



Legitimacy and institutional support for student groups at Canadian post-secondary institutions: Implications of resource allocations

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Overview

- ▶ Purpose of the research
 - ▶ Theoretical framework
 - ▶ Relevant survey data
 - ▶ Relevant institutional data
 - ▶ Insights from key informants
 - ▶ Implications of findings
 - ▶ Future directions
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Purpose of the Research

- ▶ To explore the sources of resources for student-focused supports at universities, e.g. interest groups, clubs, services, facilities
 - ▶ University-funded vs. student-funded (e.g. through student association)
 - ▶ Ongoing support vs. temporary support
 - ▶ Competitive support vs. guaranteed support



Theoretical Framework

- ▶ Availability and structure of services and resources for students can be an important factor in persistence/completion
- ▶ Adequate support for services and resources is more critical when funding is limited or when there is competition for allocations
- ▶ Legitimacy theory suggests that resource allocation also has symbolic value, i.e. the decisions signal the organization's priorities and values (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008)
- ▶ Legitimacy is also gained through association with an organization or groups of organizations already perceived as legitimate (Glynn & Navis, 2013)
- ▶ External legitimation pressures (e.g. legislation, policy) may also require resources to be assigned to some areas
- ▶ Allocating resources to student support not only has practical value but also has symbolic value

Respondents Sense of Belonging	Very Strong	Strong	Moderately Strong	Not Very Strong	Not Strong at all
Family	241 (46.26%)	157 (30.13%)	78 (14.97%)	30 (5.76%)	15 (2.88%)
Ethnic or cultural group(s)	55 (11.02%)	95 (19.04%)	127 (25.45%)	121 (24.25%)	101 (20.24%)
Your university	50 (9.63%)	121 (23.31%)	167 (32.18%)	105 (20.23%)	76 (14.64%)
Your faculty/program of study	98 (18.81%)	155 (29.75%)	139 (26.68%)	82 (15.74%)	47 (9.02%)
Town, city or region in which you currently live	78 (15%)	136 (26.15%)	176 (33.85%)	86 (16.54%)	44 (8.46%)
Province	70 (13.38%)	143 (27.34%)	174 (33.27%)	90 (17.21%)	46 (8.80%)
Canada	177 (33.84%)	170 (32.50%)	129 (24.67%)	27 (5.16%)	20 (3.82%)
North America	72 (14.06%)	120 (23.44%)	162 (31.64%)	107 (20.90%)	51 (9.96%)
Your hometown	124 (24.12%)	150 (29.18%)	118 (22.96%)	65 (12.65%)	57 (11.09%)
Other	17 (45.95%)	9 (24.32%)	7 (18.92%)	4 (10.81%)	0

Lack of belongingness on campus

Reason(s) why respondents felt uncomfortable or out of place while attending your university	Frequency	Percent
Your race or skin colour	92	35.11%
Your ethnicity or culture	76	29.01%
Your religion	57	21.76%
Your gender identity	43	16.41%
Your language or accent	35	13.36%
Being differently abled	21	8.02%
Other	31	11.83%
Don't know	20	7.63%
Not applicable (I've never felt uncomfortable or out of place)	10	3.82%

	Religion	LGBTQ
UBC (Vancouver) -- administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaplaincy (16 faiths represented) • Room allocated for Muslim prayer (operated by Muslim student club) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Space Campaign • Equity & Inclusion Office
UBC (Vancouver) -- Alma Mater Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 student-run clubs with religious affiliations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride Collective [website inactive]
UWinnipeg -- administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room allocated for Muslim prayer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights & Diversity Office • Equity census (includes LGBTQ and gender identity questions)
UWinnipeg -- Student Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 student-run clubs with religious affiliations (4 associated with external organizations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rainbow Lounge • Women-Trans Spectrum Centre • Positive Space training required for all clubs
University of Ontario Institute of Technology -- administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Chaplain services available to students in need through community services" • Designated prayer rooms (2 multi-faith, 1 Muslim) • RISE (Respecting Individuals and Supporting Equity) workshops include training on religious discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity & Inclusivity Co-ordinator
UOIT-- Student Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 student-run clubs with religious affiliations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride & LBGTO Centre (not in operation)
Mount Saint Vincent University-- administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interfaith Peace and Friendship Centre (with co-ordinator) • Peace Room • Multi-faith Room 	
MSVU-- Student Union		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride Centre • Feminist Collective

Institutional Values (selected) ... as stated on websites

UWinnipeg

- **MISSION:** ... committed to excellence ... our primary responsibility is to our students, to whom we strive to offer **a community which appreciates, fosters, and promotes values of human dignity, equality, non-discrimination and appreciation of diversity.**
- We view both **accessibility** and excellence as important goals, and **will endeavour to make the University as accessible as we can** while maintaining high standards of quality in our academic programs. ...
- The University of Winnipeg **values academic freedom, self-governance and community service.**

UOIT

- **MISSION:** Provide superior undergraduate and graduate programs that are technology-enriched and **responsive to the needs of students** and the evolving workplace.
 - Conduct research that creates knowledge, solves problems, results in economic and social innovation **and engages students**
 - Facilitate life-long learning that is flexible, **inclusive** and emphasizes college university transfers
 - Cultivate a **dynamic learning environment for students by promoting social engagement**, fostering critical thinking and integrating experiences inside and outside the classroom
- **VALUES:** Integrity and respect – We embrace honesty, **inclusivity**, and **equity** in all that we do.
 - Honesty and accountability – **Our actions reflect our values**, and we are accountable for both.

MSVU

- **Mission:** We are committed to academic excellence, and our passion is **a rich and rewarding university experience.**
 - We are dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge: scholarship, teaching and intellectual endeavour of the highest quality, and **we promote accessibility through flexible learning opportunities and services.**
 - We are inspired by our strong **tradition of social responsibility** and our enduring **commitment to the advancement of women.**
 - Our people are our foundation and our relationships are built on **respect and accountability.**
- **Values:** Academic Freedom, **Accountability, Engagement, Professionalism, Respect**



Insights from UOIT

- ▶ UOIT administrator (Key Informant)
 - ▶ Equity co-ordinator expected to do too much, has to request funds on a project-by-project basis
 - ▶ Equity initiatives face backlash on campus
 - ▶ Monies spent on capital projects rather than on services
- ▶ UOIT student union representative (Key Informant)
 - ▶ SU centres/services exist "in name only"
 - ▶ Spending choices depend on who is around at the time
 - ▶ University tries to downplay incidents rather than addressing systemic issues
 - ▶ University ignores more activist groups, "waits until they've left or burnt out"
 - ▶ Inconsistent support for students across Faculties
- ▶ UOIT student comment (Survey):
 - ▶ "As a recent graduate, I don't feel like I got to experience all that you can experience in university because I didn't find a lot of groups that I could relate to or could help me through my university journey."

Insights from UWinnipeg

- ▶ University of Winnipeg student association representative (Key Informant)
 - ▶ UWSA challenges university administration when it feels actions do not match values
 - ▶ “Certain student mobilization is more welcome than others”
 - ▶ University budget meetings are closed; difficult for students to have input
 - ▶ Conflict between university’s stated value of sustainability and its investing in fossil fuel projects
 - ▶ Student union had to advocate to get its own space
- ▶ UWinnipeg student comment (survey):
 - ▶ **“I had little guidance in university**, unsure of what field I was going into. The web advisor system has improved, but up until last year I was not even aware of what I needed for my history degree. More or less, what I have now in university would have helped before. Also, **I have no friends in university**. I am a **traditional, conservative, straight white male**, surrounded by many who are the opposite. There are many groupings of people based on culture, gender identity and sexual orientation, religion, and my type does not have a group. **I am Metis, but I am not connected with the Aboriginal group, for it is not Metis based from my experience. It seems the groups in university are based on the minority groups, but really, that caused me to become the true minority.**”

Insights from MSVU

- ▶ Key Informant, MSVU Feminist/ Queer Collective:
 - ▶ Student groups are underfunded ~\$60 per year base
 - ▶ "The Marginalized community at the Mount is mostly part time or international, which makes organizing tricky to do. For a lot of international students can't take part. And due to structures part time tend not to be able to take days off."
- ▶ Mount Saint Vincent University student comments (Survey):
 - ▶ "My university life is over, which saddens me greatly."
 - ▶ "Wish I was more involved."



Implications of Findings

- ▶ Potential lack of services or overlap of services
- ▶ Potential variations in sources, amounts, or guarantees of funding
- ▶ Potential disconnect between services that students want/need and what is offered
- ▶ Lack of continuity in funding or staffing affects availability of services
- ▶ Potential disconnect between stated values and how resources are allocated



Future Directions

- ▶ Examine decision-making processes used to allocate resources, especially in differences between administrations and student unions
 - ▶ Participants
 - ▶ Decision criteria
 - ▶ Steps in the process
- ▶ Examine types of resources (e.g. funding, space, staffing) made available
 - ▶ Temporary vs ongoing
 - ▶ Guaranteed vs case-by-case or competitive
- ▶ Examine processes that select which services are offered for students and how they will be supported



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