

2020-21

Saitsa*

ANNUAL REPORT

[Saitsa.com](https://saitsa.com)

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Advocacy & Research

There have been a number of exciting projects going on in advocacy and research that directly impact our student members. Current ongoing projects include Educational Affordability, Mental Wellbeing initiatives, and improvement of the Upass Program. Each of these are multi-year initiatives that will be heading into phase two during the 2022/2023 academic year.

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Affordability | Phase One

Saitsa remains committed to working with SAIT to continue the path of making SAIT education more affordable and accessible by supporting affordability initiatives such as the Open Educational Resource plan. According to current internal reports, 90% of our student base have concerns about textbook costs, while 63% would choose an OER over a mainstream textbook.

The first phase of our affordability advocacy has focused on the increasing need for Open Educational Resources (OERs) at SAIT. As of January 2022, 25 courses at SAIT have implemented some form of OERs for students in 10 subject

areas. Such OERs have the potential to save up to \$1000 per year per student. Saitsa has approached academic council and there is currently a motion to vote on 4 asks in regard to OERs.

These asks include:

1

To provide funding and other resources for the discovery and development of OERs.

2

Form an inter-departmental team to advocate, train, and support OER concepts.

3

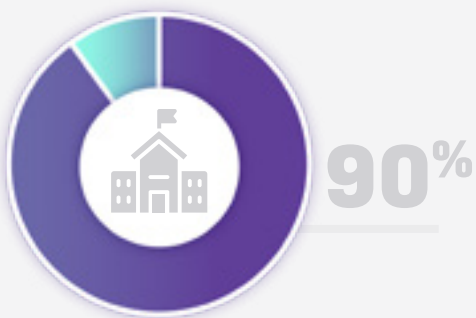
Provide direction to academic chairs for all departments to implement OERs by 2025.

4

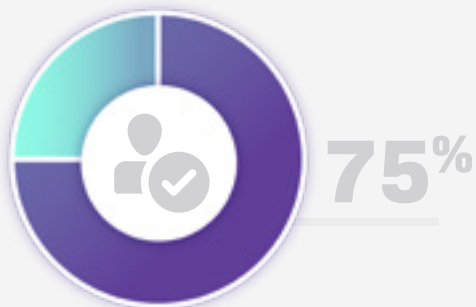
Each department should increase the use of OERs by 50% each year, for the next 5 years.

Upass

Saitsa will be arranging to be meet with both City Council & Calgary Transit representatives to renegotiate the Upass. This includes the cost of the Upass, and potentially extending to practicum students, and including an opt-out option for students.



According to our 2021 Annual Survey over 90% of students were in favour of extending the Upass program to Practicum and Placement students.



Additionally, 75% of students were in favour of adding in an opt-out option for the Upass, even if that meant a slight increase in costs. These student positions will be kept in mind as we head into the negotiations.

Mental Health | Phase One

Mental wellbeing has been an ongoing issue on Canadian campuses, and since COVID-19 has emerged and caused lock downs and required society to adapt to entire new ways of not only learning but also socialization, student mental wellbeing decreased. The literature shows an increase in areas such as depression, anxiety, overall mental wellness, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009; Bartlett, 2014). There is a wealth of literature available that indicates that there is a link between student academic success, and student mental wellbeing (Alberta Post-Secondary Mental Health and Addic-

tions Framework, 2015; Cheng et al, 2021; American College Health Association, 2019; Hartey et al, 2017). Equally so, there is an abundance of literature that indicates that universities across Canada were having a “mental health” crisis pre COVID-19, and the Pandemic has Exacerbated that issue (Alberta Post-Secondary Mental Health and Addictions Framework, 2015; American College Health Association, 2019; Bartlett, 2014; Buote et al, 2007; Cheng et al, 2021; Son et al, 2020; BC Partners for Mental Health and Addiction Infor-

mation, 2008; Canadian Association of College and University Student Services and Canadian Mental Health Association, 2013; Canadian Mental Health Association, 2021; Center for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, 2021; Hartey & Wells, 2017; Hefner, 2009; Lipson, 2009; McMaster University 2021; Mental Health Commission of Canada 2021; Kwakye, 2020; Okanagan Charter, 2015; Raghacan, 2014; Reid, 2015; Rashid, 2020; Riwi, 2020; Shepell, 2021(c); The Jed Foundation, 2017).

What we want to achieve is a better understanding of how students feel about the resources available to them to support their mental wellbeing.

The number of students that are facing mental wellbeing issues is increasing every year, and exponentially since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020.

4 main themes have emerged from the current literature (Chang et al, 2021; Kirshetal,2016):

1

Stigma of mental health on campus

2

Culture around mental wellbeing on campus

3

Accessibility to mental wellbeing services

4

Student mental wellbeing coping mechanisms

Therefore, Saitsa wants to achieve a better understanding of what student mental wellbeing looks like, and how it is perceived on the SAIT campus. As well as understand what Saitsa and SAIT could do to better understand the student's needs.

Saitsa seeks to find out the answers to several questions via the mental wellbeing work in 2022/2023 academic year:

1

How can we raise awareness on mental wellbeing on campus?

2

What challenges do SAIT students face with mental health on campus?

3

What resources do other Campuses in Alberta provide for Mental wellbeing supports?

4

Do students have appropriate accessibility to services offered at SAIT?

5

What can we do to improve mental wellbeing support on campus?

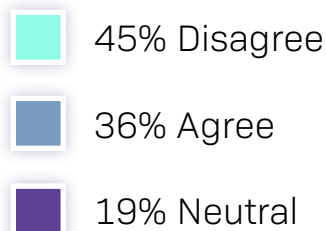
The final report for phase two of our mental wellbeing project can be expected mid 2023. Stay tuned.

Annual Saitsa Survey

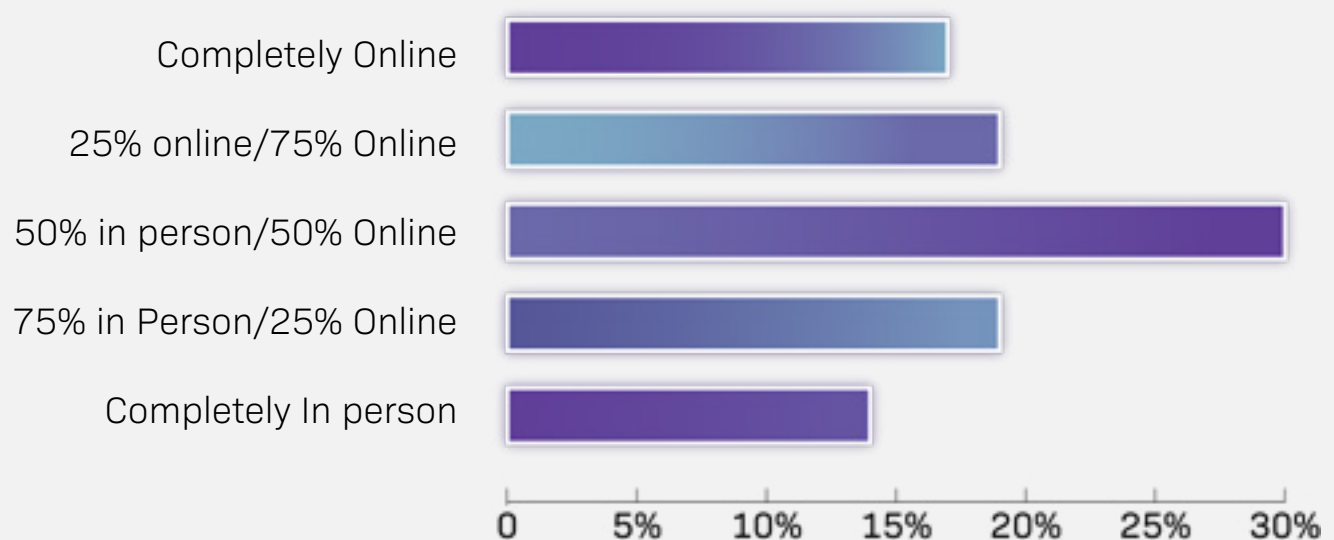
Every year, Saitsa conducts an annual survey to collect and analyze feedback from students about their experience with the association and the events and services we provide. *The Annual Saitsa Survey* is an important tool for consulting with our membership, and directly collecting data on a variety of student issues. The results allow us to better understand the needs of our membership and advocate for our members appropriately. The following graphics depict some notable portions of data collected from the 2020-21 survey.



Students feel that they have received the full value of their tuition:

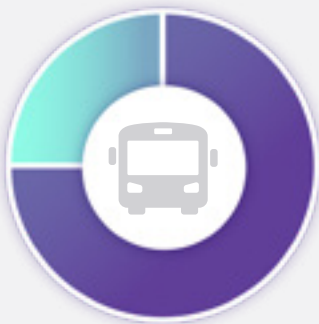
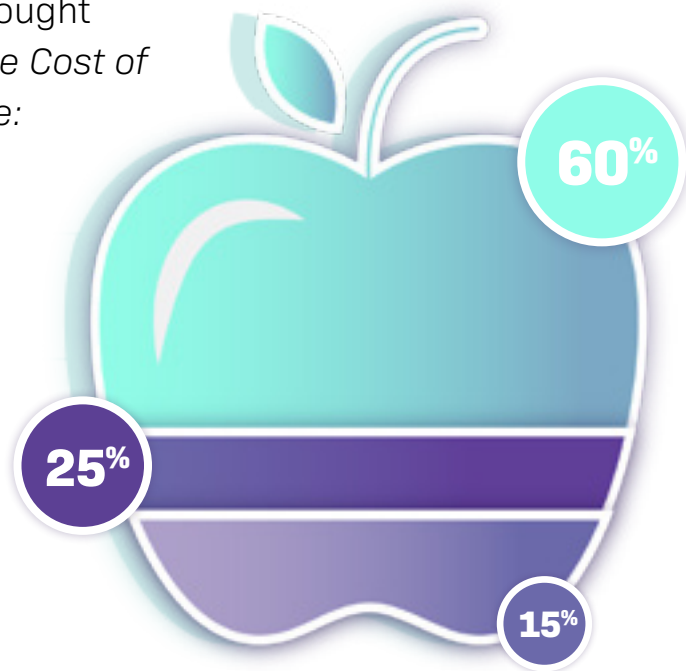
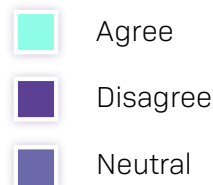


Student Preference, Online vs. In-person Classes:

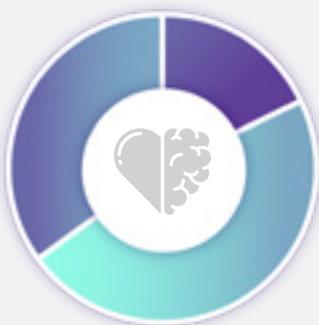
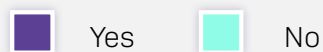


When we asked what students thought about the following statement: *The Cost of Education at SAIT is Too Expensive:*

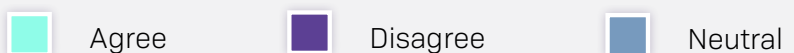
60% Agreed, 15% Disagreed and 25% indicated they felt Neutral on the topic.



When asked *Should Students be given the choice to opt-out of the Upass even if the cost increases?* 75% of students said 'Yes' and 25% said 'No'.



We asked if students felt there were enough mental health supports at SAIT to help with the online environment as a result of the pandemic. 47% agree, 35% were neutral, and 18% disagree.



Financial Highlights

Our goal is to serve you, the students. We do this by collecting student fees, which are utilized to advocate for your rights, and to provide quality services and programs to students outside of the classroom. The Post-Secondary Learning Act grants authority to Saitsa to collect fees in order to fulfill its mandate to represent and serve students.

The student fees we collect are divided into two funds: the Saitsa Restricted Building Fund and the Saitsa General Operations Fund. The Restricted Building Fund's sole purpose is to fund the future construction of non-academic student space on campus. Our operating funds support the day-to-day function of Saitsa's operations, programs, and services.

Who Pays Saitsa Fees?

Most full- and part-time students, apprentices, and some earned revenue students pay Saitsa fees. The actual fee assessment depends on the number of credit hours or apprentice weeks in which a student is enrolled.

How Much?

Each full fee-paying member is assessed at \$287.77. To understand how your fees are being utilized to improve the student experience, [visit our website](#). Students falling outside this classification will be assessed according to the SAIT fee table. Your student invoice will also show fees for your Student Dental Plan and your Student Health Plan; if you have comparable coverage then you are able to opt out of your Dental and Health plans and get reimbursed for those fees. Make sure to opt out by the deadline.



Services Highlights

Throughout the year, though COVID-19 has posed significant disruptions and challenges to our operational status-quo, Saitsa has persevered to maintain a high level of service for our student members and staff alike.

Remaining flexible and open-minded to changes in delivery of our services was key to reaching students in a primarily online environment. Understanding the common barriers that students were facing helped to inform our approach, and we remained in a pivot state in order to best serve *you*.

...Saitsa has persevered to maintain a high level of service for our student members and staff alike.

Student Experience

Due to the pandemic, for the first time in Saitsa history – clubs were registered and operated entirely online. This led to many challenges, but it didn't stop the **Saitsa Clubs** community from coming together and exceeding expectations by achieving these remarkable milestones, all in a virtual format:



- * 44 Clubs Registered, and 93 Event Proposals
- * Virtual Clubs Expos held in both Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 Semesters
- * \$5000 requested in Club Start Up and Club Reimbursement Grant Funds
- * Moved to EFT direct deposits for club withdrawals and generally to Online Banking (accepting e-transfers and direct deposits)

Supported again by the generous donations of those in the SAIT community, Saitsa was able to 'adopt' 40 SAIT Student Families. Our annual **Saitsa Adopt a Family** initiative provides these families with gift cards to help them through the holiday season.



Saitsa values creating safe and welcoming virtual and on-campus spaces for **LGBTQ2+** students. In partnership with the Pride at SAIT Committee, Saitsa continued to make strides towards making SAIT a more inclusive environment for all. Here are just a few ways we showed our pride on campus:



The Pride flag was raised on campus in October 2020 to commemorate Pride Month.



Saitsa ran a weekly “Pride Zoom Room” event allowing members of the LGBTQ2+ community to virtually gather throughout the academic year.



Saitsa and the Pride at SAIT committee planned a pride-themed stained glass showcase in Stan Grad Building (unveiled in Fall 2021).



Food insecurity during the pandemic rose in the student population and Saitsa was there to support those in need. Over 70 students were supported by the **Saitsa Food Bank**. This initiative is designed to support SAIT students who are experiencing food insecurity due to financial hardships.



Saitsa's Tax Program provides practical experience for students to have training through Canada Revenue Agency's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP). This opportunity allows for student volunteers to complete fellow students or community members' taxes. This is a completely free service and allows for volunteers to gain amazing experience.

We are always humbled to have such amazing volunteers, and hear feedback about their experiences. Here are what a few of them had to say about their time volunteering in the 2020-21 program:

"...I had the opportunity to participate in the tax program and also had my tax return done free of charge. And that's what this amazing program offers, helping the community, helping students, and building leaders for those who volunteer."

— Gregory Sands
Business Administration, Accounting

The 2021 Tax program was run entirely online for the very first time, and there was:

70

Tax returns filed by our student volunteers

15

Volunteers assisting students and community members

"...I Would 100% recommend other students to take part, whether they're in an Accounting related program or not, they'll learn something they didn't know before and have an amazing time with the other volunteers!"

— Sarah Luzzi
Business Administration, Accounting

Governance

With Saitsa's governance having been restructured last year, the Board of Directors has since approved its new Policy Manual, defining the organization's end goals and vision for a meaningful student experience at SAIT. The Board's end goals are:

1

Members maintain a sense of overall wellbeing throughout their academic career.

2

Students are able to successfully navigate their post-secondary educational experience.

3

Members will experience a high degree of engagement with their community.

These end goals will be used by Saitsa's student service departments to develop and refine our programs and services to benefit as many students as possible. While the Pandemic has made it difficult to connect with our members, we believe it is more important than ever that Saitsa is there to support its members on- and off-campus. This governance restructuring has been a success upon introduction, and we are excited to see how it evolves the association in the future.

Saitsa's 2021 General Election saw 12 candidates run for 9 Board positions. Due to personal circumstances, 2 candidates withdrew resulting in 10 candidates seeking election as Director. Last year's Board of Directors Election had a voter turnout of approximately 6%. Majority of students who vote continue to be full-time students, though part-time students and apprentices also voted in the election. This decrease in voter turnout

can be attributed to restricted access to SAIT campus, as COVID-19 continues to affect the community. Voting students commented that not having direct access to candidates and understanding their platform made it difficult to vote. It is our hope that the 2022 General Election will maintain or increase voter turnout or student engagement with the election process.

Student Events



2058+

Student engagement hours happened over the year through events



2966+

Student engagement hours including music programming, podcast programming, and elections events.



175.5%

Increase of players in Winter term Saitsa events versus the Fall term. Viewership & engagement increased 231.5% and 227.2%



59 Events

Number of events held from September 2020 - June 2021



1760 Attendees

The number of students who attended events through the year.



30 Per Event

Student attendance averaged at 30 per event.

Takeaways:

- * Bingos continued to be the most popular student event. Bingo and Dirty Bingos had an average attendance of 56 and 48 players per event.
- * These numbers were excellent and exceeded many expectations, however they do not compare to the average in-person event numbers from the previous year.
- * On average, each event would have likely seen 3 times the attendance and engagement if able to be in person.

Operations

Unfortunately, the pandemic resulted in various restrictions and shut-downs on campus throughout the 2020-21 academic year. As a result, our operations were primarily closed for the duration of the year, and began reopening phases in fall 2021. Here are some overviews of what these student-serving operations are all about:



The Odyssey is an Award-Winning, on-campus café featuring direct-trade fresh roasted custom coffee. With our commitment to staying local, our student-friendly restaurant offers high-quality products from Calgary & surrounding area farms & bakeries. Our coffee is Direct Trade and custom roasted each week right here in YYC. We care about sustainability and are proud to be LEAF certified.



Winner of the 2020 YYC Hot Chocolate Fest

The Odyssey's Pistachio Rose Hot Chocolate beat out competition from over 50 local businesses to be crowned YYC's *Best Hot Chocolate* during the 2020 YYC Hot Chocolate Fest.



The Gateway Campus Bar and Entertainment Venue is a popular hangout for SAIT students to gather with friends for late breakfast, lunch or dinner. With daily food and drink specials, live events, and the best patio view in Calgary, there's always a great reason to gather!

World-Class Entertainment

The Gateway stage has seen some of the world's best talents in music, comedy, and podcasting. Some noteworthy names include The Tragically Hip, Arkells, Mother Mother, July Talk, Prozzak, The Glorious Sons, and X Ambassadors.

Free-For-Student Events

Home-base of the legendary karaoke, Wingo, Dirty Bingo, and Trivia Nights.

An Inclusive Dining Experience

We are proud to offer an inclusive and [ever-evolving menu](#) with multiple vegan, vegetarian and gluten smart options. We work hard to accommodate all meal preferences and are always adding fresh new menu items that are sure to be your next favourite dish.



The Saitsa Awards



At Saitsa, we believe outstanding students and instructors should be rewarded for their dedication and hard work at SAIT, which is why we honour their commitment through awards. These were the awards we were pleased to present to some exceptional SAIT students and Instructors this year:

★ **Athena Award**

N/A | Jennifer Dunn

★ **DC Fleming Award**

\$1000 | Tristina Quinney-George

★ **JM Parker Award**

\$1000 | Timothy Holowachuk

★ **Marcel Carpenter Award**

N/A | Jessica Norman

★ **Therese Murray Award**

\$1000 | Connor McCallum

★ **Sentinel Award**

N/A | The Lamb Learner Success Centre

★ **Club of the Year Award**

\$750 | Architectural Technologies Student Association (ATSA)

★ **Instructor Excellence Award**

School of Business

Linda Gardner

School of Construction

Carina Butterworth

MacPhail School of Energy

Steve Gao

School of Health & Public Safety

Teela Kowalchuk

School of Hospitality & Tourism

Ray Bucknell

School of Information & Communications Technologies

Jim Cunningham

School of Manufacturing & Automation

Ben Millen

Letter from the President

When I wrote my first letter to you as President, it was filled with optimism at the prospect of seeing you all in person in the fall semester. You were all conscious for the last few months, so I won't belabor the point, but that obviously didn't pan out. Classes have been moved back and forth between in-person and online many times, new restrictions like the REP and promises of going back to normal in January – our year as students has been fraught with uncertainty, stress, and a staggering decline in mental health across the nation. I'm reminded of a movie I saw wherein a woman tries to run down a hallway – but as she runs, the hallway extends faster than she can catch up. I'm sure many of you are tired.

I'm not going to make the mistake of declaring any variant as the last gasp of an endemic. I can say, though, that the extension of the hall has seemed to stop, or slow at least – and I can see light peeping out from under the door at the end of this long and troublesome corridor.

The other certainty I can say is that Saitsa will be there for you all the way through that door and out the other side. We continued to keep to our mission of improving the student experience, providing support for those who need it, and a voice for all our members. We've hosted events, giving students the opportunity to connect and form bonds outside the classroom. We've provided volunteer opportunities and supported clubs that have, in turn, given students space to thrive. We've met with government officials across all branches as much as we've met with your deans, raising student concerns to those in power no matter where or on what scale. In short, we've kept being Saitsa.

2022 marks our hundredth year of doing this, so I think we can be forgiven for seeing the big



picture here. We will stubbornly refuse to back down from helping our members in times of plague or health, in war or peace, as we have always done. And we're looking forward to doing it for a hundred years more.

Sincerely,

Liam Hunter
President (2021-2022)