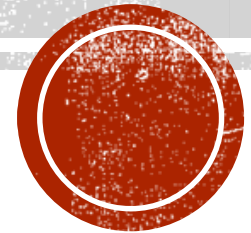


**VOLUNTARY
STUDENT
UNIONISM**



TODAY

- Introductions
- What is VSU?
- VSU History: The Australia/New Zealand examples
- VSU in Ontario
- Take-aways and To-dos
- The National Perspective





Voluntary Student Unionism, defined.

AKA, Anti-Student Organization Policies (ASOP)



Competing Values: The Why of VSU

Freedom of Association

v.

The Free Rider Problem



Mandatory v. Non-mandatory components



Opt-in v. Opt-out Fee collection mechanism



Annual v. Persistent



The exact policy has a great
impact on the end effect.





EFFECTS OF POLICY CHOICES

- The higher the mandatory component, the lower the optional component.
 - This can help drive a higher ‘membership yield’ for the optional component if the remaining optional services are appealing enough (more for less)
- Opt-in v. Opt-out and at-assessment v. post-assessment:
 - Post-assessment opt-in < at-assessment opt-in < at-assessment opt-out < post-assessment opt-out
- Annual v. Persistent
 - Annual < Persistent, but persistent probably provides a better indicator of how your organization is performing.
 - Persistent-choice VSU changes recruitment and retention strategies



Voluntary Student Representation (VSR)

Compulsory fee for non-political service uses, non-compulsory fee for advocacy/political activity



AUSTRALIA

- Australia
 - 1994: VSU introduced at the state level, in Western Australia and Victoria.
Repealed in WA in 2002
 - 2005: Nationally-mandated VSU
- The background politics
- SUs became opt-in organizations which had to do their own recruitment and fee collection.
 - 100% optional, no mandatory component, fee collection handled by the student association.



AUSTRALIA - IMPACTS

- With a few notable exceptions, SU membership rates generally fell to below 10% of students at a given institution.
- 25 of 30 undergraduate SUs had to make substantial job cuts, with over 1000 jobs lost nationwide. Some SUs were left with no staff entirely.
- Almost half of the postgraduate student associations ceased to exist due to lack of funds.
- Substantial cuts had to be made to SU departments, especially those which served disadvantaged or underrepresented students.
- Most surviving student services were taken over by the universities themselves. In some cases, the universities even took over student rights advocacy.



CASE STUDY: U OF SYDNEY UNION

- Voluntary, annual, post-assessment opt-in – basically, a sign-up system.
- Initial impact: Reduced to 10% membership.
- Slowly rebuilt; still below 50% opt-in over 10 years later.
- How did USU survive? Extensive reserves and business operations – a \$25M+ organization and a lot of cuts.
- Recently made an agreement with the University to restore some funding.
- Has moved to a free membership/paid discount-club model. The paid model is open to all, not just students.



NEW ZEALAND

- In New Zealand, like in Australia, SU membership is voluntary and occurs on an opt-in basis.
- Several SUs collapsed entirely due to lack of funds.
- Critical difference in ancillary fees/MNIFs, which were initially banned in Australia but not NZ.
- SUs that have survived did so as a result of universities collecting mandatory student service fees and remitting the resulting funding to their respective SUs.
- Membership in New Zealand SUs is usually free and comes with enough benefits to entice many students to join their local SU.
- While this model may sound preferable to Australia's, it is important to note the greatly-increased reliance that SUs now have on their institutions, impacting their autonomy and independence.



AUSTRALIAN RATIONALES FOR VSU

- **Freedom of association.**
- **Student associations are radical, unreflective of their members (as evidenced by low election turnouts), and often wasteful or corrupt.**
- Few students access the student services.
- Mandatory fees encourage student services to become inefficient, complacent and unresponsive.
- It is the responsibility of Student Associations to convince students of the benefits they provide.
- The issue of free riders can be addressed by implementing a membership card so only those paying a fee can access services.



AUSTRALIAN ANTI-VSU ARGUMENTS

- **The Free Rider/Tragedy of the Commons problem.**
- **Vital amenities, services and facilities will be at risk upon the introduction of VSU.**
- Students' Unions can provide services and amenities that universities cannot offer, or can deliver them more cost-effectively.
- Threat to the independence of the student voice.
- Many students don't realize the services available to them until they need to use them.
- **VSU proponents use the few rare examples of mismanagement in student-run organizations, ignoring what Student Unions do right.**



The Ontario Announcement



THE POLICY – HIGHLIGHTS

- **26 Pages long**
- **Universities and Colleges each have their own binding agreement**
- **Prescribed essential fee categories left to interpretation**
- **Institutional governing bodies now “under-write fees”:**
- **Institutions penalized if fees optional fees are collected incorrectly**
- **Directly targeted “Student Activity Fees”:**
- **To ensure transparency and clarity, colleges are expected to itemize the individual functions for which fees are charged. Bundling fees together (e.g., charging a ‘student activity fee’ that encompasses funding for multiple services) is not permitted.**

THE POLICY – ESSENTIAL FEES

- **Athletics and Recreation**

- Fees supporting the operating and capital costs of athletic facilities made available to the broader student body may be charged on a compulsory basis.

- **Career Services**

- Fees to support career related services made available to the broader student body, including career counselling, information sessions, job fairs, job boards and job placement may be charged on a compulsory basis.

- **Student Buildings**

- Fees that support spaces and facilities that host student activities and services which are not supported through the government operating and capital grants may be charged as compulsory ancillary fees. A facility that is restricted to specific students who pay separate costs for access cannot be supported through a compulsory ancillary fee (e.g., student residences).



THE POLICY – ESSENTIAL FEES

- **Health and Counselling**

- On-campus access to health professionals for basic medical care, mental health, counselling and basic health resources may be supported through compulsory ancillary fees. Services for disabilities or mental health assessments necessary to support academic accommodations and achievement cannot be supported by a fee - these are considered services that are normally paid out of operating revenues.

- **Academic Support**

- Academic support includes services such as peer tutoring or improving writing skills that are not provided through academic program delivery and are not funded by government operating and capital grants. Fees that fall under this category may be charged as compulsory.
- Technology that provides academic support may be charged on a compulsory basis. Institutions are responsible for providing details about the technology service(s). All other technology fees may only be implemented on an opt-out basis.

THE POLICY – ESSENTIAL FEES

- **Student ID Cards**

- Student ID cards identify individuals as students at their college or university and are used for access to services and facilities such as athletic centres, library and media services, and meal plans. The cards may also be required for exams and accessing academic records. The cost of issuing the student ID cards may be charged as a compulsory ancillary fee.

- **Student Achievement and Records**

- Fees related to the administrative costs of producing documents of student achievement, such as diplomas and transcripts as well as costs related to convocation may be charged as compulsory ancillary fees. No ancillary fees may be charged for the general administrative costs of maintaining student records for internal purposes.



THE POLICY – ESSENTIAL FEES

- **Financial Aid Offices**

- Fees that support enhanced financial aid office services to students may be charged on a compulsory basis. This could include the development of a student-facing app or hotline that helps students navigate, understand and monitor the status of their financial aid. Compulsory ancillary fees to support general operating costs of the financial aid office, including the cost of bursaries or other financial aid awards, are not allowed as such services would be considered tuition-related fees and therefore ineligible as compulsory ancillary fees.

- **Campus Safety**

- Fees that support programs and services that promote on-campus safety, including the prevention of sexual violence, are an allowable compulsory ancillary fee. Such programs and services may include but are not limited to walk safe programs which provide students, faculty and staff free night-time accompaniment for those who are uncomfortable or who are unable to walk home alone.

THE POLICY – ESSENTIAL FEES

- **Health and Dental Plans**
- These plans can be charged on a compulsory basis, but colleges must allow students to opt-out if they provide proof of pre-existing coverage.
- **Student Transit Passes**
- If an institution has a compulsory ancillary fee to support a student transit pass agreement that was established prior to January 17, 2019, compulsory ancillary fees may be charged for the duration of the agreement and any subsequent renewals of these agreements. Renewals are understood to be subsequent contracts between the same parties creating uninterrupted service to students.
- No compulsory ancillary fee may be charged to support a student transit pass that did not have a fully executed agreement in place prior to January 17, 2019 (with the exception of agreements considered renewals as noted above).
- **Administration Fee against essential fee categories**





THE POLICY – NON-ESSENTIAL FEES

- All fees not included in the above categories must be optional.

To ensure transparency and clarity, colleges are expected to itemize the individual functions for which fees are charged. **Bundling fees together (e.g., charging a ‘student activity fee’ that encompasses funding for multiple services) is not permitted.**



THE CHANGING FEES

- **“Essential Buckets” were fluid and changed with various pressures applied**

TRANSIT / U-PASS

- Transit Passes

London

Province appears to back down, student transit passes will stay mandatory



'This is fantastic news,' says vice-president of Western University Student Council

[Andrew Lupton](#) · CBC News · Posted: Feb 04, 2019 12:57 PM ET | Last Updated: February 4



VARSITY ATHLETICS

- January 17th assumed essential
- March 19th in draft framework, announced as Non-Essential

Athletic activities that are not available to all students, such as varsity athletic teams, cannot be supported with compulsory athletic and recreation ancillary fees.

- April 1st in final framework, announced Essential

- Athletics and Recreation
- Fees supporting the operating and capital costs of athletic facilities made available to the broader student body may be charged on a compulsory basis

Ontario reverses plan to cut university sports programs

JOE FRIESEN ▸ POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION REPORTER

PUBLISHED APRIL 8, 2019

COMMENTS



TRENDING

- 1 Populist parties make gains in elections but fall short of political order
- 2 Brexit Party heads to sweet victory in European election
- 3 OPINION
Onex is making more headway than its Canada 20 years ago





ROLL-OUT & TIMING

- Preamble to announcement
- January 17th, 2019 – Minister’s Public Press Announcement
- March 19th, 2019 – Draft Framework Made Public
 - Many “next week” conversations in between
- April 1st, 2019 – Final Framework Made Public
- Approval of Ancillary Fees by most institution’s Board of Governors
- Summer 2019 - Student Choice Initiative Opting-Out platform available to students
- September 2019 – Collection of Ancillary Fees under new guidelines



SA & INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

- **Government wanted to “bring consistency and simplicity to the ways students can opt-out of ancillary fees.**
 - Mission NOT accomplished
 - No institutional system is the same. The option was also left open for interpretation for Opt-In vs. Opt-Out
- **Many institutions mentioned a unified approach to Essential vs. Non-Essential categorization**
 - Mission NOT accomplished
 - With institutions being operated so differently, no two student associations have the same categorization of ancillary fees
- **Who the Student Association worked with influenced the results of categorization**
 - Student focused administrations, led to more liberal interpretation of essential
 - More risk focused administration, led to fewer essential fees



EXPECTED OUTCOMES


- Western Fee Structure

<u>MAIN CAMPUS</u>		F2019	2018-2019
	2019-2020	F2020	
Mandatory			
			UCC Fee (\$61.80) + UCC Renovation levy (\$33.48)
Student Building		\$124.53	\$95.28
Academic Support		\$11.73	\$3.37
Transit Pass		\$262.92	\$240.82
Health and Wellness		\$5.40	-
Safe Travel Program		\$15.85	\$10.58
Health Plan		\$161.00	\$138.47
Dental Plan		\$155.34	\$141.50
N/A		\$0.00	\$84.82
			USC Base Fee
Optional			
Government Advocacy		\$8.75	\$3.73
Student Life		\$14.05	-
Peer Programs		\$3.20	-
Clubs Administration		\$6.82	-
Orientation Week Fee (FY students only)		\$118.26	\$100.00
Student Initiative Grants		\$7.43	\$4.04
Gazette		\$19.43	\$20.03
Radio Western		\$12.24	\$12.00
Student Refugee Program		\$0.83	\$0.83
Daycare		\$1.60	\$1.60
Marching Band		\$0.54	\$0.53
Community Legal Services		\$5.72	\$5.61
Faculty and Affiliate Councils		\$4.24	\$4.16
Student Aid Endowment Fee		\$50.00	\$50.00
		\$	\$
Total Student Fees - Main Campus		989.88	917.37





EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- What is Opt-Out percentage going to be?
 - What outcomes does it have on non-essential areas?
 - Events, O'Week, Marketing, Clubs, Campus culture, etc
 - What does it mean for student government nationally?
 - Will student associations maintain autonomy?
- 

TAKE-AWAYS AND TO-DOS

- Pay attention to what is going on in Ontario
- Policy and implementation details have huge impacts, positive and negative
- Identify your value propositions and communicate it
- Assess your organizational risk: What impact would a VSU policy have on your organization
- Professionalize your organization
- Importance of working together and sharing ideas



THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

