

NEWS RELEASE

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Additional emergency aid available for students at Okanagan College

Kelowna—Students at Okanagan College are applauding an emergency aid investment of \$3.5 million for domestic students and \$1.5 million for Indigenous students from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training.

“Students and their families in the Okanagan are in a time of financial insecurity like we have never seen before,” said Alex Starker, Chairperson of the Okanagan College Students’ Union. “This investment in emergency funds will help to ensure rent can be paid and food can be on the table during these troubling times.”

Students often work in precarious, low-wage jobs with only a few shifts a week between busy study schedules; they are highly represented in industries that have laid off many workers due to pandemic responses. With summer employment now unlikely, and other avenues of emergency relief not available, many students and their families are entering into a period of intense financial insecurity.

With this investment, \$140,000 is available for domestic students at Okanagan College, and \$48,000 for Indigenous students. Also recognizing the immense need of students, particularly International students, Okanagan College Students’ Union has committed \$15,000 for emergency relief for students in addition to the current funding available. “The Okanagan College Students’ Union was created to provide support to our members and, in this time of crisis, this financial commitment is something more we can do to provide that support,” said Alex Starker.

"With layoffs, physical distancing, and classes suddenly being completed online, students and their families have a lot to worry about right now," said Starker. "Providing additional relief will go a long way to help those in need be able to stay focused on being successful in their studies."

According to the government’s announcement, the \$4.9 million in funding can be used for a broad range of expenses that students find themselves under pressure to pay, such as food, rent, and equipment necessary for the new reality of online and remote learning. The funding will be administered through financial aid offices at BC’s 25 public post-secondary institutions.

The Okanagan College Students’ Union represents over 9000 students at Okanagan College. Together with the British Columbia Federation of Students, these students advocate for a well-funded system of post-secondary education in BC that is affordable and accessible for all students.

For more information, please contact:

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