students organization pass at Canadian Federation of Students-British Columbia meeting. *Nexus*. Retrieved from

<https://www.nexusnewspaper.com/2016/02/03/motions-to-separate-from-national-canadian-federation-of-students-organization-pass-at-canadian-federation-of-students-british-columbia-meeting/>.

²⁷¹ *ibid.*

²⁷² Kao, J. (2018, June 14). Canadian Federation of Students votes to expel 12 BC student unions. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from



corruption and financial mismanagement, a troublesome development that doesn't foster much confidence in the health of the national student movement.

One BCFS local went so far as to present a motion in 2017 alleging that CFS leadership had knowingly lied in stating that they had never interfered in local student union elections.²⁷³ The motion describes how CFS leadership actively aided candidates vying for the executive office of local student unions who showed support for the CFS; helping them create campaign materials and strategizing with them on campaign items to ensure they align with the Federation's advocacy priorities.²⁷⁴ Candidates wishing to become executives of their member local student union would undoubtedly wish to align their advocacy priorities with those of the national student movement. The troublesome aspect of the developments outlined in this motion is that candidates were materially benefiting from the support of a multi-million dollar national student organization, putting their opponents at a disadvantage while manufacturing a facade of grassroots students-first organizing.

At the UTSU

This is criticism that has played out at the UTSU itself; the aforementioned motion details how the Change UofT slate in 2015 had been benefiting from the CFS' support alongside many other candidates and slates across the country.²⁷⁵ Prior to 2018, candidates wishing to be elected to the UTSU often did so through membership with a 'slate'.²⁷⁶ Slates are akin to political parties; in the university context, this means that candidates belonging to a slate would cross-campaign for those on their slate. Like political parties, slates have centralized campaign infrastructures, advertising, priorities, and finances. Slates have been known to create boundaries for independent candidates that do not have access to the same funds and benefits of collaboration.²⁷⁷ They have also been characterized as unfair, as

<https://thevarsity.ca/2018/06/14/canadian-federation-of-students-votes-to-expel-12-bc-student-unions/>.

²⁷³ Curie, A. (2017, June 22). BC student union accuses CFS of collusion in local student union elections. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from

<https://thevarsity.ca/2017/06/22/bc-student-union-accuses-cfs-of-collusion-in-local-student-union-elections/>.

²⁷⁴ Selkirk College Students' Union. (2017, June 22). Motion. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Local-4-Motion.pdf>.

²⁷⁵ Curie, A. (2017, June 22). BC student union accuses CFS of collusion in local student union elections. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from

<https://thevarsity.ca/2017/06/22/bc-student-union-accuses-cfs-of-collusion-in-local-student-union-elections/>.

²⁷⁶ Bañares, I., (2018, October 31). UTSU AGM 2018: UTSU strikes down slates. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2018/10/31/utsu-agm-2018-utsu-strikes-down-slates/>.

²⁷⁷ Yüe, S. (2015, May 15). Slate system a barrier to campaign funding according to candidates. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from



individuals in the know of student politics are more likely to have the knowledge and ability to develop a slate than other students who may want to get involved. Oftentimes individual members on a slate, especially those vying for directorship roles, would be forgotten in the slate's marketing process, making it difficult to get to know each individual candidate. However, some argue that slates can be useful tools for voters to better understand candidates' priorities in a simplified manner.²⁷⁸

Although the practice is not exclusively used by unions with ties to the CFS, the CFS has used the slate system to favor the slate that better suited their interests, such as Change UofT. Slates favored by the CFS had dominated student politics at the UTSU for many years until the victory of Brighter UofT, the slate opposing Change UofT in 2015.²⁷⁹ Finally, in 2018, UTSU members voted to abolish the practice of slates, the rationale at the time being to help the electorate get to know an individual candidate better instead of taking them at face value as just another member of a larger team.²⁸⁰ This was the culmination of a tumultuous period for the UTSU in which slates in opposition to the CFS had difficulty organizing themselves against the relatively more experienced and better supported slates that allied themselves with the CFS. Tensions had been simmering for quite some time, with many students concerned about the intentions and motivations of the UTSU establishment and the way it conducted elections. Candidates and individuals, especially in contentious elections involving two strong slates, were occasionally quite pointed in their criticism of one another, resulting in significant amounts of demerit points being given out and creating toxic election cycles. Additionally, for many years the UTSU's elections had been conducted exclusively during day time hours in-person, similar to the CFS' stipulation for referenda. It was common practice for opposing candidates and their parties to campaign around these voting booths, a concerning facet of the electoral landscape and detrimental to election credibility.

Many divisional student societies at U of T picked up on these concerns, leading to the creation of the Non-Partisan Declaration of Electoral Reform Package. The goal of the Reform Package was to increase the accessibility of the UTSU's elections

<https://thevarsity.ca/2015/05/15/slate-system-a-barrier-to-campaign-funding-according-to-candidates/>.

²⁷⁸ Feng, A. (2018, March 21). Running on a slate comes with clear advantages, especially this election season. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2018/03/21/running-on-a-slate-comes-with-clear-advantages-especially-t-his-election-season/>.

²⁷⁹ McKeen, A. (2015, March 30). Brighter UofT victorious. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2015/03/30/brighter-uoft-victorious/>.

²⁸⁰ Bañares, I., (2018, October 31). UTSU AGM 2018: UTSU strikes down slates. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2018/10/31/utsu-agm-2018-utsu-strikes-down-slates/>.

processes by changing its elections code.²⁸¹ Part of the changes included mandating the implementation of an online voting system, specifically citing the accessibility issues surrounding the CFS-era in-person voting system.²⁸² The Reform Package was forwarded to the UTSU's AGM in the fall of 2012 but the UTSU failed to include it on the agenda.²⁸³ The 2012 AGM saw record turnout as students mobilized to oppose the UTSU's failure to include the Reform Package, resulting in the members present refusing to adopt the meeting's agenda, ending the meeting before it began.²⁸⁴ Student leaders from various divisions argued that the Reform Package was a necessary step away from the divisiveness that marked politics at the UTSU and towards a more accessible and transparent future. These developments began a chain of events which enabled Brighter UoF to come out victorious from the 2015 election, marking a decisive break from CFS based establishment student politics.

The UTSU organized a Special General Meeting (SGM) the following February 2013 in order to attempt to cover the business that would have been covered at the AGM and to include the much anticipated Reform Package. The Reform Package passed with an overwhelming majority at the SGM in its second sitting, one week after the original incarnation of the meeting ran out of time.²⁸⁵ However, the proposal to implement online voting was non-binding and although there was significant pressure from divisional societies, the UTSU argued that it couldn't be implemented in time for the UTSU's spring 2013 elections.²⁸⁶ However, Simply Voting, the UTSU's current online voting system, was implemented with the help of the university administration in time for the UTSU's following fall by-election after "a \$17,000 lawyer's report commissioned to study the impact, and a threat from the Provost's office."²⁸⁷

In response to the strife seen in the 2012/2013 academic year and the lengthy debates surrounding the implementation of online voting, the Engineering Society, the Victoria University Students' Administrative Council (VUSAC), and the Trinity

²⁸¹ Schwartz, Z. (2013, February 13). SGM approves online voting for upcoming election. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2013/02/13/sgm-approves-online-voting-for-upcoming-election/>.

²⁸² *ibid.*

²⁸³ Schwartz, Z. Hawa, K. (2012, November 23). UTSU agenda voted down at annual general meeting. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2012/11/23/utsu-agenda-voted-down-at-annual-general-meeting/>.

²⁸⁴ *ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Schwartz, Z. (2013, February 13). SGM approves online voting for upcoming election. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2013/02/13/sgm-approves-online-voting-for-upcoming-election/>.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Djuric, J. (2013, September 30). UTSU implements online voting. *The Varsity*. <https://thevarsity.ca/2013/09/30/utsu-implements-online-voting/>.



College Meeting (TCM) proposed “defederating” from the UTSU by holding referenda to divert its students funds meant for the UTSU back to their college societies, arguing that the UTSU could no longer represent the interests of their students.²⁸⁸ Students at all three divisions voted overwhelmingly to defederate from the UTSU via separate referenda, all of which were not recognized as valid by the UTSU.²⁸⁹ The issue was not resolved until the election of the Brighter UofT slate which ran on a platform of rebuilding relationships with divisional societies.²⁹⁰ Some time later, the Engineering Society in particular was able to come to an agreement with the Brighter UofT administration on a fee diversion scheme that enabled the society to receive 50% of membership fees paid to the UTSU by engineering students.²⁹¹

Elections in following years were for the most part also won by like-minded slates and individuals. In 2016, the UTSU was one of 10 CFS member locals representing 200 000 students that signed on to an open letter calling for the CFS to make a number of changes to the status quo at general meetings and surrounding decertification referendum processes.²⁹² Their recommendations included implementing more robust minute taking, prioritizing student voices over staff, and fostering a culture that would be more welcome to constructive criticism at general meetings.²⁹³ It also called on the Federation to be more forthcoming and transparent with its financial information and policies and review the “overly burdensome process through which locals are able to leave the Federation”.²⁹⁴ Most years since the UTSU’s reorientation away from unconditional support of the CFS, executive teams have engaged in internal advocacy such as this and have also forwarded motions aimed at reforming the structure of the Federation from within, seeing little success. UTSU executives have even stated their desire to continue building the progressive national student movement envisioned by the CFS at its inception.²⁹⁵ However, the Federation has shown that constructive intentions are not relevant and could be considered hostile regardless.

²⁸⁸ Schwartz, Z. (2013, February 11). Trinity, SMC, Engineers announce UTSU secession plans. *The Varsity*.

<https://thevarsity.ca/2013/02/11/trinity-smc-engineers-announce-utsu-secession-plans/>.

²⁸⁹ Mansour, T. (2015, September 28). UTSU, EngSoc reach historic fee agreement. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2015/09/28/utsu-engsoc-reach-historic-fee-agreement/>.

²⁹⁰ *ibid.*

²⁹¹ *ibid.*

²⁹² University of Toronto Students' Union et al. (2016, September 19). [Letter to Canadian Federation of Students]. Ontario. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwUcrOZ-BPI6RUNaRUNxVU9obm8/view>.

²⁹³ *ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *ibid.*

²⁹⁵ Yun, T. (2016, September 19). UTSU signs open letter to CFS with nine other member locals. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2016/09/19/utsu-signs-open-letter-to-cfs-with-nine-other-member-locals/>.



Much of the negative sentiment surrounding the UTSU establishment in these years arose from its lack of attention to the needs of the student population, in favor of a more monolithic approach akin to the CFS' which posits unity and uniformity of the student movement before all else. Although calls to amend the UTSU's elections code in 2012 and 2013 may not have been beyond the scope of reason, similar to the CFS' reluctance to entertain any changes that its establishment construes as not in the best interests of the Federation, any changes that were seen to be not in the best interest of the UTSU establishment could not be entertained. This philosophy of centralized power that heeds the recommendations and intentions of the establishment before all else pervades the CFS and those that ally itself with it; a philosophy that has grown to be detrimental to any well-intentioned involvement of ordinary students in the national movement that is supposed to represent them and fight for their rights. The outcome of this reality at the UTSU has been its slow withdrawal from the unconditional support for the CFS, demonstrated in the years after 2015 through re-building cross campus relationships and reforming internal procedures to build a culture of transparency and accountability into policy. Unfortunately, a regrettable determinant of these necessary changes has been the UTSU's inability to play an active role in the development and decision-making of the national student movement, helmed by the CFS, as a result of the Federation's resistance to building trust with the UTSU and its members.

The CFS sees itself as imperative to aggregate the expression of student voices in a centralized manner. Local student associations are referred to as member locals of the CFS, not as independent associations that are part of a national organization. This distinction is key in understanding how the CFS sees itself and its members as merely parts of the whole. National, provincial, and local representatives of the CFS (members of a local student association's board of directors) are expected to promote the Federation's campaigns and services.²⁹⁶ If a member local elects representatives that are not in favor of the Federation's programs, the local ends up paying fees to the CFS while opting to not use its services or engage in its campaigning infrastructure. And, considering how difficult it is to decertify, the CFS can afford to wait for new elected representatives to arrive who may be more likely to re-engage with it on a more intimate level. The CFS' centralized outlook benefits it in this way as it can always claim to be the rightful national locus of student engagement, regardless of the individual actions of some of its members' representatives who may not be enthused by what they see from the Federation in their short times in office.

²⁹⁶ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 84. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

CFS-Ontario

The Canadian Federation of Students operates provincial components that are composed of all the member locals of their province.²⁹⁷ Provincial components themselves are not members of the national federation; however, they are represented in the Federation through an elected at-large member of the National Executive.²⁹⁸ Although the CFS-O must follow the national organization's policies and bylaws, it retains its own policies that describe its specific principles, views, and long-term goals.²⁹⁹

Certification & Decertification

Post-secondary institutions who wish to certify as members of the Federation must do so through the national organization; they are automatically granted membership in the appropriate provincial arm of the Federation by extension.³⁰⁰ However, if students of a member local student association wish to decertify from the Federation, they must do so for both CFS-Ontario and the national organization separately. Specific stipulation surrounding a vote on decertification from the CFS-Ontario is largely the same as it is described in the national organization's bylaws. The CFS-Ontario process allows students to submit petitions for decertification 2 years following a previous attempt, however since the national organization mandates that 5 years elapse between the votes, this is not relevant.

Compared to the process in the national organization, a petition for decertification from the CFS-O must include the exact dates that the students at a valid member local wish to hold the referendum. They must also submit the petition no later than 6 months prior to the dates they choose. This can present issues in the process of decertification as the national organization chooses the referendum dates for the member local with no established timeline. Meaning, that a referendum to decertify from the CFS-O could happen at a completely different time than a referendum to decertify from the national organization. Moreover, the provincial component's requirement to indicate the dates of the referenda puts an expiration date on any petition, as organizers must collect the prerequisite amount of signatures before the 6-month mark prescribed in the bylaws. For a petition to decertify from the national organization, the complication lies in needing to collect enough signatures within a

²⁹⁷ Canadian Federation of Students. (2019). *Constitution and Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 national general meeting*, page 48. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

²⁹⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *ibid.*, 15.

³⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 48.



year, lest graduating students be made ineligible to sign upon their graduation, hampering organizing efforts.

Ontario Executive Committee

The Executive Committee of the CFS-O, not to be confused with the Executive Committee of the national organization, is the primary decision-making body of the CFS-O and many members are elected at each year's annual general meeting. The Executive Committee is composed of the Ontario Chairperson, the Ontario Representative to the National Executive Committee, and the Treasurer.³⁰¹ Their terms commence in May of each year for a one year period.³⁰² The Ontario Chairperson and National Executive Representative both receive full time salaries; the same compensation as the three at-large members of the National Executive.³⁰³ The Ontario Chairperson is the primary member of the Executive Committee responsible for spearheading its long-term tasks and operations, including overseeing staff, communicating with member locals, chairing general meetings, and organizing executive committee meetings—they are also obligated to be functionally bilingual.³⁰⁴ The Ontario National Executive Representative is responsible for implementing national campaigns and programming on the provincial level on top of representing member locals in national affairs.³⁰⁵ The range of the Ontario National Executive Representative's responsibilities are similar in scope in comparison to the Ontario Chairperson.

The Ontario Executive Committee is also composed of the Circle of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students Constituency Commissioner, the Constituency Coordinator, and the Women's Commissioner whose terms begin at each annual general meeting for the period of one year.³⁰⁶ Moreover, the Ontario Executive Committee includes one representative from each member local student association in Ontario.³⁰⁷ This stands in contrast to the National Executive, on which the Ontario National Executive Representative is meant to represent the will of all member local student associations in Ontario. Member locals tend to have a closer relationship to the

³⁰¹ *ibid.*, 19.

³⁰² *ibid.*

³⁰³ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2019). *Operations Policy, as amended at the 2019 Annual General Meeting*, page 29. Retrieved <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Operations-Policy-2019.08.pdf>; Canadian Federation of Students- Ontario. (2019). *Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 annual general meeting*, page 20. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 27-28.

³⁰⁵ *ibid.*, 29-30.

³⁰⁶ *ibid.*, 19.

³⁰⁷ *ibid.*



at-large members of the Ontario Executive Committee than to the at-large members of the National Executive. This is because member locals in Ontario each hold a seat on the Ontario Executive Committee, but also because the at-large members of the Ontario Executive Committee are “encouraged to visit and speak to the council of every member local at least once” and have more frequent correspondence with them.³⁰⁸ Moreover, the Ontario Chairperson is encouraged to meet with members of local campus media in consultation with member locals and is encouraged to write articles detailing the federation’s efforts and campaigns.³⁰⁹

The Ontario Executive Committee is obligated to meet at least two times over the course of the year between annual general meetings.³¹⁰ Members of the Ontario Executive Committee can be removed by $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote at a general meeting if deemed necessary.³¹¹ The responsibilities of the Ontario Executive Committee are largely the same as that of its national counterparts. The Ontario Executive Committee is obligated to present a report on its activities to the organization at each general meeting.³¹² Members of the committee are also responsible for presenting short reports at each meeting of the committee on their activities since the previous one.³¹³

Similar to the National Executive, the Ontario Executive Committee’s work is aided by a team of staff responsible for regional, financial, services, and communications coordination.³¹⁴ There is no reference to this staff team on the CFS-O website. The CFS-O has an office collective composed of the Chairperson, the National Executive Representative and staff members, many of whom have had prior involvement in student organizing or in an elected capacity within the Federation.³¹⁵ There is some evidence detailing the office collective’s role in writing some of the motions that member locals bring to general meetings.³¹⁶ However, just as the UTSU’s staff and executive team work together to forward motions to board meetings and general

³⁰⁸ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2019). *Operations Policy, as amended at the 2019 Annual General Meeting*, page 29. Retrieved <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Operations-Policy-2019.08.pdf>.

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 49.

³¹⁰ *ibid.*, 19.

³¹¹ *ibid.*, 23.

³¹² *ibid.*, 25.

³¹³ *ibid.*, 26.

³¹⁴ Gregory, T. (2013, April). *Solidarity For Their Own Good: Self-Determination and the Canadian Federation of Students*, page 126. Retrieved from <http://www.studentunion.ca/solidarity-paper.pdf>.

³¹⁵ *ibid.*, 129, 136.

³¹⁶ *ibid.*, 131-133.

meetings that they think are in the best interest of the union, so does the CFS-O's office collective.

General Meetings

The CFS-O's Annual General Meeting takes place in the summer.³¹⁷ Previously, the CFS-O held two general meetings per year, with the first taking place in the winter months and the second in the summer. Similar to the national organization, this was reduced to one general meeting following concerns that the Federation's revenue would be severely impacted by the Government of Ontario's Student Choice Initiative. Each member local is given one vote at general meetings and is permitted to proxy its vote to another member local if needed.³¹⁸ The CFS-O assumes the costs of one delegate of each member local to attend the annual general meeting, with member locals responsible for funding any subsequent delegates.³¹⁹ However, it also employs a practice of subsidizing extra delegates coming from smaller and less financially sustainable member locals.³²⁰ Media rights at general meetings are the same at those of the CFS-O as they are in the national organization.³²¹ Minutes from the annual general meeting are posted on the CFS-O's website 30 days following their ratification at the next annual general meeting one year later.³²² Like their national counterpart, the CFS-O's minutes are not incredibly detailed; this is especially apparent when it comes to the discussion portions of motions as any mention of the parties involved is omitted for the most part.

Similar to the national organization, the CFS-O has standing committees to discuss particular issues pertaining to the Federation. They are the Budget Committee, the Campaigns & Governance Relations Committee, Organizational and Services Development Committee, and the Policy Review and Development Committee.³²³ Each delegate to general meetings can attend one committee meeting.³²⁴ Each member local present in a committee meeting setting receives one vote, this stands in contrast to the national set up where voting is allocated on different grounds.³²⁵

³¹⁷ Canadian Federation of Students- Ontario. (2019). *Bylaws, as amended at the November 2019 annual general meeting*, page 13. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Bylaws-Amended-2019-11.pdf>.

³¹⁸ *ibid.*, 13.

³¹⁹ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2019). *Operations Policy, as amended at the 2019 Annual General Meeting*, page 42-43. Retrieved <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Operations-Policy-2019.08.pdf>.

³²⁰ *ibid.*

³²¹ *ibid.*

³²² *ibid.*, 65.

³²³ *ibid.*, 45.

³²⁴ *ibid.*

³²⁵ *ibid.*



The responsibilities of each committee are largely the same as their national counterparts' responsibilities.³²⁶

Like national general meetings, provincial general meetings have meetings of constituency groups and caucuses. Constituency groups come together at each general meeting to discuss the meeting's issues from their unique perspective as well as to elect the commissioner(s) responsible for administering their groups. Constituency groups include those for Student with Disabilities, Mature Students, International Students, Part-time and Mature Students, Two-Spirit/Queer Students, Racialized Students, Two-Spirit/Trans Students, and women.³²⁷ Whereas the Circle of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Students' national arm is considered a caucus, the CFS-O classifies it as a constituency.³²⁸ Conversely, the national organization considers Francophone students a constituency whereas the CFS-O's Francophone and Bilingual Caucus serves that purpose on the provincial level.³²⁹ The CFS-O's other caucus groups include those for Graduate Students, Northern Region Students (NRC), and Part-Time & Continuing Education students.³³⁰

The Circle of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Students and Womens' Constituency are the only constituencies whose elected commissioners are voting members of the Ontario Executive Committee. However, commissioners of the four CFS-O caucuses have non-voting status on the Ontario Executive Committee and constituency group commissioners are generally expected to communicate with the Ontario Executive Committee and CFS-O staff.³³¹ Similar to the national organization, constituency groups and caucuses can both establish their own committees and policies as long as they do not sit in contradiction with CFS policies.³³²

Constituency groups meet together twice per year as members of the CFS-O's Council of Constituency Representatives; this is mainly organized by the Ontario Constituency Coordinator.³³³ Besides their constituency meetings at general meetings, constituency groups also meet twice in the form of the Constituency Commission at general meetings.³³⁴ Similarly, caucuses have designated meeting times at annual general meetings.³³⁵ Each constituency representative, otherwise known as the Commissioners of each constituency group, receive an honorarium of

³²⁶ *ibid.*

³²⁷ *ibid.*, 13.

³²⁸ *ibid.*

³²⁹ *ibid.*, 7.

³³⁰ *ibid.*

³³¹ *ibid.*, 7, 13-26.

³³² *ibid.*, 7, 13.

³³³ *ibid.*, 24-25.

³³⁴ *ibid.*, 42.

³³⁵ *ibid.*, 41.



\$500 after a successful completion of their terms.³³⁶ Constituency groups receive at least \$250 per year to plan their budgets, allocated from a pool of at least \$7000; the Women's Constituency group receives one third of this sum.³³⁷ Caucuses collectively have a budget of at least \$10 000.³³⁸

Caucuses such as the NRC are obligated to meet at least once a year outside of the annual general meeting, however the other three groups often only meet at general meetings.³³⁹ The Ontario Circle of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Students holds a gathering each year in June; the gathering is a time of healing and takes place in and around member locals with the guidance of the Circle and its commissioner.³⁴⁰ Each year, the Circle's commissioner, as well as the Racialized Constituency Commissioner, plan the Ontario Racialized & Indigenous Student Experience (RISE) Summit.³⁴¹ The RISE Summit takes place in the GTA and is organized with these commissioners in conjunction with a planning committee to be a space for discussion of combatting decolonization, anti-racism, and anti-capitalist oppression.

³⁴²

The UTSU and the CFS-O

The UTSU's relationship with the CFS-O can be characterized as more productive than its relationship with the national organization, partly because it sits on the organization's board of directors, the Ontario Executive Committee, and possibly because the issues discussed are more pertinent to the landscape of provincial politics. UTSU executives often have more day-to-day conversations with CFS-O leadership given these differences, creating a more active relationship between the two bodies.

The UTSU presented similar versions of the five motions it created for the CFS-National's annual general meeting at the CFS-O AGM, aimed at making the certification and decertification processes more accessible.³⁴³ The motions were considered but mostly ignored as the CFS-O radically amended the meeting agenda in response to COVID-19.³⁴⁴ However, these motions were forwarded to the Ontario

³³⁶ *ibid.*, 25.

³³⁷ *ibid.*, 33.

³³⁸ *ibid.*

³³⁹ *ibid.*, 51.

³⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 56.

³⁴¹ *ibid.*, 60.

³⁴² *ibid.*, 61.

³⁴³ Riches, T., Ahmed, M., Reuter, F., & Hemrajani, N. (2020). *Report on the Canadian Federation of Students - Ontario Annual General Meeting August 2020* (Rep.). Retrieved <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Report-on-the-CFS-Ontario-Annual-General-Meeting-August-2020.pdf>.

³⁴⁴ *ibid.*



Executive Committee for further discussion.³⁴⁵ Unlike the National Executive, representatives from each member local sit on the Ontario Executive Committee, including the UTSU. This meant that the UTSU could actively advocate for its motions, whereas in the national context, motions that are forwarded to the National Plenary from critical members are usually ignored. Most of the UTSU's motions failed or were recommended for defeat, however the Ontario Executive Committee tabled the discussion on online voting given that reports on implementing online voting into the CFS-O had been done in previous years.

At the time of the writing of this report, a follow up discussion had not occurred however, the online voting reports were made available to members of the Ontario Executive Committee. The reports describe the benefits of adopting an online voting system being its potential to improve accessibility by creating more flexible voting times and enabling people to not have to stand in long lines or come to campus.³⁴⁶ However, there was concern regarding the handling of students' private information and the susceptibility of such systems to be hacked.³⁴⁷ There were also concerns about the potential costliness, whether the Federation would invest in an already existing service or create its own.³⁴⁸ The Federation was also concerned that online voting would create barriers for those without internet access.³⁴⁹ While this is a fair point, during the COVID-19 pandemic, all post-secondary activities have become somewhat less accessible for those without internet access or with technological issues. Moreover, post-secondary institutions often have a slew of computers available for students in libraries and student spaces on secure servers, making it easy for students without access to the internet at home to vote on campus. A report written by past UTSU executives Joshua Grondin and Anne Boucher for the Ontario Executive Committee described the proliferation of the use of online voting services at CFS locals, institutions, and political parties across the country.³⁵⁰ The report also detailed the ease of use of online voting systems and the ways in which they contribute to election accessibility and involvement. It also demonstrated how functions such as providing a ballot receipt and an exclusive encrypted code to

³⁴⁵ *ibid.*

³⁴⁶ Zhao. (2018). *Online Voting Accessibility Report for the Canadian Federation of Students- Ontario* (Rep.), page 1.

³⁴⁷ Akbar. (2018). *Report on Security for online voting for the Canadian Federation of Students- Ontario* (Rep.), pages 1-2.

³⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 3.

³⁴⁹ Zhao. (2018). *Online Voting Accessibility Report for the Canadian Federation of Students- Ontario* (Rep.), pages 1-2.

³⁵⁰ Boucher, A., Grondin, J. (2018). *Online Voting Research for the Canadian Federation of Students- Ontario* (Rep.).

voters can help ensure online voting security, citing how many CFS locals have utilized online voting systems without incident.³⁵¹

OUSA

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) is an association of eight Ontario student unions incorporated in 1995 to advocate for “better financial aid, fair tuition fees, greater university accountability and more government funding for universities”.³⁵² OUSA emphasizes engaging in research to ensure that its lobbying efforts present a constructive and credible front to politicians and the public at large.³⁵³ OUSA is also committed to supporting a more decentralized organizational structure that enables its members to drive its policies and priorities.³⁵⁴ OUSA has a number of membership ‘classes’, each with a different level of involvement and fees to give prospective members options with “full members” being the main form of membership.³⁵⁵ The organization’s bylaws specify that its members’ bylaws and policies are to be followed first and foremost, particularly in matters of admission into or withdrawal from OUSA.³⁵⁶

The withdrawal process from OUSA is significantly less intensive and contentious than the CFS’ decertification process. Members are required to give notice to OUSA by registered mail their intent to withdraw and must do so in accordance with their own bylaws and policies.³⁵⁷ For example, whether a withdrawal will happen via referendum or by vote of a members’ board of directors is entirely up to the member’s bylaws and policies.³⁵⁸ This emphasis on a member-driven organizational structure is comparable to CASA’s commitment to its members. Like CASA, OUSA was partially created in opposition to the CFS’ monopoly on the student movement and its perceived deficiencies in properly representing and advocating for students.

OUSA has a Steering Committee that acts as its board of directors, similar to the CFS-O’s Executive Committee.³⁵⁹ The Steering Committee is composed of a representative from each full member who serve as voting directors as well as any

³⁵¹ Boucher, A., Grondin, J. (2018). *Online Voting Research for the Canadian Federation of Students- Ontario* (Rep.), page 8.

³⁵² Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. (2020). *Organizational History*. Retrieved April 3, 2021, from https://www.ousa.ca/Organizational_History.

³⁵³ *ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵⁵ Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. (2020). *By-law One*, pages 7-8. Retrieved from https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/60/attachments/original/1609881911/OUSA_Official_Bylaw_1_-_November_2020.pdf?1609881911.

³⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 7-9.

³⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 9.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 10, 19.



number of non-voting external advisors.³⁶⁰ Representatives must be students and/or executive members of their student associations and thus cannot be staff members.³⁶¹ The Steering Committee chooses OUSA's three officer level positions, the President, Vice President (Finance), and Vice President (Administration & Human Resources), from amongst its directors each fiscal year.³⁶² The officers are tasked with carrying out the decisions of the Steering Committee and Assembly of OUSA and do not receive remuneration.³⁶³ The Steering Committee also appoints and oversees an Executive Director to manage the organization's day to day operations.³⁶⁴ The Executive Director and the Steering Committee oversee the hiring of any additional staff members; currently, OUSA has three additional staff members focused on supporting the organization's research capacity and communication apparatus.³⁶⁵

Similar to the CFS-O, OUSA also has an Assembly made up of member delegates similar to the CFS's conception of the plenary which meets twice per year to oversee the direction of the organization.³⁶⁶ Unlike general meetings of the CFS-O where each member constitutes one vote regardless of a member's number of delegates or scale of representation, delegates to OUSA's general meetings are determined based on the number of students that each full member represents.³⁶⁷ Members who are not full members are entitled to a smaller number of delegates depending on their membership status.³⁶⁸ Delegates must be students and cannot be staff members, unlike the CFS where staff members can vote on behalf of their member locals.³⁶⁹ The Assembly is the main body which determines the organization's policy decisions.³⁷⁰ Any policy decisions proposed by the Steering Committee must be approved by the Assembly as well.³⁷¹ However, similar to the UTSU's Executive Committee, OUSA's Steering Committee is entitled to set policy priorities in matters that require a timely response.³⁷² The Steering Committee is also entitled to establish committees or standing committees to engage more thoroughly in the work of specific matters.³⁷³

³⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 11-12.

³⁶¹ *ibid.*, 11.

³⁶² *ibid.*, 25.

³⁶³ *ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 28.

³⁶⁵ Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. (2020). *Home Office*. Retrieved April 3, 2021, from https://www.ousa.ca/home_office.

³⁶⁶ Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. (2020). *By-law One*, page 19. Retrieved from https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/60/attachments/original/1609881911/OUSA_Official_Bylaw_1_-_November_2020.pdf?1609881911.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 16-17.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 17.

³⁶⁹ *ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 19-22.

³⁷¹ *ibid.*, 22.

³⁷² *ibid.*, 22-23.

³⁷³ *ibid.*, 32.



Moreover, both the Assembly and the Steering Committee can establish working groups on matters deemed relevant to OUSA members.

Services

CFS Finances

The CFS has three primary sources of revenue: membership fees, general meeting delegate fees, and revenue generated through the provision of services.³⁷⁴ The first two are straightforward, there are national and provincial membership fees, both indexed to the Consumer Price Index, as well as per-delegate fees for attending general meetings—though as noted earlier in this report, member locals are able to send one delegate to general meetings free of charge.³⁷⁵ In 2019, the CFS generated \$2,753,652.00 in revenue from membership fees, rental income, investment income, and miscellaneous income.³⁷⁶ The most recent budget indicates that the Federation's largest expenses are component and constituency allocations, campaigns and government relations, administration and office, legal, and national executive salaries.³⁷⁷ For both the CFS and CFS-O, UTSU members paid \$498,275.98 in membership fees in 2019-2020 and \$767,779.54 in 2018-2019; these numbers have fluctuated as a result of the Student Choice Initiative and the inclusion of, and subsequent separation from, the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU), respectively. For the 2020-2021 year, the UTSU's total membership fees contribution to the CFS is estimated to be around \$600,000.00.

As the Federation notes in its response to the committee's mandate to author this report, "all services are coordinated through CFS-Services, a separately incorporated entity of the Federation"; the funding of which comes mainly from "a portion of the Federation's membership fee".³⁷⁸ The CFS and the CFS-Services combined budget as well as their separate audits are presented and reviewed at the Federation's AGM each year and are readily available on the CFS' website.³⁷⁹ It is important to note that membership fees do not cover the costs of many of the CFS' services, but rather provide access to them at additional subsidized costs, which is why the UTSU is able to opt out of them. Services that would require the UTSU to pay to utilize include handbooks, the Ethical Purchasing Network, and the National Student Health Network.

³⁷⁴ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*

³⁷⁶ Canadian Federation of Students (2019, June 30). Financial Statements. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CFS-Audit-FY-2019-Web-EN.pdf>.

³⁷⁷ *ibid.*

³⁷⁸ Canadian Federation of Students (2021, February 26). *Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE*, page 12.

³⁷⁹ *ibid.*; Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). Finances. Retrieved April 5, 2021, from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/about/finances/>.

Travelcuts & the CIBC Account

In 2014, members of the CFS at-large executive discovered a hidden bank account—CIBC account #99-16113—under the Federation's name.³⁸⁰ In 2017, a summary audit of the account was released that revealed that an unauthorized total of \$263,052.80 in deposits and \$262,776.13 in withdrawals were made between July 2010 and December 2014.³⁸¹ The bank account was opened in July 2009 to help travelcuts, a travel company that was majority-owned by the CFS at the time, manage its debt.³⁸² According to *The Varsity*,

On July 14, 2009, the federation deposited \$1.6 million into the account as a loan "to facilitate the receivership and sale process as Travel CUTS was experiencing cash-flow problems. The loan was repaid in full by Travel CUTS to [CFS-Services]," wrote CFS Treasurer Peyton Veitch in an email to *The Varsity*.

In October 2009, the CFS sold the company to Merit Travel Group Inc., and the last authorized use of the account was on May 6, 2010, two months before the unauthorized transactions began.³⁸³

A forensic review of the account was undertaken by Grant Thornton, LLP, and revealed that an unauthorized total of \$263,052.80 in deposits and \$262,776.13 in withdrawals were made from the account between July 2010 and December 2014.³⁸⁴ According to the forensic review summary, there were five recipients of the unauthorized disbursements, "two of whom, are former employees of the Federation, a further individual, one law firm and a consulting company."³⁸⁵

The Federation opted not to release the full forensic review, and as a result, it is not known where the unauthorized funds originated from or where they ultimately went.³⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the November 2016 National General Meeting voted to approve

³⁸⁰ Kao, J. (2017, September 11). CFS audit reveals details of hidden bank account. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2017/09/11/cfs-audit-reveals-details-of-hidden-bank-account/>.

³⁸¹ *ibid.*

³⁸² Kao, J. (2017, September 18). Former CFS-owned company linked to secret bank account. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2017/09/18/former-cfs-owned-company-linked-to-secret-bank-account/>.

³⁸³ *ibid.*

³⁸⁴ Grant Thornton, LLP. (May 30, 2017). *Forensic Review: Canadian Federation of Students Summary Report* (Rep.).

³⁸⁵ *ibid.*

³⁸⁶ Kao, J. (2017, September 11). CFS audit reveals details of hidden bank account. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2017/09/11/cfs-audit-reveals-details-of-hidden-bank-account/>.



the audit of the account, without being able to access said audit.³⁸⁷ The handling of this account was harshly criticized by the UTSU; the 2016-2017 Vice-President Internal & Services Mathias Memmel wrote in an executive report that the CFS' handling of this account was "incredibly disturbing," because the Federation "refused to disclose where it came from or where it went despite the completion of a forensic audit and report."³⁸⁸

Today, the CFS-Services has a service agreement with Merit Travel Group, the company that bought Travelcuts in 2009, to operate the Summer Work Abroad Program and to be an alternative issuer for International Student Identity Cards, which are explored later in this report.³⁸⁹

Health & Dental Insurance Plans

The CFS offers health insurance through the National Student Health Network (NSHN) buying consortium.³⁹⁰ This "cooperative services model" enables students' unions to "have direct control over the services offered by their health and dental plans".³⁹¹ Members opting into the NSHN are covered by Green Shield Canada (GSC), which the Federation claims is "the country's only not-for-profit insurer."³⁹² Each student union in the NSHN has their own customized plan through GSC that is contracted on a yearly basis.³⁹³ Through the NSHN, the Federation helps individual member locals renegotiate their plans with GSC each year by hiring a third party consultant to review them before the agreements are signed.³⁹⁴ The NSHN helps members manage the day-to-day operations of their health & dental plans and "provides educational resources" to enable students to better understand their plans.³⁹⁵ The NSHN also provides Continuing Coverage Care plans for students who are

³⁸⁷ Flores, L. (2017, January 9). CFS under fire for handling of "hidden" bank account. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2017/01/09/cfs-under-fire-for-handling-of-hidden-bank-account/>.

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*

³⁸⁹ Kao, J. (2017, September 25). CFS still receiving revenue from programs linked to secret bank account. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2017/09/25/cfs-still-receiving-revenue-from-programs-linked-to-secret-bank-account/>.

³⁹⁰ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). *Services*. Retrieved April 5, 2021, from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/services/>.

³⁹¹ *ibid.*

³⁹² *ibid.*

³⁹³ Canadian Federation of Students (2021, February 26). *Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE*, page 14.

³⁹⁴ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). *39th Annual National General Meeting November 17-21, 2020- National Executive Report (Rep.)*, page 27. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NE-Report-Nov-2020-EN.pdf>.

³⁹⁵ Canadian Federation of Students (2021, February 26). *Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE*, page 13.

transitioning off of their student union's health plan.³⁹⁶ The NSHN has recently expanded to include two new services, Akira Virtual Health and BEACON.³⁹⁷ Akira Virtual Health is primarily a digital medical consultations device meant to connect students with primary-care clinicians.³⁹⁸ BEACON is a digital cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) program distributed through students' GSC coverage.³⁹⁹ The Federation is currently working on adding an International Student Health Care Plan and a preferred pharmacy network to the NSHN.⁴⁰⁰

The UTSU has its own unique Health and Dental Plan through its relationship with the national insurance broker, Studentcare, and the insurance company Desjardins. Under the administration of the Brighter UofT slate in 2015, the UTSU terminated its participation in the NSHN and began a direct relationship with GSC without the intermediary support provided by the NSHN.⁴⁰¹ Soon after, the Board of Directors began conversations with Studentcare, which describes itself as the only insurance broker in the country "specializing exclusively in student healthcare".⁴⁰² Studentcare is the "largest student health and dental plan administrator in Canada" serving over a million students at over a hundred student unions.⁴⁰³ Studentcare's role as a broker is to work for the UTSU and its members by consulting with various insurance companies to ensure that the "UTSU receives the best value for [it's] Health & Dental Plan."⁴⁰⁴ Whereas the CFS' NSHN works exclusively with GSC, the UTSU's relationship with Studentcare enables it to shift to different insurance companies and/or plans depending on what would produce the best value each time it's up for renewal. However, whereas the NSHN's GSC plans are re-negotiated yearly, Studentcare and the UTSU usually sign multi-year contracts for the sake of stability for the union and for students; currently the UTSU has a 4 year contract with Studentcare until 2025.

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*

³⁹⁷ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). *39th Annual National General Meeting November 17-21, 2020- National Executive Report (Rep.)*, page 27. Retrieved from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NF-Report-Nov-2020-EN.pdf>.

³⁹⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ *ibid.*, 27-28.

⁴⁰¹ Coleman, B. (2015, December 17). [Letter to Tom Rowles, National Student Health Network Administrator]. University of Toronto Students' Union, Toronto, Ontario.

⁴⁰² Studentcare. (2016, February). *UTSU 2016 Request for Quotations RFQ Report (Rep.)*. Retrieved from

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gol2NoyO1B6PO-ke2yNtv9MUBel_wgs-/view?usp=sharing.

⁴⁰³ Studentcare. (n.d.). *Our History*. Retrieved April 08, 2021, from

<https://www.studentcare.ca/rte/en/ASEQcommon?superUid=Content2>.

⁴⁰⁴ Studentcare. (2016, February). *UTSU 2016 Request for Quotations RFQ Report (Rep.)*, page 1. Retrieved from

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gol2NoyO1B6PO-ke2yNtv9MUBel_wgs-/view?usp=sharing.

That said, the UTSU retains the ability to mutually renegotiate, renew, or extend our plan at any time.

In November 2015, Studentcare was given a mandate by the UTSU to conduct an internal “comprehensive review” of its plan with GSC including a Request for Quotes (RFQ) process that compares available competitors in the industry to be the union’s next insurance company.⁴⁰⁵ While reviewing the UTSU’s plan history, Studentcare found that the NSHN never hired independent consultants to review the UTSU’s GSC plan, despite its commitment to do so.⁴⁰⁶ The UTSU’s plan under GSC worked on a retention/refund accounting basis which meant that the UTSU was responsible for managing any deficits or surpluses created by the plan.⁴⁰⁷ Studentcare reported that the UTSU had mostly failed to benefit from this arrangement, stating that the union had lost over \$1.6 million cumulatively.⁴⁰⁸ As a result, Studentcare recommended pursuing a fully insured model whereby the insurance company would be responsible for any deficits or surpluses in exchange for being owed a higher premium.⁴⁰⁹ Studentcare requested quotations from five insurance companies including GSC, Ontario Blue Cross, Desjardins Financial Security, SSQ Financial Group, and Sun Life Financial.⁴¹⁰ They asked each insurer to propose quotes for a 24 month plan on retention/refund accounting and fully insured bases as well as a 12 month fully insured plan; however, they recommended a 24 month fully insured plan as the most financially sound choice.⁴¹¹

The Organizational Development and Services Committee concluded that Desjardins presented the best quotation.⁴¹² Desjardins presented the lowest quotations out of the five insurers in all three plan categories.⁴¹³ Members of the committee expressed their preference for Desjardins because of its nature as a democratically governed co-operative in contrast to a purely for-profit insurer such as Sun Life Financial.⁴¹⁴ The committee also considered whether to underwrite the

⁴⁰⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.*, 1, 7.

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 5.

⁴¹⁰ *ibid.*, 3.

⁴¹¹ *ibid.*, 6.

⁴¹² University of Toronto Students’ Union (2016, February 22). *Minutes of the Organizational Development and Services Committee Meeting*, pages 3-4. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BCIleolVDKC0SxcYZXnAy-6EUzvR-iNI/view?usp=sharing>.

⁴¹³ Studentcare. (2016, February). *UTSU 2016 Request for Quotations RFQ Report* (Rep.), page 12. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Gol2NoyO1B6PO-ke2yNtv9MUBel_wgs-/view?usp=sharing.

⁴¹⁴ University of Toronto Students’ Union (2016, February 22). *Minutes of the Organizational Development and Services Committee Meeting*, pages 3-4. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BCIleolVDKC0SxcYZXnAy-6EUzvR-iNI/view?usp=sharing>.



UTSU Health & Dental Plan on a retention/refund accounting basis or on a fully insured model.⁴¹⁵ They decided to go with Studentcare's recommendation to switch to a 24-month fully insured model to ensure more financial stability for the union, citing the amount of debt that had been incurred through the retention/refund model.⁴¹⁶

In signing with Studentcare, the UTSU's new plan costs were significantly less than what they had been paying, as detailed in the RFQ process. However, the union's service fees increased to "3.2% of the total Health and Dental Plan fees for the 2016-2017 policy year" from the 1.7% fee that it was paying before.⁴¹⁷ The benefits of the plan themselves did not change substantially with the move from GSC to Desjardins. However, Studentcare recommended three changes to the benefits for the new plan: the addition of a psychology network, vaccination coverage at 80%, and a rebalancing of two elements of the dental plan that had proven not to be very useful for students.⁴¹⁸ The impact of these changes on costs were negligible. The Board of Directors at the time also decided to take the opportunity of a stable 24 months of guaranteed premium rates to increase coverage for psychology sessions "to \$100 per visit [for] a maximum of 20 visits per year".⁴¹⁹

Handbooks & Bulk Purchasing Programs

The Federation offers two bulk purchasing programs to its member locals: the Ethical Purchasing Network and the Handbook and Dayplanner Program. In their submission to the committee, the at-large National Executives write that:

Smaller member locals benefit as they do not have the same buying power as larger member locals. Larger member locals benefit as they are able to access high quality, ethically sourced products at a cheaper price, as together with other students' unions, the combined purchase is much larger. Purchasing in this larger quantity ultimately lowers the cost.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁵ *ibid.*, 4.

⁴¹⁶ University of Toronto Students' Union (2016, February 22). *Minutes of the Organizational Development and Services Committee Meeting*, page 5. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BCIleolVDKC0SxcYZXnAy-6EUzvR-iNI/view?usp=sharing>.

⁴¹⁷ University of Toronto Students' Union (2016, February 28). *Appendix B- StudentCare Contract Information*, page 3. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1hNbZCtVJkVMeDN-14b21JuYXDfclRCof>.

⁴¹⁸ *ibid.*, 6.

⁴¹⁹ University of Toronto Students' Union (2016, February 28). *Minutes of the 16th Board of Directors Meeting*, pages 5-6. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rVB1obGrMUtUOBTqsejvUjXsZVkJEnvyZ/view?usp=sharing>.

⁴²⁰ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.



The Ethical Purchasing Network purchases supplies from suppliers, such as water bottles, t-shirts, and lanyards, at distributor pricing, allowing member locals to purchase these items at a cost below the manufacturer's suggested retail price.⁴²¹ These supplies are vetted to ensure they meet the Federation's ethical standards, including workers' rights, unionized workforce, and high environmental standards.⁴²²

The Handbook and Dayplanner Program is similar, and sees handbooks sourced from a unionized printer facility that uses vegetable inks and recycled paper to produce the handbooks.⁴²³ Member locals using the service can customize most content, including the calendar pages, while the Federation provides additional pages of CFS-specific content at no additional cost to the local.⁴²⁴

The benefit of these services comes from bulk purchasing power to lower costs for student unions. The UTSU, however, is one of the largest member locals of the CFS, granting it a significant amount of purchasing power on its own. According to the 2016 draft report, there were no obvious problems with the 2015-2016 UTSU handbook—the last handbook ordered by the UTSU through the CFS' service.⁴²⁵ However the report noted that there are less expensive alternatives that are also ethically sourced, and noted that most of the Orientation 2016 materials would be purchased from suppliers other than the CFS.⁴²⁶ The 2015-2016 UTSU Handbook saw \$23,525.00 in sponsorship revenue, compared to \$61,302.50 in expenses.⁴²⁷ In comparison, the UTSU spent \$24,963.00 in 2019-2020 on "Design & Promotion," which included the UTSU Handbook, according to the draft actuals.⁴²⁸ While the bulk purchasing programs and economies of scale may benefit smaller unions, the UTSU has found more affordable alternatives that achieve similar objectives. The UTSU should continue to pursue the best options for its members, which for the time

⁴²¹ *ibid.*; Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). *Services - Ethical Purchasing Network*. Retrieved April 09, 2021, from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/services/#epn>.

⁴²² Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.

⁴²³ *ibid.*

⁴²⁴ *ibid.*

⁴²⁵ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

⁴²⁶ *ibid.*

⁴²⁷ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *2015-2016 Amended Operating Budget and Actuals*. Retrieved from <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Operating-Budget-2015-2016-Actuals-Sheet1.pdf>.

⁴²⁸ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2020). *UTSU & Student Commons 2020/21 DRAFT PRELIMINARY Operating Budget & Draft 2019/2020 Actuals*. Retrieved from https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/3-UTSU-and-Student-Commons-DRAFT-Budget-2020_2021-for-Discussion-Finance-Committee-June-2020.pdf.

being, is not the Federation's Ethical Purchasing Network or the Handbook and Dayplanner Program.

Perks & Discounts

The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) is run by the ISIC Association which is a private, not-for-profit corporation based in Denmark. They are intended to constitute proof that one is a student. The ISIC Association owns the ISIC brand, but the Federation is the exclusive distributor of the ISIC in Canada and is a voting member of the not-for-profit ISIC Association.⁴²⁹ ISIC cards are free for students whose student union is a member local of the CFS, and the cards can also be purchased for \$20 by any student. In theory, the cards grant access to student discounts, but most student discounts are available to anyone with a valid student ID; there are few, if any, discounts available only to students who have ISICs.⁴³⁰ An ISIC is essentially a student ID issued by a third party, and, while the ISIC brand is certainly well-known, one would think that an official student ID is almost always preferable to a third-party alternative. In their submission to the committee, the CFS writes that:

The Federation does not work with any other companies or organizations beyond member locals to issue the ISIC. Revenues of paid ISIC sales purchased by non-members are recorded on the card sales line of the ISIC Discount Services section of the Canadian Federation of Students and Canadian Federation of Students-Services combined budget. This allows members to easily see how much revenue is received compared to expenses.

⁴³¹

The Federation also wrote in their submission to the committee that “analytics data [indicates] that very few students follow through [the UTSU's Student Perks & Discounts webpage] to obtain their ISIC. Organically, thousands of UTSU members each year seek an ISIC through the Federation's online application.”⁴³² The UTSU used to print physical ISIC cards for students at its office, however the machine was unreliable and time-consuming, so UTSU Front Desk staff began referring students to the online portal used to obtain an ISIC. This may explain the disparities in analytics data referenced by the Federation.

⁴²⁹ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.

⁴³⁰ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

⁴³¹ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.

⁴³² *ibid.*



Tax Services

The Federation partners with UFile to provide its members access to free tax filing software, at a value of \$20 for students and \$30 for families.⁴³³ The UTSU does not promote this service, as it is a part of the Canada Revenue Agency's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP). Through the CVITP, the UTSU organizes an annual Tax Clinic, and is provided access to UFile at no cost in order to facilitate this service. The Tax Clinic is a popular program of the UTSU, and helped 700 students during the 2018-2019 year.⁴³⁴

⁴³³ *ibid.*

⁴³⁴ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2019). *2018-2019 Annual Report* (Rep.).



Advocacy

The inaugural general meeting of the CFS, held at Carleton University in October 1981, reveals much about the CFS. The new federation, like the National Union of Students before it, called for the abolition of tuition fees, and endorsed a plan of action.⁴³⁵ However, it also passed a number of more specific motions. Some, like the motion encouraging action on the unique issues facing Indigenous students, were laudable and ahead of their time.⁴³⁶ Others, like the motion calling on the Government of Canada to withdraw from NATO, were less obviously relevant to student issues.⁴³⁷ The point, though, is that the CFS has always eschewed a narrow focus on tuition fees in favour of a broader focus on social justice.⁴³⁸ This orientation is evident from the nature and the diversity of the Federation's campaigns.

The CFS presents itself as both a lobby group and an activist organization.⁴³⁹ As a lobby group, it is unlike the earlier Canadian Union of Students (1963-1969), which was the explicitly Marxist forerunner of the NUS, and was fundamentally opposed to lobbying, let alone working with, governments and university administrations.⁴⁴⁰ As an activist organization, the CFS is unlike CASA and OUSA, which lobby and make policy recommendations but do not, for the most part, engage in protest.⁴⁴¹ CFS lobbying and CASA & OUSA lobbying are essentially the same, although each organization benefits from close, albeit unofficial, ties to a major political party (the CFS is tied to the New Democratic Party; CASA and OUSA are tied to the Liberal Party).⁴⁴²

Campaigns

In their submission to the committee, the CFS writes that "majority of the campaigns of the Federation are put forth by the members. In consultation with affected groups, the national office is then tasked with producing campaign materials and associated resources. All of our campaign resources are freely accessible to our members and it is at the discretion of member locals which campaigns they want to interact with, and incorporate, on their campuses."⁴⁴³ For greater clarity, the

⁴³⁵ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

⁴³⁶ *ibid.*

⁴³⁷ *ibid.*

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*

⁴³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴⁴² *ibid.*

⁴⁴³ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.



campaigns of the Federation are put forth and reviewed by member locals at general meetings of the Federation, and are summarized in a Campaigns Guide maintained by the Federation.⁴⁴⁴ In recent years, the UTSU has not participated in the campaigns of the Federation, instead pursuing more locally-developed campaigns and advocacy initiatives.

Activism is naturally more visible than lobbying is, because activism consists for the most part, of public acts. CFS activism consists primarily of organizing and attending rallies, printing and distributing pamphlets, and writing letters.⁴⁴⁵ The CFS consistently maintains at least one campaign calling for the abolition of tuition fees and increased public funding for post-secondary institutions. The 2016 draft report highlighted the Drop Fees campaign and its apparent lack of success, before the campaign was succeeded by the Education is a Right campaign.⁴⁴⁶ Today, the CFS' flagship campaign is the Education For All campaign.⁴⁴⁷ Launched in January 2021, the Education For All campaign seeks to advocate for a "high-quality, universally-accessible, and fully-funded post-secondary education system for all."⁴⁴⁸ The campaign is supported by the CFS' coalition partners: the Canadian Alliance of University Teachers (CAUT), Canadian Unionized Public Employees (CUPE), the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), and the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE).⁴⁴⁹

The efficacy of lobbying for the abolition of tuition fees has been a topic of debate in student politics for decades now, and this report will not resolve this debate. The 2016 draft report states that "the concern has always been that making this demand is, at present, a non-starter, and prevents student representatives from getting a foot in the door."⁴⁵⁰ This continues to be a concern—while the abolition of tuition fees and a

⁴⁴⁴ Riches, T., & Ahmed, M. (2021). *Report on the Canadian Federation of Students Annual General Meeting November 2020* (Rep.). Retrieved <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Report-on-the-CFS-Annual-General-Meeting-November-2020.pdf>; Canadian Federation of Students. (2020, November). *Campaigns Guide*.

⁴⁴⁵ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

⁴⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.; Canadian Federation of Students. (2020, November). *Campaigns Guide*.

⁴⁴⁸ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.

⁴⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁰ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.

full funded public education system are ideal goals, it is difficult to ask for that outright and receive an eager response from government officials. It could be argued that it is more effective to advocate for gradual tuition reductions and the increasing of public funds to post-secondary institutions, while maintaining an eventual goal of the abolition of tuition fees, but this is not the approach of the CFS. However, the abolition of tuition fees is also actively discussed by some federal political parties, so it could also be argued that lobbying outright for the abolition of tuition fees is effective when working to influence party platforms and government policy. Again, this report cannot draw a conclusion here.

Other major campaigns of the CFS include their Go Fossil Free campaign, their Anti-Racism campaign, and campaigns focusing on the needs of international students and Indigenous students. Also of note is CFS-Ontario's We The Students and Maintain Your Membership campaigns. We will discuss each campaign in turn.

Go Fossil Free campaign

The 2016 draft report highlighted the previous Bottled-Water Free campaign and noted that this was the extent of the CFS' direct advocacy on environmental issues, and noted that the UTSU and other student groups had successfully lobbied for a bottled-water free campus at U of T in 2011.⁴⁵¹ Instead, the CFS often engaged in environmental activism by supporting the work of grassroots organizations such as 350.org and on-campus divestment movements.⁴⁵² This is a good approach, and appears to have been institutionalized in the current Go Fossil Free campaign of the Federation. The campaign seeks to support Indigenous communities in halting fossil fuel extraction projects and supporting on-campus movements to pressure universities to divest from fossil fuel companies.⁴⁵³ This is a good campaign, and although it is not unique to CFS member locals' campuses, it seeks to support a broader push for universities to divest from fossil fuels.

Anti-Racism campaign

The Federation recently launched their Anti-Racism campaign, which includes an anti-racism toolkit and three accompanying workshops: a Race-Based Data workshop, Organizing Training for BIPOC Leaders, and BIPOC Executive Leadership Training.⁴⁵⁴ The toolkit and workshops provided through this campaign are good

⁴⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁴⁵² *ibid.*

⁴⁵³ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020, November). *Campaigns Guide*.

⁴⁵⁴ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.

resources, and the CFS should be commended for providing them to member locals and their campuses.

Fairness for International Students campaign

The Fairness for International Students campaign seeks the elimination of differential fees for domestic and international students, access to universal public healthcare, ending restrictions on work permits, and ensuring clear pathways to permanent residency, among other goals.⁴⁵⁵ Two of these goals: eliminating differential fees and ensuring access to public healthcare, are within the jurisdiction of the provincial government, and would likely benefit from a more targeted province-by-province approach; while CFS-Ontario also runs a Fairness for International Students campaign, this campaign seems more oriented towards building awareness than effectively lobbying government.⁴⁵⁶ Indeed, international tuition fees have been deregulated in Ontario since 1996 and have increased rapidly since.⁴⁵⁷ Lobbying for the re-regulation of international tuition in Ontario is also not unique; OUSA also has a policy paper that recommends the regulation of international tuition “for incoming students at a maximum of 5 percent per year and in-cohort increases at a maximum of 3 percent per year”—which is a more immediately achievable goal on the path to fairness for international students.⁴⁵⁸

We The Students & Maintain Your Membership campaigns

In January 2019, the Government of Ontario announced three changes to its post-secondary policy:

- A 10% reduction to domestic tuition, with no accompanying increase to government operating grants;
- Cuts to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) that saw the elimination of the free tuition program; and

⁴⁵⁵ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020, November). *Campaigns Guide*.

⁴⁵⁶ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2020, August). *2020-2021 Campaigns Guide*.

⁴⁵⁷ Anielska, M. (2021, January 17). International fees increased by 41.2 per cent in past decade, despite student calls for relief. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2021/01/17/international-fees-increased-by-41-2-per-cent-in-past-decade-despite-student-calls-for-relief/>.

⁴⁵⁸ Cruz, Shawn, Emma Evans, Matthew Gerrits, Fayza Ibrahim, Brook Snider, and Megan Town. *Policy Paper: International Students & International Education*. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2020. Retrieved https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/82/attachments/original/1589213013/International_Students_International_Education_document.pdf?1589213013.

- A revision to the ancillary fee guidelines that introduced a policy directive known as the Student Choice Initiative (SCI), which deemed certain ancillary fees—including student union membership fees—as optional.⁴⁵⁹

These changes received nearly universal condemnation from student groups across the province. In response, the CFS-Ontario launched the We The Students campaign and, relatedly, the Maintain Your Membership campaign, which sought to reverse these changes and encourage students to remain opted into their student unions, respectively.⁴⁶⁰ The We The Students campaign sought to mobilize students through letter writing, rallies, and membership outreach, although CFS-Ontario was not the only group to organize direct action—Students For Ontario, March For Our Education, and the Ontario Student Action Network coordinated a province-wide protest on February 4, 2019 in response to the cuts.⁴⁶¹

In their submission to the committee, the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union credits the We The Students campaign and push to Maintain Your Membership for assisting the union in retaining “at least 85% of all its dues that were optional on ACORN.”⁴⁶² This helps to show that these campaigns did have a direct positive impact on students and their student unions. It is important to note, however, that the reaction to the Student Choice Initiative extended far beyond the CFS and member locals who participated in these campaigns. The McMaster Students' Union (MSU) organized a Choose Student Life campaign; the University Students' Council at the University of Western Ontario organized a Save Your Student Experience campaign; even here at the U of T St. George campus, the UTSU, divisional student societies, clubs, and levy groups worked together to organize the ChooseUofT campaign and inform students of why they should remain opted-in to optional fees.⁴⁶³ The ChooseUofT campaign is explored later in this section.

⁴⁵⁹ Takagi, A. (2019, February 4). What we know about the Ford government's changes to postsecondary education. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2019/02/04/what-we-know-about-the-ford-governments-changes-to-postsecondary-education/>.

⁴⁶⁰ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (2020, August). *2020-2021 Campaigns Guide*; Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (n.d.). Maintain Your Membership. Retrieved March 02, 2021, from <https://cfsontario.ca/action/>.

⁴⁶¹ Le Blanc, S., & Mannie, K. (2019, February 10). Students march to Queen's Park in protest of OSAP cuts. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2019/02/10/students-march-to-queens-park-in-protest-of-osap-cuts/>.

⁴⁶² University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union. (2021, February 28). Written Submission to the UTSU ad hoc CFS Committee.

⁴⁶³ McMaster Students' Union. (n.d.). Choose Student Life. Retrieved March 02, 2021, from <https://www.choosestudentlife.com/>; University Students' Council. (n.d.). Save Your Student Experience. Retrieved March 02, 2021, from <https://www.saveyourstudentexperience.ca/>; ChooseUofT Campaign Team. (2019). ChooseUofT. Retrieved March 02, 2021, from



Finally, the legal challenge launched by the CFS-Ontario and the York Federation of Students (YFS) against the Student Choice Initiative is considered to be a part of the We The Students campaign. Filed on May 24, 2019, the CFS-Ontario and YFS argued that the Ministry of Colleges and Universities “lacked the legal authority to implement the SCI, and was also in breach of procedural fairness as it failed to consult with or adequately notify student groups.”⁴⁶⁴ On November 21, 2019, the Divisional Court of Ontario ruled that “Ontario does not control [the relationships of student associations and universities] directly or indirectly,” and quashed the Student Choice Initiative.⁴⁶⁵ This was a victory for students and student unions, and should be applauded. However, the then-President of the UTSU had expressed doubts over the finality of the decision, as the government could seek to legislate the Student Choice Initiative into law.⁴⁶⁶

The Government of Ontario has appealed the decision, and the case will be heard in late March 2021.⁴⁶⁷

Government Relations

Another question that is difficult for this report to answer is “is CFS lobbying effective?” The 2016 draft report points out that “whenever a (positive) policy change is announced, rival student groups race to claim credit.”⁴⁶⁸ This is true for many policy announcements by governments; unless government officials explicitly give credit to specific student organizations, student organizations that advocate for similar policy changes will naturally claim credit.

The CFS and CFS-Ontario both undertake annual lobby weeks, inviting member locals to join in lobbying for the Federation’s priorities at both the provincial and

<https://www.chooseuoft.ca/>; Bowman, J., Krause, K., O'Halloran, D., & Wilton, D. (2019, August 11). Op-ed: Why you should ChooseUofT this year. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2019/08/11/op-ed-why-you-should-choose-uoft-this-year/>.

⁴⁶⁴ Takagi, A., & Toone, M. (2019, November 24). Ford government’s Student Choice Initiative quashed in Ontario court. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2019/11/24/ford-governments-student-choice-initiative-quashed-in-ontario-court/>.

⁴⁶⁵ *ibid.*; Canadian Federation of Students v. Ontario, 2019 ONSC 6658 (CanLII), <https://canlii.ca/t/j3hcc>, retrieved on 2021-03-02.

⁴⁶⁶ Bowman, J. (2019, December). *Report of the President* (Rep.). Retrieved <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FLvKqGNRZ4G1X1g6vaTv-djdMUZDwyw/view?usp=sharing>.

⁴⁶⁷ Abes, C. (2021, February 24). Ford government’s appeal to reinstate Student Choice Initiative to be heard in March. *The Eyeopener*. Retrieved from <https://theeyeopener.com/2021/02/ford-governments-appeal-to-reinstate-student-choice-initiative-to-be-heard-in-march/>.

⁴⁶⁸ University of Toronto Students’ Union. (2016). *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students* (Rep.). Retrieved from *The Varsity*, https://thevarsity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CFSReportDraft.docx_.pdf.



national level.⁴⁶⁹ Lobby weeks often take place in advance of federal and provincial budgets, and both the national and provincial components of the Federation make regular budget submissions.⁴⁷⁰ CFS-Ontario also regularly meets with officials from the Ministry of Colleges & Universities to provide recommendations on policies.⁴⁷¹ In recent years, the UTSU has not participated in lobbying efforts by the CFS or the CFS-Ontario, instead lobbying either on its own or alongside other student unions in more coalition-based contexts such as the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities.

Advocacy at the UTSU

A Brief History of the UTSU's Advocacy

For the purposes of this report, it is important to highlight the UTSU's own advocacy apparatus, particularly as it relates to the CFS. Upon joining the CFS, SAC, and later the UTSU, began to adopt many of the national organization's campaigns to complement its own; Internet Archives of the UTSU's website from August 2011 show CFS-sponsored campaigns such as the Drop Fees campaign, alongside UTSU-developed campaigns such as the Student Space campaign which had led to the successful Student Commons referendum in 2007.⁴⁷² Even prior to CFS membership, however, SAC had a history of bold activism on campus, undertaken alongside lobbying efforts. Two notable examples of this activism took place in 1972 alongside other student groups: advocacy to allow women to access Hart House, and an occupation of Simcoe Hall that led to undergraduate students being granted access to the stacks of John P. Robarts Research Library.⁴⁷³

The years following the victory of the opposition slate Brighter UofT in the UTSU's Spring 2015 Elections saw a significant shift in the UTSU's advocacy apparatus. Many of the UTSU's pre-2015 campaigns were built using campaign infrastructure provided by the CFS, however post-2015 saw a sharp decline in the use of CFS

⁴⁶⁹ Canadian Federation of Students. (2021, February 26). Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE.; Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (n.d.). Lobbying. Retrieved March 20, 2021, from <https://cfsontario.ca/lobbying/>.

⁴⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁴⁷¹ Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. (n.d.). Lobbying. Retrieved March 20, 2021, from <https://cfsontario.ca/lobbying/>.

⁴⁷² University of Toronto Students' Union. (2011). "Drop Fees." Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20110828190100/http://utsu.ca/section/1136>; University of Toronto Students' Union. (2011). "Student Space." Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20110828190705/http://utsu.ca/section/14>.

⁴⁷³ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2020). "About the UTSU." Retrieved on March 19, 2021 from <https://www.utsu.ca/about-the-utsu/>; University of Toronto Students' Union. (2011). "Brief History of the Students' Union." Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20110828185117/http://utsu.ca/section/89>.



campaigns and campaign materials in favour of campaigns and materials developed by the UTSU directly, such as the NO To The Laptop Ban campaign and the Equity 101 campaign.⁴⁷⁴ More recent campaigns have become less numerous and less visible, with the notable exception of the ChooseUofT campaign in 2019 that saw the UTSU work with divisional student societies, clubs, and service groups to convince students to remain opted-into fees made optional under the Student Choice Initiative.⁴⁷⁵

Evolution of the Advocacy Apparatus

For decades, SAC and the UTSU's structure featured commissions, which served as an opportunity for students to get directly involved with projects and advocacy of the student union. In 2016-2017, it was noted that UTSU executives were often the ones proposing projects to commissions, and the Board of Directors added a Campaigns Committee and an Outreach Committee to its standing committees to offer executives and directors a venue to receive UTSU resources for projects, freeing up the commissions to support student initiatives. Unfortunately, by 2018-2019, commissions were no longer functioning due to a lack of student involvement, and were removed from the UTSU's structure in favour of Working Groups, in which students could apply to the Campaigns Committee for UTSU support and resources for projects.⁴⁷⁶

Over time, and as the UTSU matured, the responsibilities of the Outreach Committee shifted and declined. The committee's mandate of carrying out "outreach" was never clear, as outreach takes place across the UTSU rather than being siloed in one committee. This organizational reality led to the merging of the Campaigns and Outreach Committees in 2019-2020 into the Campaigns & Outreach Committee.

Working Groups, despite their intention to provide similar support as the structure of commissions, were never widely promoted, and never got off the ground. In the 2020-2021 year, the Working Groups Policy was repealed and replaced by the Campus Initiatives Policy, which sought to loosen the restrictions on applying for UTSU support. The policy has not yet seen a student or group of students apply for

⁴⁷⁴ University of Toronto Students' Union. (2018). "Campaigns." Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20180101040512/https://www.utsu.ca/campaigns/>.

⁴⁷⁵ ChooseUofT Campaign Team. (2019). ChooseUofT. Retrieved March 02, 2021, from <https://www.chooseuoft.ca/>; Bowman, J., Krause, K., O'Halloran, D., & Wilton, D. (2019, August 11). Op-ed: Why you should ChooseUofT this year. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2019/08/11/op-ed-why-you-should-choose-uoft-this-year/>.

⁴⁷⁶ University of Toronto Students' Union (2018). Minutes of the University of Toronto Students' Union's 2018 Annual General Meeting. Retrieved from <https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Minutes-of-the-2018-Annual-General-Meeting.pdf>.



UTSU support on a project this year, so the efficacy of the policy cannot yet be assessed.

After a years-long debate over the structure of the UTSU's Board of Directors, a new, *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*-compliant board structure was approved at the 2015 Special General Meeting (sometimes referred to as "AGM Part 2").⁴⁷⁷ This board structure included seven General Equity Directors that chaired respective sub-commissions—this structure was intended to provide marginalized groups on campus with formal representation on the Board of Directors.⁴⁷⁸ However, at the UTSU's 2017 Annual General Meeting, General Equity Directors and their sub-commissions were eliminated in favour of Equity Collectives, whose coordinators would sit on the Board of Directors, and while they did not have a vote, they were to be compensated for their labour.⁴⁷⁹ The motivation behind this change was to allow representation of identity groups to come from the groups themselves in a bottom-up fashion, rather than being imposed by the Board of Directors.⁴⁸⁰

While this is a noble change in the right direction, Equity Collectives in recent years have failed to materialize, and have largely fallen by the wayside without being organized by successive Vice-Presidents Equity. A motion was brought to the UTSU's 2019 Annual General Meeting to remove—later amended to review—the Equity Collectives system, arguing that they are inherently tokenistic and that the UTSU should instead be supporting the work of communities and groups already doing equity work on campus, rather than replicating equity work under its own imposed structure.⁴⁸¹ This motion was ultimately tabled to the Equity & Accessibility Committee, and during the 2020-2021 year, the Equity Collectives structure remains in UTSU policy, although hired Community Member seats have since been added to the Equity & Accessibility Committee to allow for better representation since the Equity Collectives have not been struck.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁷ Yun, T. (2015, November 18). UTSU board structure confirmed at Special General Meeting. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from

<https://thevarsity.ca/2015/11/18/utsu-board-structure-passes-with-overwhelming-support/>.

⁴⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ Bañares, I., & Tough, A. (2017, October 31). AGM 2017: VP Advocacy proposal fails, Equity Collectives introduced. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from

<https://thevarsity.ca/2017/10/31/agm-2017-vp-advocacy-proposal-fails-equity-collectives-introduced/>.

⁴⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ University of Toronto Students' Union (2019). Minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting. Retrieved from

<https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Minutes-of-the-2019-Annual-General-Meeting.pdf>.

⁴⁸² *ibid.*; University of Toronto Students' Union. (2020). Policies of the University of Toronto Students' Union - Current to 1 December 2020. Retrieved 20 March 2021 from



While the CFS' representative structure for equity-seeking groups, particularly at general meetings, has been criticized as tokenistic, it is important to note that the UTSU's structure has also faced similar criticisms. The UTSU must review the way that marginalized groups are provided institutional representation in the student union and, more importantly, how they are provided support and resources by the student union.

The last notable and recent change to the UTSU's advocacy apparatus is in its executive structure. For over a decade, the UTSU Executive Committee included a Vice-President External Affairs, responsible for lobbying government and liaising with external organizations such as the CFS, and a Vice-President University Affairs, responsible for lobbying the university administration and supporting student advocacy on campus. In 2017, a proposal was brought to the UTSU Annual General Meeting to merge these two positions into a Vice-President Advocacy position, largely as a cost-saving measure, however the proposal ultimately failed.⁴⁸³ A similar proposal for a Vice-President Public & University Affairs position was brought to the UTSU's 2020 Special General Meeting and was adopted, primarily motivated by a desire to eliminate redundancy between the VP External Affairs and VP University Affairs positions and have a full-time position on the UTSU dedicated to advocacy.⁴⁸⁴

The UTSU's Advocacy Today

Since shifting away from CFS-sponsored campaigns and undergoing significant structural and cultural changes as an organization in the last six years, the UTSU still has work to do to build its advocacy apparatus and its capacity to lobby and affect change to what it once was. However, recent trends suggest that the UTSU is heading in that direction in the coming years.

Today, the UTSU advocates through statements, letters, government submissions and deputations, research reports, campaigns, and more. The 2020-2021 academic year—in which the COVID-19 pandemic forced classes to move online and greatly disrupted life at the University of Toronto and around the world—saw much of this advocacy in action. The UTSU showed it had the capacity to send letters to

<https://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/UTSU-Policy-Manual--Current-to-1-December-2020.pdf>.

⁴⁸³ Bañares, I., & Tough, A. (2017, October 31). AGM 2017: VP Advocacy proposal fails, Equity Collectives introduced. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2017/10/31/agm-2017-vp-advocacy-proposal-fails-equity-collectives-introduced/>.

⁴⁸⁴ Carty, H. (2020, February 23). UTSU Special General Meeting: External and university affairs executive positions merged. *The Varsity*. Retrieved from <https://thevarsity.ca/2020/02/23/utsu-special-general-meeting-external-and-university-affairs-executive-positions-merged/>.



government officials on a variety of issues, and put out multiple statements calling for better financial support, lowered tuition for online classes, and greater accommodations for students. It conducted surveys and research, and released reports on online learning & remote classes, third-party proctoring services, residence accommodations for students in professional faculties, and equity and anti-oppression oriented courses at U of T; the UTSU is also currently working on research reports on campus police, the University of Toronto's *University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy*, and this very report on the Canadian Federation of Students.

Many of these reports come with formal recommendations that are used when lobbying administrators and officials; the UTSU has prioritized pragmatic policy proposals that reflect U of T students' needs and work towards an accessible and affordable education, backed by thorough and accurate research. The UTSU has also begun to rebuild its campaign apparatus, having joined, launched, or relaunched the Same Degree, Same Fee campaign, the Stop Unsafe Evictions campaign, the Equity 101 campaign, the U4Consent campaign, the Debt-Free Degree campaign, and the Advancing Equity in Education campaign. The UTSU also submitted both a federal budget submission and a provincial budget submission for 2021, along with recommendations to the Government of Ontario for the next iteration of the Tuition Fee Framework & Ancillary Fee Guidelines.

Two advocacy-related issues still need to be addressed in future iterations of the UTSU: the efficacy of the UTSU's advocacy, and its capacity to undertake advocacy work. The CFS believes that "no individual students' union, no matter how big or active, has the resources or the political clout on their own to effectively influence the post-secondary education policies of the provincial and federal governments."⁴⁸⁵ This might be true, however being a big and active student union certainly helps; with 38,000 members at the University of Toronto, the UTSU is one of the largest student unions in the country, which has allowed it to meet with federal, provincial, and municipal officials in its own capacity. That being said, working alongside other student organizations can and does greatly help with effective advocacy efforts through pooling resources and increasing pressure.

An example of this collective work in action can be seen in the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU), the federal lobbying organization for student unions at U15 institutions that the UTSU has worked closely with in recent years. From our own analysis, the structure of UCRU allows for the UTSU to have a more direct involvement in setting advocacy priorities than the CFS, which—in

⁴⁸⁵ Canadian Federation of Students. (2020). About. Retrieved March 20, 2021, from <https://cfs-fcee.ca/about/>.



seeking to enable itself to more accurately effectively advocate for and respond to the needs of its own members—may be why the UTSU has a much closer working relationship with UCRU and its member student associations. In November 2020, the UTSU joined other UCRU member student unions to lobby federal Members of Parliament on a host of issues, including undergraduate research and the creation of a new post-graduate work permit pathway in light of COVID-19.⁴⁸⁶ In January 2021, the Government of Canada announced an expansion of the Undergraduate Student Research Awards and a new program for post-graduate work permits for eligible international students.⁴⁸⁷ These announcements aligned with UCRU's lobby recommendations, and while a direct correlation cannot be determined, this suggests that the collective voice of the UCRU member schools was heard by the federal government. In order for the UTSU's advocacy to be effective, it must continue to build its capacity to advocate alongside organizations striving for similar goals. In its submission to the committee, the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union wrote that:

The UTSU's deliberate absence in spaces has negatively impacted all its sister unions' abilities to coordinate tri-campus actions, mobilize members, and see victories that benefit all UofT students. The UTMSU knows this is fundamentally rooted in the recent UTSU's desire to separate itself from the CFS.⁴⁸⁸

While the committee does not believe that the UTSU's relationship with the CFS precludes it from working with its sister student unions at U of T, we must note that the UTSU hasn't frequently worked with its sister student unions on tri-campus collaborations in recent years, and that this may stem from differences of opinion between the UTSU and its sister student unions regarding the CFS. If the UTSU and its membership desire to decertify from the CFS, that decision lies with the UTSU and its membership alone. However, if the UTSU is seeking to strengthen its advocacy apparatus to be more effective, particularly in the context of university advocacy, this includes a need to strengthen its working relationships with its sister student unions. The UTSU can choose to develop advocacy initiatives independently

⁴⁸⁶ Riches, T. (2020, November). *Report of the Vice-President, Public & University Affairs* (Rep.). Retrieved

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HV5042gsZxjiK58u4ntZ8JhPR5UwrN9p/view?usp=sharing>.

⁴⁸⁷ Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities. (2021, January 12). Research and International Student Advocacy Wins. Retrieved March 20, 2021, from <https://www.ucru.info/post/research-and-international-student-advocacy-wins>.

⁴⁸⁸ University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union. (2021, February 28). Written Submission to the UTSU ad hoc CFS Committee.



of the CFS and work with its sister student unions, and other organizations—these things are not mutually exclusive.

The second issue that must be addressed by the UTSU if it wishes to strengthen its advocacy apparatus is increasing its capacity to undertake advocacy work. Currently, much of the advocacy work done by the UTSU is undertaken by the Executive Committee and its team of Executive Assistants. The UTSU's full-time staff complement supports the union's operations, communications, events, programs and services, however there is not currently any full-time staff positions dedicated to supporting advocacy work. Hiring a full-time campaigns and research coordinator, for example, would help take off some of the burden from the Executive Committee and Executive Assistants, and greatly increase the UTSU's capacity for advocacy work, in order to carry on the tradition of a bold UTSU and effective advocacy.

Conclusion

For the conclusion of this report, we have laid out our conclusions for the governance, services, and advocacy of the Canadian Federation of Students, and close with our final concluding thoughts for the Board of Directors.

Regarding the governance of the Canadian Federation of Students, there is much to criticize, however attempts at reform have been largely unsuccessful. The Federation has an institutional “top-down” culture; the Federation insists that individual students are the final decision-makers through their involvement with their local student unions, in practice the structure and culture of the CFS prevents grassroots decision-making and reform. The Federation views its members locals not as autonomous associations of students, but as extensions of a national organization, which weakens the individual power that student unions—and by extension, students—have on the governance of the Federation. The “one local, one vote” rule at general meetings is admirable in its goal, but creates barriers for larger student unions, such as the UTSU, to effectively represent their members. Some sort of bicameral structure could be pursued wherein one local one vote is true for the national and provincial executive committees, while general meetings see proportional representation according to student union memberships. This too would require extensive reform; beyond what we believe the CFS is capable of.

We draw particular attention to the certification and decertification processes of the Canadian Federation of Students. The aforementioned assertion that the Federation views its member locals as extensions of itself is particularly evident in the needlessly burdensome process for leaving the Federation. The Federation’s bylaws, and not the local student union’s bylaws, governs the referendum process that would see a student union join or leave the Federation. It’s been argued that the same referendum rules should apply across the country, but this overriding of local processes undermines the principle of local democracy and students’ right to self-determination for their student unions. It also raises legal and political questions that individual students and student unions don’t easily have the power to address, such as “whose bylaws are followed?” and, perhaps more importantly, “whose bylaws should be followed?” The referendum that led to the Students’ Administrative Council joining the CFS as Local 98 in 2002 violated the student union’s bylaws, which jeopardized the recognition and collection of the CFS membership fee by the University of Toronto for years after the vote. When local democracy and institutional fee-setting policies are taken into consideration, it is plainly clear that the CFS should defer to member locals’ bylaws and referendum procedures. The existing CFS rules surrounding decertification make engaging with the question of membership



incredibly difficult for students, and attempts to reform this process have been largely unsuccessful.

Regarding services, many of the services offered by the Canadian Federation of Students can be replicated by the UTSU at a smaller cost, and actively are. To date, the only service of the CFS that the UTSU engages with is the International Student Identity Card (ISIC). The utility of this service is debatable, but students at non-CFS student unions can still purchase an ISIC at a cost of \$20. In pursuing its mandate of service provision, the UTSU should actively seek the best value for our members. At present, this means using non-CFS services.

Regarding advocacy, the Canadian Federation of Students undertakes many good advocacy campaigns and initiatives, particularly when it provides resources and supports to more localized advocacy efforts. Its larger campaigns have been criticized for being very top-down, with “out-of-the-box” campaigns being adopted by member locals across the country. The UTSU has not participated in these campaigns, in large part by direction from our membership to pursue crafting our own, local campaigns that address the specific needs of U of T students. With post-secondary education largely falling within provincial jurisdiction, the CFS would benefit from pursuing a more decentralized advocacy and lobbying strategy in order to address the needs of its members across the country. It is true that student unions working together can advocate more effectively, but the UTSU has already shown that this is possible outside of the CFS. The UTSU is actively building up capacity to undertake bigger advocacy efforts independently of national and provincial organizations, and the UTSU does not currently participate in most advocacy work of the CFS. In our view, whether we are or are not members of the Federation does not affect our ability to work in solidarity with student unions across the country; however it does affect our ability to effectively represent our own students.

Given these conclusions, it is our opinion that the UTSU does not benefit from membership in the CFS enough to justify the fees that our members pay to the organization. Taking into consideration this conclusion, as well as the largely unsuccessful efforts of UTSU officials in recent years to push for reform within the Federation, it is our recommendation to the Board of Directors that the UTSU continue to endorse decertification from the Canadian Federation of Students. Under the CFS bylaws, this process must begin with our membership, however the UTSU should seek to support members undertaking this process. Additionally, the UTSU should investigate the feasibility of alternative avenues of withdrawal from the Federation.



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Appendices

Appendices continue on the following pages.

Appendix A: SLS Letter to UTSU re CFS (2021-02-16)

Written submission from the Students' Law Society at the University of Toronto (see *attached*)

Appendix B: National Response to UTSU

Written submission from the Canadian Federation of Students (*see attached*)

Appendix C: Written Submission to the UTSU ad hoc CFS Committee

Written submission from the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (see *attached*)

APPENDIX A



STUDENTS' LAW SOCIETY

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Jackman P322, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto
78 Queen's Park, Toronto ON M5S 2C5

studentslawsociety.com
studentslawsociety@gmail.com

Tuesday, February 16, 2021

Dear Tyler,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to make written submissions to the UTSU *ad hoc* Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) Committee for consideration.

Despite the fact that our students pay the CFS fee, our main connection to the CFS is through the UTSU. We believe that the Students' Law Society (SLS) and students at the Faculty of Law garner little to no direct benefit from the UTSU's relationship with the CFS.

After reviewing the 2015 *Draft Report of the Ad hoc Committee on the Canadian Federation of Students*, we note that it does not recommend or endorse either secession or continued membership. Based on this information and our own understanding of the CFS, we believe it is worthwhile to explore the feasibility of seceding. Over the past five years, the work of the CFS has been informally evaluated by UTSU executives, who have repeatedly reaffirmed their belief that the CFS is beyond reform. We similarly share concerns about the CFS' litigious history and, specifically, its tendency to sue its own members. However, we also think it is important to consider the CFS' advocacy work post-2015 in relation to both equity issues and the Student Choice Initiative. In weighing these considerations, we suggest further investigating what liability the UTSU may face if it, or some combination of its members, pursues secession.

Our recommendation to the UTSU *ad hoc* CFS Committee would therefore be to consult with the UTSU's lawyer about potential avenues for secession, specifically including the options of holding a referendum (as per the UTSU's bylaws) and/or withholding funds from the CFS. We also recommend considering the ramifications of such actions, including possible effects on the UTSU's arrangements with other relevant parties.

We would be happy to discuss this recommendation further, and wish you the best of luck with your report.

With thanks,

Robert Nanni (on behalf of the Student Affairs and Governance Committee)
President
Students' Law Society

APPENDIX B



Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE
February 26, 2021

SECTION 1.0: INTRODUCTION

SECTION 2.0: STRUCTURE

SECTION 3.0: ADVOCACY

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SECTION 4.0: SERVICES

4.1. National Student Health Network

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SECTION 5.0: CONCLUSION



Written Submission to the L98 UTSU ad hoc Committee on the CFS-FCEE February 26, 2021

Dear members of the committee,

Thank you for your time as you read our detailed, critical review of the University of Toronto Student's Union's (UTSU) relationship with the Canadian Federation of Students (the Federation). The information presented in the document is factual, true and in accordance with the bylaws of the Federation. However, we have also chosen to, where appropriate, highlight the specific elements of the working relationship between both organizations that have created barriers for our collective goal to prioritize students.

In November 2002, UTSU became Local 98 with the Canadian Federation of Students. Since then, the UTSU has been an active participant of the Federation, but in recent years there remains much room for improvement to ensure members are best able to access Federation resources and support. That being said, we respect and appreciate the UTSU elected officials' commitment to represent their members at our National General Meetings; minutes from which can be found [here](#).

Institutional knowledge is an integral part of the work that we do as organizations, and plays an important role in how we can move forward to improve the ways in which we represent and advocate for our collective membership. The relationship between the CFS and the UTSU is one that can be mutually improved to create a stronger support for students.

We hope that by engaging us in this process, there is a shared openness and willingness to work together in rebuilding trust for our membership in a shared commitment to advocating for accessible, equitable, and high-quality post-secondary education.

In Solidarity,

The Canadian Federation of Students

Azinwi Kien, Chairperson
Nicole Brayannis, Deputy Chairperson
Alannah Mckay, Treasurer



SECTION 1.0: INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Federation of Students and the Canadian Federation of Students Services is Canada's largest and oldest student organization, uniting over 530,000 college, undergraduate and graduate students from coast to coast. The Federation has advocated for the interests of post-secondary students in Canada since 1981, with 2021 making it 40 years! The Federation's ultimate goal is to achieve a universal system of high-quality, public, tuition-free post-secondary education in Canada for domestic and international students. This system would include adult education, apprenticeships for skilled trades and diploma or degree programs in colleges and universities. Additionally, it is important to note and be clear that every single student has a voice in the matters of the Federation and it is solely at the discretion of the students' union executives on who they decide to bring to the Federation National General Meetings and other Federation spaces.

SECTION 2.0: STRUCTURE

Similar to the three levels of government, the Federation works locally, provincially, and federally to better serve students. The diagram below shows the governing structure of the Federation with our members being the highest decision-making body. More context into the 2020-2021 structure of the Federation can be found [here](#).



Diagram 1: Structure of the Canadian Federation of Students and Canadian Federation of Students Services, National.

Structure Explained	
Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual students hold membership with the Federation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes every single student of a Member Local Drive the work of the Federation Have power to set the directives of the Federation Power to participate at National General Meetings, engage with respective Caucus & Constituency groups, participate in Lobbying Week, and run in elections for elected positions
<u>Member Locals</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g., Local 98, University of Toronto Students' Union 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member locals are responsible for taking direction of their members and amplifying it in Federation spaces Typically, Executives and Board of Directors of students' unions tend to assume responsibility for engaging with the Federation in decision-making and resource-sourcing spaces, however, every student at the respective institution is eligible to participate as a delegate across Federation spaces It is the member local's responsibility to ensure they are sending delegates that best represent the collective student interest at their respective institutions
<u>National General Meeting (NGM)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The highest decision-making body of the Federation Made up of student delegates and union executives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In this space, voting processes on motions operate as one local, one vote. This ensures that students across the country have the same opportunity to engage with the decision-making processes of the Federation, despite the size of their respective institutions Delegates are able to vote as independents within the majority of Caucus & Constituency spaces that they are attending as a member of that shared identity Elections for At-Large and National Executive positions take place at Plenary (central voting spaces) and in Caucus & Constituency spaces Member locals and the National Executive are eligible to submit motions for consideration in this space The NGM is comparable to a member local's Annual General Meeting

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Federation fully subsidizes the cost of one delegate from each Member Local to ensure there is equitable opportunity for participation, and each additional participant is partially subsidized by the Federation
<p><u>National Executive Meeting</u></p> <p>Caucuses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Students' Caucus Circle of Métis, Inuit and First Nations Students College and Institutes Caucus National Graduate Caucus <p>Constituencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Students Francophone Students Mature & Part-time Students** 2 spirit & Queer Students** 2 spirit & Trans Students Racialized Students Disability Justice <p>Provincial Representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ontario National Representative Manitoba Chairperson Nova Scotia Chairperson Newfoundland & Labrador Chairperson Saskatchewan Representative British Columbia Representative New Brunswick Representative Prince Edward Island Representative <p>**As per Federation Bylaws, these positions are members of the Constituency Group Commission and not the National Executive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Federation is made up internally by caucuses (i.e., a grouping of member locals or individual delegates with common characteristic as defined in our Bylaws/Standing Resolutions) And constituency groups (i.e., individual delegates who share a common characteristic, as recognized by the Federation in our Bylaws/Standing Resolutions) Out of the 11 elected caucus and constituency representatives, 9 make up the National Executive Committee which serves as the Board of Directors of the Federation in addition to our provincial representatives Similar to the UTSU and other progressive thinking organizations, we continue to strive to move away from institutions grounded in white supremacy and colonialism The makeup of the Federation's National Executive (BOD) is to strive to ensure an equitable representation of students and their needs through these elected representatives
<p>At-Large Executives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairperson Deputy Chairperson Treasurer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as the officers of the organization Elected during a National General Meeting Act as the face of the organization in representing students across the country

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to execute the directives set out by the membership at National General Meetings and the National Executive (BOD)
Staff National Office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Director • Director of Services • Communications Coordinator • Campaigns Coordinator • Government Relations & Researcher Coordinator • Membership Coordinator Provincial Offices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maritimes Organizer • Manitoba Organizer • Newfoundland & Labrador Organizer Note: The Ontario Office oversees their own staffing component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to support the At-Large and National Executive in executing directives from the membership • Can be available to support on-campus initiatives upon request from a member local • Assist with member local training requests, such as delivering Anti-Racism Workshops or other campaign focused initiatives.

This breakdown highlights to the committee the different levels of accountability of the Federation, not only for the elected representatives, but also for the membership. As an organization, we operate under the mandate of the membership. The UTSU executives are privy to the knowledge and procedures of changing any Federation Bylaws or Operations policies; as they have demonstrated in their motions submitted to previous National General Meetings. The membership has sole autonomy and power to alter the structure of the Federation and all governing documents.

Furthermore, to acknowledge that *“the CFS system also guarantees the representation of marginalized individuals, through the constituency groups”* and to go on to say *“for that, the CFS should be praised, although the institutional representation of marginalized individuals is no longer unique”* (UTSU Report of the Adhoc Committee on the CFS) is undercutting the decades of advocacy and the ongoing struggles and fight for representation by these same marginalized groups that we all claim to represent and strive to prioritize. We will always prioritize the inclusion and representation of marginalized students in our spaces.

We also wanted to clarify the use of *Roberts’ Rules of Order*. As stated in Bylaw II.5.a., *Roberts’ Rules of Order* is used in General Meeting Spaces. That being said, the Federation gives autonomy to Caucus and Constituency spaces to choose meeting conduct that works best



within their respective spaces. For instance, The Circle of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students chooses to forgo *Roberts' Rules of Order* in favour of a more community-led and conversational approach. *Roberts' Rules of Order* is never used in Federation spaces to silence or impose on communities, but as a process to ensure equitable opportunity for participation in large settings.

It is the freewill of any member of the Federation to express their viewpoint on any motion brought forth. In all the general meetings of the Federation, we prioritize the safety of member participation by ensuring an anti-harassment advisor and Elder are present and/or accessible at all times to assist with de-escalating situations and offer compassionate support.

As per the committee's expressed concerns on the referendum process, the stipulations for referendum can be found in Bylaw I. The Federation's [Bylaws, Standing Resolutions, Policies, Budgets, and Audits](#) are directives that have been voted upon and engaged with by members throughout our 40 year history. To reiterate the above structure, members are the sole decision-making body of our bylaws and are empowered to amend them as they collectively see fit.

SECTION 3.0: ADVOCACY

The journey to a free and accessible post- secondary education is one that is important and still ongoing and will always be the ultimate goal of the Federation. However, it is important to note that in the past 40 years, students – through the Federation – have seen significant [wins to education](#).

3.1. Campaigns

To advocate for a universally-available, equitable, and accessible education for all students, is to recognize the differences that students hold as well as the numerous barriers in place that make accessing post-secondary education for a lot of students extremely difficult. The campaigns of the Federation are in turn not approached from a “single-issue perspective” but rather in an intersectional way to reflect the lived experiences of our membership and how that plays a role into how they access education.

What is important for the committee to note, is the majority of the campaigns of the Federation are put forth by the members. In consultation with affected groups, the national office is then tasked with producing campaign materials and associated resources. All of our campaign resources are freely accessible to our members and it is at the discretion of member locals which campaigns they want to interact with, and incorporate, on their campuses. Typically, members look to their students' union executives to bring these campaigns to their respective



locals, however since membership resides with individual students, any member of the Federation is able to request and access campaign materials, at no cost, as a benefit of membership.

The Federation recognizes that advocacy work is ever-changing and needs to be adaptive to keep up with the needs of our membership. We constantly strive to follow the directives of our membership and ensure that the work we are doing aligns with the work at their local level and in their communities. That being said, due to a mass dissemination of material, occasionally outdated material is utilized on campuses. An example of this is the *No Means No* campaign, which is one of the oldest standing campaigns of the Federation, and referenced in the report by this committee. The context, wording and the technicalities of terms, language and their meanings change over time. In reflection of this, the Federation has updated the campaign to reflect the realities of students on campuses and provided new materials (offered in both French and English) as well as toolkits to member locals to update education and actions on campus to reflect these changes. Since 2015, the Federation has utilized materials from our current adaptation of this campaign, *Consent is Mandatory*.

For insight into all of our current campaigns, please reference our [2020 Campaigns Guide](#) that was shared with members during our recent November 2020 National General Meeting and sent alongside this report to the committee. Below are two recent campaigns that we have given special focus to in recent months and invite the UTSU to engage with, like other fellow member locals, in introducing these initiatives to their campuses.

3.1.1. Education For All

The crisis in post-secondary education in Canada has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While Canada ranks among the top countries in the world for its proportion of citizens with post-secondary education, this 'access' has come at a tremendous and increasing cost. Students and their supporters have been mobilizing for years in response to increasing tuition fees, skyrocketing student debt, and government funding cuts. Since 2001, tuition fees have more than tripled as public funding for post-secondary has dropped below 50%. As of 2016, the total public student debt in Canada reached \$36 billion. In 2017, total interest paid by a borrower to the Canada Student Loans Program in financing \$30,000 of student debt over 10 years was over \$10,000. Thanks to student action and the Federation's *Not In Our Interest* campaign, the 2019 Budget introduced a reduction in student loan interest rate that would save the average student approximately \$2,000 over the length of the loan. But this action on the part of the federal government simply isn't enough. The cost of public underfunding is disproportionately borne by international students who pay over three times more in tuition fees than their domestic counterparts for the same education.

Therefore, on January 21, 2021 the Federation formally launched our *Education For All* Campaign alongside coalition partners i.e the Canadian Alliance of University Teachers



(CAUT), the Canadian Unionized Public Employees (CUPE), the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), and the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE). This campaign is the largest of its kind in Canadian history and unites students, workers, and teachers in fighting for a high-quality, universally-accessible, and fully publicly-funded post-secondary education system for all!

As part of this initiative, the coalition also released a [report](#) on post-secondary education in Canada that emphasizes working towards a National Strategy. The Federation is in the process of developing customizable resources that member locals can tailor to best suit the needs of their members. In the meantime, members can engage through signing the Education For All petition on the front page of the coalition website: www.educationforall.ca.

In lead-up to the launch of *Education for All*, on October 20th the National At-Large Executives joined Provincial Executives in offering a [National Strategizing Workshop](#). Members in attendance engaged with highlighting barriers to accessing education in their provinces, and brainstormed engagement strategies to better support members amidst the pandemic. We are hopeful that representatives from UTSU will engage in National conversations in the future.

3.1.2. Anti-Racism Campaign

Widespread racism across North American campuses and communities has been a persistent issue. From racial profiling, the use of slurs in classroom environments, and other acts of racial violence, campuses have proven unsafe for racialized students. Post-secondary institutions were not designed with BIPOC learners in mind, thus, policies and practices in universities continue to harm Black, Indigenous, and racialized students. After a summer of racial uprising, we have seen campuses across Canada make institutional commitments to taking targeted actions against racism in all forms due to the resilience of students. The anti-racism campaign, including the anti-racism toolkit and accompanying workshops, is a timely and relevant resource as student leaders look to hold their administrations accountable.

As part of this campaign, three workshops have been developed to compliment the Anti-Racism Toolkit that focus on (a) Race Based Data, (b) Organizing Training for BIPOC Leaders, and (c) BIPOC Executive Leadership Training. As an additional support from the Federation, At-Large Executives and Staff of the National Office have been giving these presentations upon request to member local Executive/Board teams and student clubs. The Federation would welcome the opportunity to share these resources and support with UTSU members in combating racism and supporting BIPOC leaders on your campus.

Most recently, on February 4, 2021 the Federation hosted its first National Black History Month Event, the [Black Student Experience](#). As 2020 represented a policy shift in post-secondary education with regards to racism and anti-racism, the events of the day allowed for multiple

important dialogues to be had; both from voices engaged inside and outside of the student movement. The event accomplished:

1. Conversations around access to education (*Education for All*) to be seen through the lens of racial justice; and
2. Amplification of voices that have come out of the student movement and have continued to center the pursuit of justice in their work; and
3. Providing space for Black students to find community, healing, and learn about how to take action on their respective campuses.

3.2. Government Relations

Recently, we have seen the detrimental effects of COVID-19 on students and most importantly the need for student advocacy. Our National Lobby Weeks were created to prioritize students' needs within the decision-making processes of the federal government. This space allows student delegates to represent their member locals in the fight for a better future for the post-secondary education sector and the student experience.

3.2.1. Lobby Week & Pre-Budget Proposal

This year, as we lobbied for a “Just Recovery For Students” we continue to recognize the shortfalls of Canada’s structures in centralizing post-secondary education within the purview of the provincial/territorial government. Canada remains one of the only G7 countries without a federal Ministry or Minister dedicated to education at the post-secondary level. Therefore, we recognize the need to push the boundaries of our current jurisdictional structure and fight for a cross-jurisdictional and cross-partisan approach to not only support students amidst the pandemic, but to work towards creating a more stable foundation for the post-secondary sector moving forward.

From February 15th to February 19th, 2021, we were excited to lobby alongside over 50 of our student members to more than 65 Ministers, Members of Parliament, and Senators. The following is an outline of our five recommendations, the full asks can be found in our [2021 Lobby Document](#):

1. Following Through on Commitments to Students & Grads
2. Understanding the Impacts of COVID-19 on Current and Future Students
3. Innovating PSE Through a Student-Centred Approach
4. Developing a National Vision for Canada’s Post-Secondary Education System
5. Relieving the Burden of Student Debt

We are very much appreciative to Honourable Senator Marilou McPhedran for fulfilling Recommendation 3 in tasking the Parliamentary Budget Officer’s Office with costing out the recommendations made by the Federation and how we can move towards more sustainable



investments long-term. The Federation shared a request template with the Senator's office on February 23rd, 2021 and will be submitted soon on our behalf. The following is some of the additional feedback we received during these meetings:

- Honourable MP Jagmeet Singh committed to advocating in the House of Commons to reintroduce moratoriums; he spoke directly to this issue on Tuesday, February 23rd, 2021.
- Honourable MP James Cummings, Shadow Minister for COVID-19 Economic Recovery, was very interested in all of our recommendations and wants to meet further to discuss support measures for students
- Honourable Minister Carolynn Bennett, for Crown-Indigenous Relations, called all of our recommendations "quite practical" and wants to further engage with members of her caucus on these initiatives
- General cross-partisan support particularly from the Conservative, NDP, and Green Party Representatives in reintroducing a moratorium on federal student loans and intersectionality-targeted data collection

Further to this, on February 19th, the Federation submitted a pre-budget submission that echoes the recommendations made during Lobby Week in working towards an equitable, accessible, and sustainable post-secondary education system.

Moving forward, the Federation is hopeful that Local 98, the UTSU and its members, will engage with these lobbying opportunities and initiatives in the future, in fighting for issues like improved mental health support, intersectionality-focused data collection to promote better supports for students from equity-seeking communities, and fighting for a more sustainable and equitable post-secondary education system at the federal level.

3.2.2. Parliamentary Petition

In response to the lack of adequate support resources amidst the pandemic, the Federation partnered with our solidarity partner Don't Forget Students, a grass-roots student organization advocating for student relief amidst the pandemic. In addition to a change.org petition that has received nearly 50,000 signatures, we also partnered to introduce a [parliamentary petition](#), sponsored by Honourable MP Laurel Collins. The petition received more than 9,500 signatures and was read on the floor on February 2, 2021.

SECTION 4.0: SERVICES



The Federation has a dual mandate to advocate on behalf of students and provide them with cost-saving services. These services offer member locals and individual members access to quality programs that promote ethically-sourced materials, an added value of membership, and cost savings. By using our services, students can immediately offset the high cost of education through savings on a day-to-day basis. The goals of the services are to bring additional revenue to the Federation to support campaigns and equity mandates and to bring added value to member locals and members through cost savings.

All services are coordinated through the Canadian Federation of Students-Services (CFS-Services), a separately incorporated entity of the Federation. The funding for CFS-Services comes from a portion of the Federation's membership fee and from revenues of the various programs. The membership directly benefits from several services such as the National Student Health Network, Ethical Purchasing Network, the Handbook and Day Planner Program, the International Student Identity Card, Digital Services, and UFile. All of these services have been democratically decided upon at the National General Meetings, the largest decision-making body of the Federation.

To remain as transparent as possible and as directed by members at a National General Meeting, any revenues of each service are recorded with the associated expenses of that service. This can be found on the [combined budget](#) of the Canadian Federation of Students and Canadian Federation of Students-Services. This ensures it is very clear to members how much revenue is received for each service and all associated expenses. The budget is thoroughly presented and diligently reviewed by members at National General Meetings and is posted on the Federation's [website](#), available any time. To further promote transparency, both the Canadian Federation of Students and Canadian Federation of Students-Services are independently audited separately each year. This allows members to specifically see financial statements for each organization. Similar to the combined budget, the audited statements of each corporation are reviewed annually and discussed at a National General Meeting and are available on the Federation's [website](#).

4.1. National Student Health Network

The National Student Health Network is a consortium for health and dental insurance that uses the combined purchasing power of Federation members to secure lower rates and superior coverage. Working with Canada's only national non-profit insurance provider, Green Shield Canada (GSC), means that we can provide students with the best value and health outcomes and work collectively to move the industry in a positive direction. The Network also emphasizes annual rather than predatory multi-year contracts, giving student unions flexibility and no long term commitments, with more inclusive and holistic coverage options. This service supports students' unions to utilize the direct model of health and dental insurance from Canada's only national not-for-profit insurance provider. GSC has been supporting individuals since 1957,



providing affordable health and dental care and is the only insurance carrier in Canada that works directly with students' unions. GSC is not a cooperative or alliance, but rather a non-profit social enterprise that is dedicated to bringing affordable health and dental insurance to members at the lowest possible cost. GSC's focus is purely health and dental, opposed to many other carriers in Canada focusing on financial, automotive, and life insurance operations prioritizing shareholder profits. With hundreds of unionized staff, GSC provides the complete solution for student health and dental benefits, from claims submission, adjudication, customer service, provider relations, and reimbursement. Unlike other insurance carriers, no technical or service delivery is outsourced.

The direct model eliminates the need of often for-profit, publicly traded brokers, advisors, and third-party administrators; removing high commission fees and hidden charges from the collaboration, allowing for more student premiums to go towards the benefits that they require. GSC is fully licensed to offer health and dental insurance in every province and territory and directly to students' unions. The NSHN is not a broker or advisor, but rather a support in this model to provide a variety of services to members.

A summary of the services offered by the NSHN are:

- Reviews health and dental plans with expert industry-leading consultants on behalf of student associations
- These consultants negotiate on behalf of the NSHN for reduced rates and factors that bring savings to all students in the Network
- Partners to bring exclusively negotiated travel and AD&D rates for the entire network
- Provides educational resources to students' associations so they can better comprehend their health and dental plans
- Supports health and dental administrators at students' associations to streamline processes so that every student is able to understand and use their plan
- Enhances the Student Dental Discount Network (SDDN) in partnership with GSC, providing a guaranteed 30% off dental services
- Assists students' associations with semester opt-out and opt-in processes, including refund delivery
- Develops and assists with the creation and distribution of customized plan materials for students' associations and their members
- Partners to bring individual supplementary health and dental benefit plans to student groups without a group plan for graduating students and students pausing their studies
- Provides a comprehensive legal assistance plan add-on to support students during debilitating times involving legal matters
- Aggressively advocates on behalf of students at provincial and federal governments to create more equitable, fair and integrated health care for all



The NSHN and GSC exclusively offer one-year contracts for more flexibility and student union control, negating long-term agreements that other companies typically enforce. Each students' union has a completely customized plan, specific to the needs of their members. Additionally, the NSHN ensures each students' union health and dental plan is independently reviewed each year by impartial and unbiased consultants, where premium rates and calculations are diligently reviewed and negotiated. This is an unheard-of practice in the industry that ensures transparency. All member locals of the Federation are encouraged to have their health and dental plan reviewed annually, and the NSHN offers this valuable service.

As students' unions bring their health and dental plan to a request for proposals (RFP), the NSHN and GSC prepare a joint proposal. The NSHN receives revenue through a nominal network fee of 2% or less depending on the total enrollment of the plan, which is used to fund all the services of the NSHN that it does exclusively on behalf of the members in the program. This network fee is substantially less than what any broker, advisor, or third party administrator normally charges. Ultimately, the NSHN is a service managed and controlled by students, for students, with the support of professional staff and independent experts that operates at the lowest possible cost.

The UTSU previously utilized services of the NSHN, when the Network was positioned with a large, national broker to offer services. While working with a broker may have advantages, the NSHN formed an innovative model with GSC that negates the need of these often predatory companies, but rather utilizes required broker services on a consultancy basis. Having experience in working with brokers and third parties, we found that it added complexity, delays, and unnecessary expense as well as lack of transparency to the detriment of students, the NSHN has found it simply does not work for students. The high cost and frequent hidden fees of many brokers ultimately pad the profits of these companies, many of which are now owned by a publicly traded company with further ownership by a US-based financial institution. The Federation welcomes and encourages the UTSU, as a member local, to engage with the NSHN service. While the UTSU is utilizing a broker and other insurance company, the students' union can still seek a complete independent review of the plan via the NSHN's independent consultants. This can provide a valuable financial review of premiums students are paying, commissions, and any other fees that may be charged.

4.2. Bulk Purchasing Programs:

Ethical Purchasing Network & Handbook and Dayplanner Program

The Federation's bulk-purchasing programs are the Ethical Purchasing Network and Handbook and Dayplanner Program. These services have benefits for all member locals, as both provide access to ethically produced products at a bulk-purchase price. Smaller member locals benefit as they do not have the same buying power as larger member locals. Larger member locals benefit as they are able to access high quality, ethically sourced products at a cheaper price, as



together with other students' unions, the combined purchase is much larger. Purchasing in this larger quantity ultimately lowers the cost. All member locals benefit from these programs as the Federation's professional staff seamlessly source the ethical products, coordinate the ordering, production process and delivery. This allows member locals to refocus their staff and efforts to advance their own mandates and work on campus. Member locals also gain the satisfaction of solidarity, knowing that their participation allows all students' unions to have equal access to these ethical products at the lowest cost possible. The Federation continuously seeks feedback from member locals on products and provides constant negotiation pressure on suppliers to secure the lowest cost of items that uphold our collective ethical values.

The Ethical Purchasing Network is designed to access products directly from the suppliers of those products. As a registered distributor of products, the Federation is able to purchase bulk orders directly from suppliers at distributor pricing. This means that member locals receive these items at a cost well below the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP). All products and their associated suppliers are diligently screened by Federation staff to ensure that they meet high ethical standards, particularly worker's rights, unionized workforce, and high environmental standards. The Ethical Purchase Network has disrupted the industry, as suppliers see the demand by students for ethically produced products.

The Handbook and Dayplanner service is similar to the Ethical Purchasing Network. Handbooks are sourced from a unionized printer facility that utilizes vegetable inks and recycled paper to produce the books. Member locals ordering may select the quantity of completely customized pages, that can be designed by the member local or by the Federation with member local provided content. The Federation designs and provides the calendar pages, with the option for member locals to additionally customize. Furthermore, the Federation provides a few additional pages of Federation specific content, to allow members to learn more about the student movement in Canada. These pages are provided at no additional cost to the students' union.

Unfortunately, the UTSU has not participated in or provided feedback on either bulk-purchasing programs since at least 2016. This means that the UTSU has not benefited from the low cost and quality ethically sourced products for members. Furthermore, the UTSU has not contributed to the bulk-buying power of these programs, which ultimately negatively impacts member locals across the country. The Federation encourages the UTSU to provide feedback on the bulk-purchasing programs and participate so that we can ensure UTSU members receive the benefits and cost-savings from a bulk order in solidarity with students' unions across the country.

4.3. International Student Identity Card

The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) is a service offered to all members of the



Federation, including domestic and international students. This service is a program that allows individual members to receive direct savings on every purchase, large purchases, and travel through exclusively negotiated discounts and verified student status. The Federation is the exclusive distributor of the ISIC in Canada and is a voting member of the not-for-profit ISIC Association. This membership driven Association, based in Denmark, is the administrator of ISIC globally. The ISIC is the only student card that is officially endorsed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which has been renewed since 1968. ISIC is a globally recognized brand, issued now in nearly every country and territory around the world. Other national students' associations similar to the Federation hold the similar exclusive issuing rights in their markets, such as the National Union of Students (NUS) in the United Kingdom and Federation of Estonian Student Unions (EÜL) in Estonia. The Federation frequently coordinates with these groups, and others like the European Students' Union (ESU) to coordinate ISIC and other matters affecting students across the globe.

Students have access to over 100,000 benefits spanning the world, with many in Canada available via popular brands members frequently shop and travel partners. Whether making transactions at home or while travelling, students can be confident that their ISIC will provide them verified student ID when their institution provided card may not be recognized or valid, especially in cases where these cards typically have long validity or expiry dates, or simply none at all. In addition to allowing students to gain immediate cost-savings, the ISIC is also very important for mature students. Often, companies will limit a student discount to those under a certain age. For example, Via Rail limits student fares to those 25 or under. However, with the ISIC as a verified piece of student identification, students 25 and older gain access to this valuable benefit. For students travelling away from their institution's community, proving student status can be challenging as businesses may not be familiar with that institution or student card. Since the ISIC is globally recognized, students can be assured that they will be recognized as a student. Each country that issues ISIC solicits discounts and benefits for all cardholders - regardless of which country that student may be from. In Canada, there are many benefits offering discounts on many everyday products that members are purchasing.

Member locals have the opportunity to brand the ISIC with their logo and any additional information. They can also work with the Federation to build any custom promotional materials and bring new promotions to local businesses around campus. The ISIC is issued digitally, by the member local office, through the Federation on campus, and by digital online application. The Federation can customize the digital online application for member locals so that it is a seamless experience for members applying for their card. Once the card is issued, students download the ISIC global app to their smartphone, which offers an extensive benefit catalogue and virtual card. If necessary, students can request an additional plastic card through the Federation which will be mailed to the student's address.

The cost of the ISIC is \$20 for non-members of the Federation, while members receive the ISIC for free as a benefit of membership. The Federation does not work with any other companies or



organizations beyond member locals to issue the ISIC. Revenues of paid ISIC sales purchased by non-members are recorded on the card sales line of the ISIC Discount Services section of the Canadian Federation of Students and Canadian Federation of Students-Services [combined budget](#). This allows members to easily see how much revenue is received compared to expenses.

Currently, the UTSU website highlights ISIC on the Student Perks & Discounts page. Analytics data indicate that very few students follow through this page to obtain their ISIC. Organically, thousands of UTSU members each year seek an ISIC through the Federation's online application. The Federation welcomes the UTSU to promote ISIC to members on a regular basis using promotional materials routinely distributed through the Federation's newsletters so that students can receive their card as a benefit of membership and obtain immediate cost-savings. The UTSU can issue cards to students using the online tools, promote members to obtain their card online through a customized issuing portal, and more frequently engage with Federation representatives to issue cards on campus when safe to do so.

4.4. Digital Services

The digital services of the Federation offer member locals support and expertise with website hosting, email service, and access to digital advocacy tools. Member locals can access free Canadian website hosting and cloud-based domain management. Professional staff can assist member locals accessing free Google and Microsoft email, calendar, and cloud storage solutions and completely facilitate migration to these services. The advocacy tool can be customized for any type of letter-writing campaign, which member locals can use to promote members to send pre-written letters to Board of Governors, Municipal, Provincial, or Federal government officials.

Currently, the UTSU hosts its Wordpress framework website www.utsu.ca independently of the Federation. The UTSU has the opportunity to utilize Federation hosting services at no charge. The Federation boasts a seamless hosting experience, allowing for the UTSU to have complete autonomy over the system. Based in Toronto, this cloud-based SSD secure server is compliant with any industry standards, including: SSAE 16 SOC 2, ISO 27002, PIPEDA, and PHIPA. This would bring immediate savings to UTSU's operating budget.

4.5. UFile

For over a decade, the Federation has partnered with UFile to bring free tax filing to members and students across Canada. Regularly costing over \$20 for students, and \$30 for families, this service ensures students can file their taxes at absolutely no cost, while utilizing UFile's intuitive and educational web-based filing software. The Federation also provides guidance to member



locals interested in hosting tax clinics on campus and circulates various promotion materials each year.

The Federation regularly provides new UFile promotional content each tax filing year that can be easily shared over member local email newsletters, social media, and used on campus. This content is distributed to UTSU Executive via Federation newsletters.

4.6. Summary

The services of the Federation provide members and member locals with a comprehensive suite of resources and benefits that ultimately bring direct value and cost-savings. In addition, services bring ethically sourced products, high environmental standards, enhanced worker's rights; all having an effect on industries at large. These services have been democratically decided upon at National General Meetings, thoroughly discussed by the National Executive, and continuously evolved and shaped by member locals and students. Member locals contribute to these services, and our shared goals, by working together. Members are central to the services of the Federation and by participating in the programs, the student movement has stronger connections and continues to have an important impact on the services industry. Best of all, the immediate savings that each member receives: with ISIC and UFile, students immediately save \$40 per year; with the NSHN, students can save hundreds of dollars over the course of their degree, and with bulk-buying services, member locals can save more of their budgets and staffing time to put towards advancing mandates and advocating for their members on campus.

While the UTSU's Executive teams have chosen to not engage with the Federation's services, members have proactively been utilizing what they can with ISIC and UFile services. There is a tremendous opportunity for the UTSU to begin engaging with the Federation's services to bring more savings to the local and members while contributing to enhance the collective student movement. For students, by students, we are stronger together.

SECTION 5.0: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is strength in unity and even greater strength in collective numbers. As it has been demonstrated through these reports, the priority for both the UTSU and the Federation remains in advocating for the wellbeing of our student members. To reiterate, as elected executives of the organization, we hope that by engaging us in this process, there is a shared openness and willingness to work together in rebuilding trust for our membership in a shared commitment to advocating for accessible, equitable, and high-quality post-secondary education. Thank you to the committee for reaching out, thank you for your time in reading this detailed



report, and finally thank you for starting this process of meaningful conversations towards a better future for both parties.



Sunday, February 28, 2021

Dear Ad Hoc CFS Committee,

This letter is to highlight the ways in which the members of the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU) have benefited from being members of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS). Throughout this document, one will find how the CFS impacts UTMSU services, advocacy efforts, organizing efforts and overall, the UTMSU membership.

Background

The UTMSU represents over 15,000 full-time and part-time undergraduate students at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM), as well as 200 students at the Mississauga Academy of Medicine (MAM) at the UTM.

Prior to 2019, the UTMSU had an Associate Membership Agreement (AMA) with the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU). For over 40 years, the UTMSU members benefitted from a central, representative body to advocate and represent the best interests of UTM students. Unfortunately, after years of misrepresentation and lack of principled leadership at the UTSU, the UTMSU made a decision to separate itself from the oldest students' union in the country.

Regardless of this change, the UTMSU continues to lobby the central University of Toronto administration, provide various cost-saving services, operate its own student centre and pub, oversee over 120 clubs, levy groups and academic societies, host events, and execute various campaigns that focus on student issues including, but not limited to, eliminating tuition fees, accessible transit, student workers' rights, reproductive justice, and student union autonomy.

As an organization that is committed to an accessible education, the UTMSU and its members have greatly benefited from the services, campaigns, and support that the CFS provides.

Services:

The UTMSU benefits from both member and union-specific services. This section will address services that the UTMSU and their members benefit from using.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC)

The ISIC serves as a discount card and as a form of identification for many international students, students studying abroad, and students who do not have other forms of identification. Each year, members pick up their ISIC in order to access various discounts locally



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in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) as well as around the world. These discounts are important, especially now during the pandemic as students are able to save money with this discount card to help offset the rising cost of tuition fees. Alongside this service, the UTMSU employs students on a part-time basis to solicit discounts from local stores to include on the ISIC. Therefore using and building upon a service provided by the CFS.

Ethical Purchasing Network (Bulk-Purchasing)

The UTMSU participates in the CFS Ethical Purchasing Network; a bulk-purchasing program that allows the union to order in bulk and customize products based on campaigns, services, and events that are developed by the organization. The UTMSU participates in this service for a number of reasons including its sweatshop-free, ethical standards and cost-saving focus.

Typically, the UTMSU invests in two bulk-purchases: one for orientation materials and one for the academic year. Over the years, the UTMSU has themed materials based on campaigns such as *Consent is Mandatory*, *Education is a Right*, *United for Equity*, and *Mental Health Matters*. In addition to promoting the UTMSU services, events, and campaigns through printed materials, members truly enjoy the physical takeaway of campaign-themed highlighters, notebooks, laundry bags, buttons, stickers, and pens.

During the year of the *Student Choice Initiative (SCI)*, the UTMSU solicited materials from other vendors to investigate different pricing options, however, students noticed a large difference in quality. After the SCI was revoked, the UTMSU returned to the CFS's bulk-purchasing program. The difference in cost was marginal but the quality of materials was extremely noticeable.

Handbook

Over the last few years, the UTMSU has participated in the CFS's production and distribution of handbooks for members. These handbooks are purchased in bulk, in collaboration with students' unions across the country. We recognize that this service is important to our members because when more student unions join the program, it lowers the per-unit cost for everyone. This frees up more money within our budget to give directly back to our membership in other forms of campaigns, services and programming. Students also enjoy that they are union-made and feature upcycled materials; an ethical standing that the UTMSU aligns with.

This service greatly benefits the UTMSU. This material provides the union a space to input information about the organization including ways to get involved, the services provided, the campaigns organized, and important dates such as UTM-specific deadlines to drop courses, petitions, exam dates and more. All this is possible because of the assistance that the CFS



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provides to our union with the design and layout process of the handbook and the delivery of these materials.

However, during the 2019-2020 academic year, due to the SCI, the UTMSU made the decision to purchase handbooks from an alternative provider. That year, members indicated that they much preferred handbooks that were provided in previous years (CFS made) as there was better quality, layout design and usefulness.

National Student Health Network (Health and Dental Plan)

The UTMSU currently works in collaboration with the CFS to provide its members with access to the National Student Health Network. The UTMSU members are currently insured by Green Shield Canada (GSC), the only non-profit health and dental insurance program in Canada. Over the years of partnership with GSC, students have expressed satisfaction with the coverage, customer service, and quick response rate. As a union, the CFS has played a crucial part in the negotiation efforts of the insurance plan and cost reduction efforts.

In 2015, the UTMSU members were forcefully removed from the Green Shield Canada insurance plan and added to the UTSU's StudentCare insurance plan. This was done without consultation or consent of the UTMSU and its members. Unfortunately, during this time students complained about the cost of their plan, the poor customer service, long wait times for support, ignored claims, and dropped calls.

After separating from the UTSU, it became abundantly clear that the UTM students were subsidizing the UTSU's health and dental plan with StudentCare. This was evident when the UTMSU was asked by the UTSU executive team to rejoin the insurance plan even after severing ties through the AMA.

Moving forward, the UTMSU made the decision to conduct a Request For Proposal (RFP) and return to GSC. The CFS assisted the UTMSU in better understanding the world of insurance. They provided consultants that were equipped to even challenge and critique the National Student Health Network, among other insurance brokers and providers.

Over the past two years, the UTMSU has been able to properly analyze the needs of students and increase coverage without increasing fees. The UTMSU believes that members benefit when negotiating in numbers, and the health and dental plan is a great example of how students' unions can better support students through the CFS.

Tax Filing



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The UTMSU partners with the CFS on the UFile taxing service to offer students free online tax filing. UFile.ca is one of Canada's leading online tax filing services and assisting the students of UTM in saving money and filing taxes. In addition to this, years ago, the UTMSU worked in partnership to develop and organize the free tax clinics. The UFile discount service alongside the assistance in developing the Free UTMSU Tax Clinics has saved students large amounts of money and has given students in management and commerce great volunteer experience in the union.

OOHLALA Mobile App

The OOHLALA Mobile App was a service that the UTMSU used actively between 2015 and 2019. The app allowed the UTMSU to showcase various services, campus groups, campaigns, and events that were happening on campus. At its peak, there were roughly 4500 active members using the app to connect with peers, create study groups, sell textbooks, advertise club events, and more.

In more recent years, the OOHLALA Mobile App was discontinued by the CFS. Unfortunately, due to the lack of uptake from students' unions across the country as well as the SCI, the CFS membership voted to discontinue the service.

Although this service was discontinued, the UTMSU believes that many locals may not have had the capacity to work in tandem with OOHLALA to customize the app to their benefit. A flaw in the service and an unfortunate reality for many locals; further developing this service may have been too expensive for smaller locals.

Since the service was eliminated, the UTM Senior Administration has created a similar app that focuses on peer connections and community development and has taken away the UTMSU's opportunity to connect with and mobilize members.

Campaigns:

Building capacity and running effective campaigns is critical to the UTMSU's success and ability to impact students' lives. Over the years, the UTMSU has contributed to the development of various campaign materials, trainings, message boxes, coalition support, and research to push forward victories across the country and at UTM. The strength students have in numbers, the ability to lobby local administration and every level of government as well as pooling resources to address students' needs is the reason why UTMSU campaigns are so successful. Some of the most notable CFS campaigns that the UTMSU uses include *Education for All*, *Fairness for*



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International Students, Mental Health Matters, and We the Students/Maintain Your Membership.

Education for All

Since the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, the UTMSU has been diligently working on the Education for All campaign to demand local, provincial and national changes to improve access to education. The Education for All campaign created by the CFS gave members of the UTMSU the ability to customize and the UTMSU's local demands included:

1. Immediate reduction of tuition fees for all students
2. Fairness for International Students
3. Increased non-academic scholarships for all students
4. Increased awards and grants for Indigenous and Black students
5. Increased paid Experiential Learning and Internship positions for all departments
6. Stand-alone mental health counsellors within all departments
7. Improvement of Accessibility Services

Accompanying this, an [emailer](#) was launched where the UTMSU asked students to get involved and email the UTM Senior Administration about the demands of the campaign.

After that, the UTMSU developed and released the [Education for All Lobby Document](#) as well as the [Fairness for International Students Lobby Document](#) which was used in a Lobby Meeting with representatives of the UTM Senior Administration. During that meeting, the lobby demands were presented and the details of the campaign along with the circumstances in which UTM students are in were discussed. The UTMSU is cognizant that larger goals like an immediate reduction in tuition fees will require a coordinated effort to lobby Governing Council, but local victories are important to empower members to get further involved in the campaign.

The UTMSU continues to push forward this campaigning by following up with the UTM Senior Administration, attending Lobby Week to meet with Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament, and participating in GTA coalition meetings to strategize with other students' unions.

Mental Health Matters

Similar to the *Education for All* campaign, the UTMSU runs the Mental Health Matters campaign with a local spin. At various town hall meetings and during outreach, UTMSU members frequently indicate the need for academic policies that support mental health. As such, the UTMSU has used this campaign to advocate for various policies and programs



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including the Second Course Retake policy, Self-Assigned Sick Note policy, having counselors embedded in departments, and extending the CR/NCR deadline to the last day of classes. Beyond academic policies, the UTMSU has used the campaign to further local initiatives such as the Peer Mental Health Support Program, exam destressors, summer/holiday care packages, and Mental Health Awareness Week.

Many of these policy changes and proposals were based on members' ideas but were also successful because the UTMSU was able to connect with students' unions across the country to mirror policies that already exist. These connections and supports were particularly important when the UofT first proposed the Mandated Leave of Absence policy back in 2018. Many students' unions and groups, including the UTMSU, spoke against this policy because of how damaging it is to the members. Through the CFS, we were able to coordinate a cross-country response and condemnation of the policy. There was so much push back and negative coverage that the Ontario Human Rights Commission called on UofT to reconsider the policy as it was presented. Though the Mandated Leave of Absence policy was still approved by Governing Council, this backing reminded students that we have power and strength in numbers.

The UTMSU will continue to work with the CFS to advocate for a campus that cares about student mental health.

Public Transit

In 2007, the UTMSU introduced the U-Pass program at UTM in collaboration with Mississauga MiWay. Across the country, through the CFS, member locals advocated for the need for accessible and affordable public transit. During that time, there was a wave of students' unions negotiating and securing transit passes for members. Since then, the CFS has supported students' unions in surveying members on their transit needs, lobbying local, provincial and federal governments for greater transit investments and supporting students' unions in their contract negotiations. Most recently, the CFS supported the UTMSU in exploring an ISIC-integrated u-pass to ensure that all students had access to both services in one. In addition to that, the CFS supported the call for a Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) student pass which was spearheaded by the UTSU, Ryerson Students' Union (RSU), George Brown College Students' Association (SAGBC) and Ontario College of Art and Design Students' Union (OCADSU). At the time, the CFS coordinated supporting deputations from sister students' unions in the GTA in hopes that the TTC would see a united student front on access to transit. This effort was particularly important to the UTMSU, as members have called for a GTA-wide u-pass program. Unfortunately, due to unsuccessful referenda at both the UTSU and the RSU, the UTMSU's ability to lobby for a GTA-wide u-pass program has dwindled significantly.



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Regardless, UTMSU will continue to advocate for an expansion of transit service at an affordable student rate.

We The Students/ Maintain Your Membership

During the Student Choice Initiative (SCI), through the We The Students campaign, the UTMSU retained at least 85% of all its dues that were optional on ACORN. In just two weeks, the UTMSU was able to collect over 2500 student signatures calling on the provincial government to respect students' union autonomy. At UTM we were able to unite with various levy groups, clubs, and academic societies to host actions and encourage members to continue to invest in their local, provincial and national students' union. As you know, UTMSU and students' unions across the province benefitted from the court challenge that was spearheaded by the CFS, the only provincial and national organization that was willing to take on the provincial government for all students in Ontario. We can only imagine how many student groups at UTM would've struggled during this pandemic had the SCI not been struck down. The UTMSU continues some form of the We The Students campaign through a local campaign called UTMSUs Got You which focuses on the importance of the students' union, the services we provide and the victories we've secured over the past few years.

While the UTMSU has focused primarily on these campaigns, we also run awareness campaigns including Reproductive Justice, *No Means No/Consent is Mandatory*, *United for Equity*, *Where's the Justice?*, and *Go Fossil Free*. The UTMSU also uses these resources to support student groups that do not have the ability to purchase campaign materials.

Victories:

By being members of the CFS, the UTMSU has directly contributed to and benefited from victories that the CFS has advocated for on a provincial and federal level. Many of these initiatives were actually put forward and developed by delegates from UofT at Ontario and National general meetings, then fully fleshed out by connecting with other students' unions across the country. The UTMSU's ability to shape campaigns and services and connect and organize with students' unions across the country has resulted in very important victories that still have a profound impact on UTM students, including:

- The right for international students to work off-campus, 2007
- The creation of the U-Pass Transit Program, 2007
- The elimination of Access Copyright fees, saving students over \$1.5 million per year, 2012
- The elimination of Flat Fees at UofT, 2013



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- Splitting tuition fee payments thus allowing students to pay in two installments, 2014
- Ensuring international students were able to run for and hold a seat on Governing Council, 2015
- The Ontario Student Grant which allowed students from low-income backgrounds to access enough grants to cover all their tuition fees, 2016
- Legislation mandating UofT (and other universities and colleges) to respond to sexual violence on campus, 2016
- Directing UofT to collect race-based data and implement equity training for administration and frontline staff, 2016
- Introduction of a Fall Reading Week, 2016
- The creation of the Ontario open access textbook platform, 2017
- The implementation of policies and programs such as the Second Course Retake, Self-Assigned Sick Note, and Department Imbedded Counsellors, 2018-2020
- Striking down the Student Choice Initiative (SCI) in a court challenge, 2020

This is by no means an extensive list of victories, but some of the most impactful victories students have seen over the past decade.

Final Thoughts:

Unlike the rest of the UofT Sister Unions, the UTMSU and the UTSU have a unique relationship. Over the last five years, the UTSU has had a strained relationship with the CFS and subsequently with the UTMSU. Many current and past UTMSU members and executives have been disenfranchised by the UTSU. Unfortunately, although the UTSU has called on the CFS to be transparent, accessible, results-driven, and welcoming, the UTSU has not held itself to the same standard. The UTSU's deliberate absence in spaces has negatively impacted all its sister unions' abilities to coordinate tri-campus actions, mobilize members, and see victories that benefit all UofT students. The UTMSU knows this is fundamentally rooted in the recent UTSU's desire to separate itself from the CFS. Despite this, the UTMSU knows that UTSU members support the work of the CFS because when the UTMSU works on tri-campus issues it is abundantly clear that students want access to CFS campaigns, services and events. It is paternalistic and not transparent of the UTSU to block students from being active members of the CFS. At the end of the day, the UTMSU recognizes that the decision to stay or leave the CFS is up to individual members, but we believe that it is the UTSU and the ad hoc committee's duty to share more than just reports - it must share the work that the Federation has and continues to do for members in a balanced and unbiased way.



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We vehemently believe that there is strength in numbers and are confident that one day all the UofT sister unions will be able to work together again to further students' priorities. In the meantime, the UTMSU encourages the UTSU Executive to re-evaluate its relationship with the CFS and to approach it with the intention of supporting students. As a sister students' union that shares many commonalities, we believe that the CFS can support UTSU in furthering its local, provincial and national goals, the same way it has for the UTMSU.

We look forward to hearing about our sister unions' experiences with the CFS and to hearing back about the outcomes of the UTSU ad hoc CFS committee.

In Student Solidarity,

The University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU)