

## **POLICY PAPER**

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### International Students

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## Introduction

International students contribute to a positive campus and community environment. With over 60,000 international students studying in Ontario<sup>1</sup> and over 200,000 across Canada, international students comprise a significant minority amongst post-secondary students. These students heavily impact the Canadian economy. In 2009, they spent over \$8 billion on tuition and generated \$455 million in government revenue through various forms of taxation, including income tax<sup>2</sup>.

International students have unique and diverse needs that are not reflected in the domestic student population. These include deregulated tuition, additional transition requirements, immigration and visa requirements, and other concerns as outlined in this policy. These concerns affect the experience of international students when they attend an institution such as McMaster.

For the purposes of this policy, we will define an international student as follows:

- ☒ Any MSU member who is not a Canadian citizen or permanent resident
  - Who is studying at McMaster for at least 1 academic year with the intention of pursuing a McMaster degree; and
  - Whose tuition fees go directly to McMaster.

Students with refugee status may be considered permanent residents, however, their situation will also be discussed in this paper. It is important to acknowledge that refugee students have different needs than international students, but in some areas can be supported in similar ways.

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<sup>1</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2009) Evaluation of the International Student Program. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## Welcoming International Students

Principle: McMaster University should ensure that international students are given the same opportunity to be welcomed into the McMaster community through Welcome Week.

Concern: International students in residence sometimes move in later than the official residence move-in date due to circumstances out of their hands, and thus receive no assistance during their move-in.

Concern: International students can find the process of connecting with others during Welcome Week difficult.

Recommendation: If needed, McMaster should give international students the option of receiving assistance during their move-in period, whether it is early or late, through the help of the Residence Community Advisors and Residence Orientation Representatives.

Recommendation: Residence Orientation Representatives should provide international students with substantial programming during Welcome Week that gets them accustomed to the community as well as connects them with other international students.

International students often come to Canada with minimal resources and knowledge of their destination; often the only knowledge that they do have is of their program and basic knowledge of their post-secondary institution. International students, often do not receive adequate help with settling in academically, dealing with tuition, picking courses, and getting items that they need for the school year. The ISS provides a special welcome Orientation session for new exchange students, and the exchange club 'MIX' also plans numerous events for new students to settle into the community and to get to know one another, but since they do not classify under the definition of international students, this<sup>3</sup> service is limited to just exchange<sup>3</sup>. It can be very stressful for international students to have to address all these issues before even having settled fully into their new environment. Canada ranks seventh in the world in terms of destination of international students. In 2014, there were about 336,497 international students registered in Canada, representing an 83% increase from 2008, and a 10% increase from 2013<sup>45</sup>. In 2012, among Canada's 275,816 international students, approximately 40.3% were in Ontario<sup>6</sup>, and with that number steadily increasing each year, resources become scarce to find and use, which makes it difficult for students to get the appropriate help needed. For McMaster, international students who move into residence later in the year due to personal circumstances do not get the help necessary to get them settled into residence, campus, and

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<sup>3</sup> Venier, Serge. "McMaster University." Welcome Week and Orientation. Accessed November 12, 2016. <https://iss.mcmaster.ca/incoming-exchange-students/exchange-student-guide/welcome-week-and-orientation.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Bureau for International Education "Facts and Figures - CBIE." CBIE. Accessed October 5, 2016. <http://cbie.ca/media/facts-and-figures/>

<sup>6</sup> "Canada International Students by Country (2015)." The Canadian Magazine of Immigration. Accessed October 27, 2016 <http://canadaimmigrants.com/canada-international-students-by-country-2015/>

community. Personal circumstances that may cause an international student to delay their moving-in date include:

- Delay of student Visa
- Delay of flight
- Family circumstance
- Delay of acceptance (which leads to late registration and choosing classes/programs at a later time)

Despite the many reasons for which a student may move in late, none are currently taken into consideration by the University in terms of the planning of residence move-in and Welcome Week.

We recommend that McMaster give international students the option of receiving assistance during move-in on a later date from Residence Community Advisors (CA) and Residence Orientation Representatives (ROR). As international students generally have no other external contacts to help them out when they first arrive on campus, they should be able to apply for assistance to be appropriately accommodated for late arrival.

Welcome Week is a program that almost all first years look forward to in their first week at university, and it also shapes their minds in terms of impressions of the university. Welcome Week is often an international student's first exposure of the University and the city, but there is a lack of programming specifically for international students. International Student Services (ISS), is dedicated to providing support for international students and internationally-minded Canadian students here at McMaster University. The goal of ISS is to promote an internationally informed and cross-culturally sensitive community to enhance the student experience<sup>7</sup>. Yet, so far the services that the ISS provides have been ineffective in this regard.

International Student Services run different programs that includes<sup>8</sup>:

- Mentorship Program
- McMaster Exchange Program
- International Education Week
- The Hamilton Series
- Student Exchange Fair
- Winter Wonderland

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<sup>7</sup> Venier, Serge. "McMaster University." Home. Accessed October 27, 2016. <https://iss.mcmaster.ca/>.

<sup>8</sup> Venier, Serge. "McMaster University." Events and Programs. Accessed October 28, 2016. <https://iss.mcmaster.ca/our-services/events-and-programs.html>.

None of the ISS programs address Welcome Week programming for international students. For many, welcome week is a crucial part of the first year experience. International students with minimal resources and contacts within the University are placed at a disadvantage by not having programs aimed to accommodate and connect the student to other international students across the university.

We recommend that the ISS should provide international students with substantial programming during Welcome Week so that they are accustomed to the community as well connected with other international students. Some of these programs could include:

- A meet and greet with all international students
- Ensuring that international students are well integrated into Welcome Week events including (air bands, bed racing, Shinerama)
- Trips to explore the city

## Integrating into the Community

**Principle:** International students should be familiar with resources aimed at supporting students in adapting to job market opportunities.

**Concern:** The Student Success Centre and International Student Services are ineffectual in meeting the niche needs of specific international student communities.

**Recommendation:** The Student Success Centre and International Student Services should directly connect with the different international student communities on campus, including but not limited to cultural clubs that have a high prevalence of international students.

Co-op opportunities are important to many students. For international students, especially students with language barriers, it is very difficult to attain an appropriate job. McMaster University offers different workshops on career opportunities, and also posts various job offers on OscarPlus from the Student Success Centre to faculty co-ops. However, many international students are not able to access these opportunities due to a few reasons:

- No work permit (international students without a work permit cannot access co-op opportunities on Oscarplus)<sup>9</sup>
- International students are not notified if they do not have a work permit unless they inquire (even if registered under the co-op program)

Developmental workshops are very useful in terms of helping students address areas that are problematic or challenging for them. Workshops can address resume writing/critiquing, mock interviews, cover letter critiquing, how to build a network, how to acquire work permits and more. The MSU recommends that the Student Success Centre and International Student Services connect international students to the different networking events, services and international student communities on campus. These include, but are not limited to cultural clubs that have a high prevalence of international students and specialize in helping improve international student life on campus as well as expand their network. Some of these events may include:

- Professional Development Conferences
- Resume and cover letter critiquing sessions
- Mock Interviews

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<sup>9</sup> "B.Tech Registration and Fees." B.Tech Fees. Accessed November 03, 2016.  
[http://www.eng.mcmaster.ca/eccs/Coopstudents/BTechRegistration\\_fees.html](http://www.eng.mcmaster.ca/eccs/Coopstudents/BTechRegistration_fees.html).

## Resources and Support

Principle: McMaster should ensure international students have access to properly equipped resources, within the institution and within the community, to ensure success in their university experience.

Concern: The success of international students can be hindered by having inadequate access to resources **that directly support them in academics, daily living, and employment.**

Concern: International students are not connected with the resources, knowledge, or contacts needed to organize events within themselves to explore Hamilton as a city and as a community

Concern: International Student Services do not provide the support network needed to help international students adapt to Hamilton and McMaster.

Recommendation: McMaster should provide comprehensive orientation programming, as well as transition, academic supports, and English language supports throughout each international student's time of study. A proportion of international student tuition should be used towards funding these services.

Recommendation: The University should partner with the City of Hamilton, other educational institutions, ethnocultural associations, and other relevant organizations collaborate with, and organize events for, international students attending post-secondary education in Hamilton

Recommendation: McMaster University should provide financial, staffing or in-kind support to Global Hamilton Connect, the local young professional organization that seeks to connect international students and young immigrants to Hamilton as a place to live and work after graduation.

Currently, many international students at the University identify that the on-campus support resources offered to them are inadequate in terms of the support they provide to students. Despite there being learning skills workshops, and programs to help international students overcome language and sociocultural barriers, only a small fraction of international students at the University are utilizing these resources. Multiple factors such as unsuccessful promotion strategies and disorganized program operations create a disconnect between these services and the international student population. Furthermore, aside from those that address the language barrier, many of the available support services are non-specific to the needs of international students. The University must recognize that students from foreign countries not only require adjustment to a new academic system, but they also need more intensive support in a wide spectrum of areas, from daily living to mental health. Additionally, faculties and peers often have inaccurate assumptions regarding international students and ignore their academic strengths. Research show that many international students are in fact more academically focused than their domestic peers and compensate for their

lack of English proficiency with strong work ethics.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the University must provide adequate resources for international students that accommodate their distinct needs, as well as help them cultivate their assets.

To provide more adequate resources and support for international students, a proportion of the international student tuition can be allocated to revamp existing support programs. Despite multiple competing factors for funding, the University must prioritize creating resources that can ensure international student success. Furthermore, most evidence-based support programs do not require immense amounts of funding and can be achieved by proper allocation of the University's resources. For instance, rather than having non-mandatory workshops, workshops that address study skills, reading and writing analysis, and critical analysis abilities should be directly integrated into the curriculum for international students. Support services can provide additional training to their staff and redesign their peer-support programs. For example, peer supporters should ideally be enrolled in the same academic courses or faculty as their paired international students to ensure a higher level of engagement between the student partners. In terms of orientation programming, there should be more Welcome Week events that specifically cater to international students and provide one-on-one guidance to address their concerns. Importantly, the University should continuously seek innovative ways of providing support, and appropriately allocate tuition fees to help establish these resources.

International students often come to Canada with very little resources and knowledge of their surroundings, and have little connection to their life back in their home country. As soon as they arrive, academics, tuition and other responsibilities start to pile up. All of this can cause a lot of stress in their lives. Connecting students to relevant ethnocultural associations may help minimize their stress and to give them a feeling of home. The University should partner with many ethnocultural associations across Hamilton to give international students a wide array of cultural, and religious resources if they choose to use them.

Global Hamilton Connect has a vision to bring awareness and access to opportunities for international students and young newcomers in order to live, work, and play in Hamilton.<sup>11</sup> Global Hamilton Connect showcases employment and volunteer opportunities with the local organizations and employers. Global Hamilton Connect offers events and provides the space for international students to network and support each other. On the Global Hamilton Connect website they host a variety of resources from multiple partners around Hamilton including Mohawk College, McMaster University, Redeemer University College, and Columbia International College.

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<sup>10</sup> Andrade, M. S. "International Students in English-speaking Universities: Adjustment Factors." *Journal of Research in International Education* 5, no. 2 (2006): 131-54. doi:10.1177/1475240906065589.

<sup>11</sup> "Global Hamilton Connect About Page." 2015. Accessed November 2, 2016. <http://globalhamiltonconnect.ca/about/>.



## Communicating Resources

Principle: International students should have important information and resources communicated to them through accessible avenues.

Concern: Since the International Student Services currently only communicates to students by email, international students who are unfamiliar with or do not use their McMaster emails often miss crucial information.

Recommendation: The Student Success Center and the International Student Services should remodel their system of communication to international students; they should consider innovative strategies such as partnering with student clubs to better disseminate information.

Recommendation: Residence life should be involved in the communication of resources so that international students in residence can ease their transition and locate appropriate resources

International Student Services communicates to the students via email, which is an insufficient method of communication. Students have expressed complaints with the lack of information and the lack of activities planned by the ISS, resulting in reduced involvement among international students in clubs and activities. The ISS has a limited number of resources that are available to International students which are:

- Exchange information sessions
- UHIP
- Tutoring Services

The ISS has now expanded their resources, and even have consulting included in their services at the present. This is a helpful service for legal situations, and to become aware of the legal situation in different countries. The consulting service is one of the most used services within the ISS, but there are still many resources that the organization lacks. There are means of fast and effective communication other than email that can be used to communicate different events and resources to international students including Facebook, Whatsapp, and Teamsnap. Residence life at McMaster is an environment that is focused on supporting the needs of students and exposes them to amazing opportunities for growth and development. Research indicates that students who live on campus get a greater overall satisfaction with and success in university, and with the amount of resources, knowledge and care that residence life offers, it can help ease the transition process of international students into their new surroundings<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> "The Residence Advantage." Residence Advantage. Accessed November 12, 2016. [http://housing.mcmaster.ca/Residence\\_life/residence\\_advantage.html](http://housing.mcmaster.ca/Residence_life/residence_advantage.html).

## Access to Healthcare

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Principle: International students should have equal access to healthcare coverage, as compared to domestic students while studying at McMaster.

Concern: As UHIP does not cover all health services, students may be required to pay out-of-pocket.

Concern: UHIP is a mandatory service that poses a financial barrier to international students trying to access health care.

Recommendation: UHIP should cover a range of medical resources, comparable to what OHIP provides to domestic students.

Recommendation: The Government of Ontario should allow international students to enroll in OHIP for the duration of their study period.

The University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) is a private health insurance plan that provides coverage of basic health care services to international students, and is a substitute to the Ontario Health Insurance Plan for domestic students. International students are required to pay up to \$612.00 for themselves, and up to \$1836.00 if they have dependents.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the current UHIP does not meet the standard care afforded to domestic students. Per policy year (from September to August), international students are allotted up to \$1,000,000.00 to cover the cost of medically necessary services, procedures, and treatments.

UHIP covers the cost of one annual health examination by a physician and some services (including those required for the diagnosis and treatment of illness and injury). For students requiring services from other medical professionals, UHIP will cover treatment from an osteopath, podiatrist or physiotherapist in an OHIP Designate Physiotherapy Clinic in Ontario.<sup>14</sup>

Given that health emergencies can occur, it is unfair that international students do not have equal access to health care services for domestic students. In times of health-related crisis, international students should not have to worry about major expenditures that result from a lack of coverage. The actual difference between the services offered to domestic students and international students lies in specialty appointments and community referrals.

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<sup>13</sup> University Health Insurance Plan, "What is UHIP" Accessed October 25, 2016. <http://uhip.ca/all-about-uhip.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Individuals are more likely to seek health care opinion when their health status is compromised. In these scenarios, occasionally, a general practitioner is not enough and individuals require the expertise of a specialist. As of now, McMaster's Student Wellness Centre is not equipped to deal with cases like these. Instead, students are referred out to the community.

For international students, being referred out to the community increases their barriers to health care.<sup>15</sup> A conversation with the clinical nurse manager of the Student Wellness Centre, Cathy Jager, revealed the definite lack of community partners to assist international students.

As healthcare is a right of every individual, McMaster should reach out to more culturally competent community health partners and ensure that resources are in place for emergency and more intricate health status concerns for international students.

The Government of Ontario can greatly simplify and improve the wellbeing of international students by allowing them to enroll in OHIP.<sup>16</sup> Since international students pay taxes through various forms<sup>17</sup>, they should be afforded the same level of health care as domestic students. By eliminating the UHIP fees and coverage gaps, international students can get the same level of care as their domestic counterparts. As students who pay taxes in Ontario, international students are deserving of adequate care. In addition to this, refugee students covered under the Interim Federal Health Program should also be allowed to enrol in OHIP for the duration of their studies.

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<sup>15</sup> Fernlund, Christopher, Anser Abbas, Alisa Bristow, and Brandon Sloan. "International Students Policy Paper." March 2014. Accessed October 29, 2016.  
[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/82/attachments/original/1473369114/International\\_Students\\_document.pdf?1473369114](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/82/attachments/original/1473369114/International_Students_document.pdf?1473369114)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2009) Evaluation of the International Student Program. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

## Equitable Recruitment

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**Principle:** International students should not face disproportionate barriers to pursue quality education at McMaster University as a result of the socioeconomic status of their home country.

**Concern:** Certain countries are overrepresented in the total international student enrollment in Canada. The majority of Canada's international students come from only five countries worldwide.

**Recommendation:** McMaster University, its admissions office, and the federal government should work together to attract students from a variety of different countries, accommodating for different challenges they may face as a result of their home country.

International students bring unique experience, skills, and perspective to the learning environment at a Canadian postsecondary institution. The academic, social, and cultural benefits of a diverse international student population are diminished when students consistently come from only a handful of countries. In 2014, international students in Canada came from over 100 countries, but 60% of these students come from China, India, South Korea, France, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>18</sup> The federal government has historically targeted Mexico, China, and India, perhaps prompting the high percentage of students from these countries.<sup>19</sup> It is important to recognize that advertising influences opportunity. In order to provide any student who might be interested in McMaster with the opportunity to attend, the federal government should diversify its advertising and also address other factors that influence opportunity.

Canada's International Education Strategy aims to double the country's international student population, focusing on identified priority markets, including Brazil, China, and India.<sup>20</sup> The country has seen progress in reaching these goals, as a result of promotion from educational institutions, organizations, and governments.<sup>21</sup> Some barriers have been removed, for instance, students will not need a work permit to work off-campus part-time so long as they have a study permit.<sup>22</sup> However, there remain countries that are ignored by academic institutions as well as

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<sup>18</sup> Canadian Bureau for International Education. "Facts and Figures." CBIE. 2015. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://cbie.ca/media/facts-and-figures/>.

<sup>19</sup> Prairie Research Associates. "Canada First: The 2009 Study of International Students." 2009. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED549797.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> McBride, Karen. "One Year Later: Progress on Canada's International Education Strategy." CBIE. January 23, 2015. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://cbie.ca/one-year-later-progresscanadas-international-education-strategy/>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

governments; students living in these countries should receive more equitable opportunities to attend McMaster. The private sector has potential to play a larger role.

Part of giving students equitable opportunity is focusing on students from low- and middle- income countries. Trends from 2013 to 2014 indicate that the countries with the fastest-growing number of international students are Nigeria (with a 25% increase), Vietnam (16%), and Brazil (15%). Nigeria and Vietnam are both classified as lower-middle-income economies by the World Bank.<sup>23</sup> While these countries are among the top 12 countries of origin, the actual percentage of students from here is below 3%.<sup>24</sup>

A 2009 survey of Canadian international students shows the top push for international students pursuing postsecondary studies in Canada is the quality of education.<sup>25</sup> Disproportionate and biased barriers should not stand in the way. Top barriers to attending postsecondary education in Canada include: obtaining money for living and tuition, receiving information about the institution, getting course credits from home institution transferred, finding a place to live, and obtaining a study permit.<sup>26</sup>

It seems that the problems international students report in applying for admission to Canadian universities differ by home country. For instance, students from North African and Middle Eastern countries are the most likely to report problems in obtaining a study permit.<sup>27</sup> McMaster as well as the Canadian government may be able to take this information into account when thinking about equitable admissions procedures. In this case, it would be helpful to provide documents or guidance in successfully obtaining a permit, making sure that the materials reach those populations in particular. By identifying different needs for different countries of origin, and then working with targeted effort to address these needs, McMaster will be better able to accommodate for disproportionate barriers that present as a result of a prospective student's country of origin.

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<sup>23</sup> The World Bank. "World Bank Country and Lending Groups." World Bank Data Help Desk. Accessed October 29, 2016. <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-countryand-lending-groups>.

<sup>24</sup> Canadian Bureau for International Education. "Facts and Figures." CBIE. 2015. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://cbie.ca/media/facts-and-figures/>.

<sup>25</sup> Prairie Research Associates. "Canada First: The 2009 Study of International Students." 2009. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED549797.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

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## Representation

Principle: McMaster University should support international students in their advocacy efforts.

Concern: The current structure through which international students can advocate gives them little ability to successfully advocate for problems and issues that international students face

Recommendation: International Student Services should create and support an international student advisory board to promote sustainable advocacy efforts by international students.

With almost 21% of the graduate student body and many undergraduate students being international, international students make up a significant portion of the student population.<sup>28</sup> However, they are not given an opportunity to advocate for themselves and for the barriers they may face. Their voices have not been heard for many years as they have minimal avenues from which they can advocate. It is unfair and daunting to ask international students to run an election

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<sup>28</sup> Toronto, A bequest, grey were adopted, the official colours, Toronto to Hamilton, Our Strengths, the top 100, et al. "McMaster University >>." 1887. Accessed November 2, 2016. [http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/html/opr/fast\\_facts/main/about.html](http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/html/opr/fast_facts/main/about.html).

for a seat on a governing body in order for them to be able to advocate for themselves. The McMaster Students Union and the International Student Services should be guiding, promoting, and providing students the proper venues from which they can advocate.

Rather than speculating what the needs of international students are, and catering to those speculations, it is critical to get input from the international students themselves. Thus, an International Student Advisory Board in conjunction with the McMaster Students Union and the International Student Services should be created. This board will be comprised of international students who wish to be involved in the advocating process and will be a primary contact for advocacy efforts for the international student population at McMaster. This board will also be a sustainable advocacy method for the international students rather than focus groups or events that may run only for a single year.

## Visas

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### ***Processing***

Principle: International students should be able to commence their studies at McMaster University in a timely fashion.

Concern: International students' quality of education and student life is hindered by delays in visa processing.

Recommendation: The Government of Canada should work to ensure the processing of student visa applications is as efficient as possible to mitigate delays.

Recommendation: The Government of Canada should reimburse processing fees to international students who are subject to delayed study permit processing.

A delay in visa processing leads to delays in commencing academic studies and participating in orientation activities, thereby aggravating the difficulties that international students face in adjusting to a new environment. Specifically, students from China, India, France, South Korea, and the United States, which consist of 62.1% of the total international students enrolled in Ontario post-secondary institutions, face an average visa processing time of 2 to 7 weeks.<sup>29</sup> There is also an approximately 10-day shipping delay between when an application is approved to when the visa is received in the mail. As the Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) outlines on its official website, the factors influencing the visa processing time are the number of applications received, the resources at the office, the length of time an applicant takes to respond to requests for information, the need for medical and security screening, and the differences in mail service.<sup>30</sup>

Ideally, the CIC prioritizes study permit applications to ensure that all qualified international students receive an approved permit as soon as possible. The government can achieve this by addressing the factors above. Aside from its current initiatives of providing weekly processing time updates and allocating applications around its global network of offices, the government should consider hiring additional staff at times when there is a high volume of visa applications to increase

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<sup>29</sup> "Check Application Processing times." Government of Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Communications Branch. 2016. Accessed November 02, 2016. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/times/index.asp>.

<sup>30</sup> "Help Centre: Why Are There Differences in Processing times among Regions and Offices?" Government of Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Communications Branch. 2016. Accessed November 2, 2016. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=069&top=3>.

processing efficiency.<sup>31</sup> To reduce shipping delay and enhance accessibility of processing services, there should be more Visa Application Centres (VACs) established in rural areas. For instance, in China, there are only 4 VACs and all are in economically advanced cities such as Beijing and Shanghai.<sup>32</sup> Students applying from smaller towns will thus have a higher chance of facing processing delays than applicants from urban areas, but the CIC can help resolve this discrepancy by having a stronger presence in less developed communities. Furthermore, if there are visa processing delays unrelated to the student's conduct that clearly impact the student's academic schedule, the CIC should reimburse the processing fees to the student. By actively attempting to mitigate study permit processing delays, the Government of Canada can help ensure that international students have a smoother academic transition.

### ***Facilitating the Visa Process***

Principle: McMaster University should provide high quality and timely advice regarding visas and immigration to current and potential students.

Concern: Due to changes in legislation, institutes are not legally allowed to hire visa and immigration advisors.

Recommendation: McMaster University should be able to connect international students with an external visa and immigration advisor, to facilitate connections between the government and students

Recommendation: The University should increase international students' awareness of the realistic options, and resources (including off-campus services) they could seek for advice, on visa processing and immigration.

The Canadian government has great interest in international students remaining in Canada postgraduation, as demonstrated by the Honourable Minister of Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship John McCallum describing international students as the "cream of the crop in terms of potential future Canadians".<sup>33</sup> Given that the federal government has identified education – and particularly academic credentials obtained in Canada – as a huge asset to Canada, a greater effort

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<sup>31</sup> "Help Centre: Why did processing times information change?" Government of Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Communications Branch. 2016. Accessed November 2, 2016. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=1185&top=3>

<sup>32</sup> Canada Visa Information. Accessed November 02, 2016. <http://www.vfsglobal.ca/Canada/china/english/index.html>.

<sup>33</sup> "Express Entry Immigration System Undergoing Review to Help Foreign Students." Canadian Citizenship & Immigration Resource Center. Accessed November 02, 2016. <http://www.immigration.ca/en/immigrationnewsarticles-menu/222-canada-immigration->

should be made by academic institutions to support international students who are interested in working in Canada or obtaining Canadian citizenship after graduation.

In 2011, the passing of Bill C-35 amended the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. As of this amendment, immigration consultation can only be offered through a provincial law society, a registered Immigration Consultants of Canada Regulatory Council (ICCRC), or an accredited Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC).<sup>30</sup> Importantly, Bill C-35 no longer allows academic institutes to hire visa and immigration consultants.<sup>31</sup> This policy was likely put in place to help prevent legal complications for students and academic institutes. However, it does not address the fact that many international students find visa and immigration requirements challenging to navigate. The barrier to accessible resources is preventing students from engaging in visa and immigration processes, as well as leading them to seek inaccurate advice from untrained professionals. Any minor and preventable mistakes made in the application may also severely jeopardize the student's ability to work in, and become a permanent resident of, Canada. Therefore, University advisors must provide attainable resources and referrals to support international students.

Despite legal restrictions to hiring visa and immigration advisors, the University should commit to alternative ways of supporting international students who are interested in applying for visas and immigration. As the processes of attaining employment and citizenship begin as soon as international students begin their studies, if not sooner, McMaster has an obligation to partner with students in the area of immigration. Currently, International Student Services at McMaster University provides undergraduate and graduate international students with access to weekly consultations with an immigration consultant. It is essential that the consultation service continues to operate for current and future international student cohorts. Additionally, efforts to inform students about the consultation service and how to register should be maintained if not improved. The consultation service is posted on the OscarPlus and International Student Services websites, but these websites alone are unlikely to inform all international students about the service.

International students are also limited to 10-minute meetings with the immigration consultant. Given the limited time to meet with the immigration consultant, international students may want to seek additional information or consultation. The website of International Student Services at McMaster University offers links to external resources on immigration and visa processing, but should also consider providing the contact information of off-campus visa and immigration advisors (including consultation fees and student pricing); the International Student Services should regularly maintain the relevance and accuracy of all information. A designated University body, such as the International Student Services, should also inform incoming international students about the information resources so that students can begin to plan visa and immigration processes as early as possible.



## Tuition

### *Regulation*

Principle: International student tuition costs should be comparable to that of domestic students' and should not increase in an unregulated fashion from year to year.

Concern: The unpredictable increases of the tuition of international students has the potential to have a negative impact on their ability to pay tuition costs from year to year and complete their education.

Concern: The government does not regulate international student tuition, resulting in McMaster's international students being subject to unfairly high fees.

Recommendation: The Ontario tuition funding framework should be reworked to account for international students and regulate their fees in a comparable way to that of domestic students.

Recommendation: McMaster University should have publicly available, predictable increases in international student tuition.

As a result of underfunding from the federal government, provinces, including Ontario, introduced differential tuition fees for international students as a source of funding for institutions in the late 1970s. In the 1990s, both federal and provincial governments cut funding for university education, and institutions have placed most of the resulting financial burden on international students, as they have little political influence in Canada.<sup>34</sup> Currently, there is a lack of government regulation pertaining to international student fees, which perpetuates the high differential fees required of international students.

Currently, there is a lack of government regulation pertaining to international student fees, which has resulted in a dramatic increase in tuition for international students across Canada. Based on 2015-2016 estimates, tuition at McMaster more than triples for an international student compared to a domestic student.<sup>35</sup> When tuition can cost more than the annual wage of a student's family, international students face great obstacles in accessing postsecondary education.<sup>34</sup> As tuition increases, a Canadian education may only be feasible for the wealthiest students.

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<sup>34</sup> Canadian Federation of Students. "Tuition Fees for International Undergraduate Students." University of Toronto Students' Union. 2012. Accessed October 29, 2016.

<http://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/201211-Factsheet-IntUgrads-en1.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> McMaster University. "Cost Estimator." McMaster University Future Students. 2015.

Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://future.mcmaster.ca/money-matters/cost-estimator/>. <sup>34</sup> Canadian Federation of Students. "Tuition Fees for International Undergraduate Students." University of Toronto Students' Union. 2012. Accessed October 29, 2016.

<http://www.utsu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/201211-Factsheet-IntUgrads-en1.pdf>.

For domestic students, tuition is regulated by the Ontario government and tuition increases are capped.<sup>36</sup> However, for an international student, tuition rates that are not regulated are significant financial barriers. The Ontario government, McMaster University, and the federal government can coordinate to develop a framework for funding that would keep costs low. Provincial re-regulation is essential for reasonable international student tuition costs, and would allow for international students to be treated more fairly when compared to domestic students. For instance, if their tuition increases were also capped, international students would be better able to predict increases in tuition. This change would lower the financial barriers that international students face. In addition, if federal funding to the province were restored, universities would feel less pressure to move its financial burden onto its international student population.

### ***Reflecting the Real Cost of Education***

Principle: International students should pay the real cost of their tuition which should not be raised to make up for a lack of funds at McMaster University.

Concern: International student tuition is increased in an unregulated fashion and is used to make up for lack of funds by the university.

Concern: The tuition of international students moves further away from the real cost of their education as a result of increasing their tuition at a higher rate than the growth of the tuition of domestic students.

Recommendation: McMaster should advocate on behalf of international students to ensure tuition reflects the real cost of education.

Part of the rationale to McMaster significantly driving up the cost of international student tuition is because universities do not receive operating funds to subsidize the cost of their education. The Ontario government has declared international students ineligible for funding in 1996, while domestic undergraduate students have approximately half of their education funded by the provincial and federal governments.<sup>37</sup>

It is unfair for students to be paying tuition that exceed the real cost of their education. The real cost of education can be defined as the proportional amount of money that a student pays for the

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<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. "New Tuition Framework." Ontario Newsroom. March 28, 2013. Accessed October 29, 2016. <https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2013/03/new-tuition-framework.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Ontario. Ministry of Colleges and Universities. The Ontario Operating Funds Distribution Manual: A Manual Governing the Distribution of Ontario Government Operating Grants to Ontario Universities and University Related Institutions (Formula Manual). Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

necessary services covered by tuition including their courses, academic resources, and their share of operating costs as compared to domestic students. This does not include additional costs for services and operations not accessible to students or are used to fund other students.

It is clear that the current investments that international students make towards tuition far exceeds the real cost of education. The University of British Columbia's Vantage College, for example, has drawn criticism for using international students as revenue who are paying more than the real cost of their education.<sup>38</sup> In the province of Ontario, international student tuition rose on average

10.7% per year,<sup>39</sup> and 6% at McMaster University between 2015-2016<sup>40</sup>, a rate much higher than the domestic provincial 3% tuition cap. This further highlights that the growth of international students' tuition is far outpacing that of domestic students, moving further away from their costs reflecting the real cost of education. It is important to note that the real cost of education does differ between international and domestic students as a result of the additional supports and services international students may provide, however current rates greatly exceed even these additional costs.

It may seem unclear how to specifically identify the real cost of post-secondary education for international students as a result of several variables that obscure the process, however it is possible for McMaster to advocate to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and University to consolidate their available data to make this estimate. It is important that international student tuition consists of the sum of tuition and government revenue allocated to domestic students, in addition to costs of supporting them.

### ***Transparency***

Principle: McMaster University should spend revenue generated from international student tuition on support services and should clearly present how this money is spent.

Concern: It can be unclear on how institutions spend revenue from international student fees.

Recommendation: McMaster University must be held accountable for how they spend the tuition of international students and provide information on how it is being spent.

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<sup>38</sup> Snider, Rebecca. "Unfair UBC Advantage?" Gazette Magazine. March 10, 2015. Accessed November 12, 2016. <https://gazettemag.com/unfair-ubc-advantage/>

<sup>39</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 477-0077 - Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study, annual (dollars), CANSIM (database). Accessed: October 25, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> McMaster University. Financial Affairs. *Tuition Fees Proposed for Graduate and Undergraduate Students 2015-2016*. April 17, 2015. Accessed November 12, 2016. <https://www.mcmaster.ca/bms/pdf/tuition15-16.pdf>

As highlighted previously, the real cost of international students' education may not be explicitly quantified at McMaster, leaving it unclear as to how much revenue the university should generate from these students to cover their education. Universities should strive to be as transparent as possible when spending student money. Considering the push by the federal government to make more investments into increasing enrolment, however, it is unclear where this additional revenue from international students' tuition will go.

While it is important to advocate for greater overall accountability, the large discrepancy between international student tuition with domestic, in addition to the general lack of information regarding how this money is spent, makes international tuition a particular area where transparent information is critical. Providing clear information on how international tuition is spent will further demonstrate McMaster's attention and care to the wellbeing and success of students. This can be done through tuition breakdowns on Mosaic, infographics presented through Student Accounts and Cashiers, or through the McMaster website.

## Financial Aid

### *Financial Assistance for International Students*

Principle: Academically qualified international students should not be prevented from attending post-secondary education due to financial barriers that they may face.

Concern: International students from low-income backgrounds who could qualify for education at McMaster University are facing financial barriers.

Concern: There is currently a lack of needs-based financial assistance available to first and second year international students.

Concern: Changes in the value of international currency may have tremendous impact on the ability to pay, as students are required to pay the equivalent in Canadian dollars.

Recommendation: McMaster University should use tuition set-aside funds for needs-based financial assistance for incoming international students.

Recommendation: The provincial government should establish a plan that offers loans to international students in the event of an unexpected economic change.

Recommendation: More needs-based scholarships and financial assistance should be publicized to all international students.

Students who are academically qualified to participate in McMaster University's learning environment should not be prevented from attending McMaster University due to financial barriers. Incoming international students must prove to the federal government that they have adequate financial support to study in Canada. In Ontario, for a single student, the minimum amount is tuition plus 10,000 for a 12-month period.<sup>41</sup> As described previously, the cost of postsecondary education for international students has increased tremendously in recent years, increasing the likelihood of students who meet the academic requirements to study at McMaster facing financial barriers to attend. In addition, economic situations in students' home countries may influence the ability of the student and/or their family to pay tuition. For instance, in 2016 the Nigerian naira fell to a record low against the dollar and nearly halved in value.<sup>42</sup> As a result, for McMaster students from Nigeria to continue to pay the same Canadian dollar value of tuition, their costs nearly double.

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<sup>41</sup> Government of Canada. 2015. "Get The Right Documents". *Government Of Canada*. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/study-how-documents.asp#doc3>.

<sup>42</sup> Wallace, Paul. 2016. "Nigeria Currency Crisis Explained: What We Know And Don'T Know". *Bloomberg*. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-05-25/nigerian-currency-crisis-explained-what-we-know-and-don-t-know>.

Many international students do not receive government assistance from their home country,<sup>43</sup> and international students are also limited in the financial assistance that they can receive from Canada. A survey by the Canadian Bureau of International Education shows that only 6% of international students attending university and college in Canada received a Government of Canada grant or loan, and 39% reported receiving a school loan.<sup>44</sup> Specific to Ontario, domestic students can access the Ontario Student Assistance Program, as well as specific university scholarships and bursaries.<sup>45</sup> In an international students focus group at McMaster, students identified that the entrance scholarships that are offered to them are small in value and do not match up to the high tuition fees that they pay. This is consistent with the finding from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance that, while there is more funding available for graduate students, on average, international undergraduate students receive significantly less than domestic students in financial support from university budgets.<sup>46</sup> There are some scholarships available to McMaster students regardless of citizenship, but many are merit-based and competitive.<sup>47</sup>

International students in levels 1 and 2 at McMaster are not eligible for undergraduate bursary funding.<sup>48</sup> In order to support students in the early years of their undergraduate education, more needs-based financial assistance should exist. This is especially pertinent for students in level 1, as their admission to McMaster could be contingent on obtaining a needs-based scholarship in order to meet the federal financial requirement. Currently, 10% of Ontario domestic student tuition fee increases are used to fund needs-based financial assistance for domestic students.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, McMaster should have a tuition set-aside where money from international student tuition creates a shared funding pool that would not require public funds. When quantifying financial assistance for international students, McMaster should not only take tuition into account, but also cost of living, including food and accommodation.

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<sup>43</sup> Prairie Research Associates. "Canada First: The 2009 Study of International Students." 2009. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED549797.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> McMaster University. "Student Financial Aid & Scholarships." Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships. 2016. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://sfas.mcmaster.ca/>.

<sup>46</sup> Fernlund, Christopher, Anser Abbas, Alisa Bristow, and Brandon Sloan. "International Students Policy Paper." March 2014. Accessed October 29, 2016. [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/82/attachments/original/1473369114/International\\_Students\\_document.pdf?1473369114](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/82/attachments/original/1473369114/International_Students_document.pdf?1473369114).

<sup>47</sup> McMaster University. "Student Financial Aid & Scholarships." Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships. 2016. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://sfas.mcmaster.ca/>.

<sup>48</sup> McMaster University. 2016. "Bursaries". *Future Students*. <http://future.mcmaster.ca/money-matters/funding/bursaries/>.

<sup>49</sup> Fernlund, Christopher, Anser Abbas, Alisa Bristow, and Brandon Sloan. "International Students Policy Paper." March 2014. Accessed October 29, 2016. [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/82/attachments/original/1473369114/International\\_Students\\_document.pdf?1473369114](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/82/attachments/original/1473369114/International_Students_document.pdf?1473369114).

Ontario provincial financial aid, through the Ontario Student Assistance Program, is not available to international students. In unexpected situations where a student's financial ability is drastically hindered, international students have few options for support. Commercial loans, through banking institutions, may be difficult to obtain, especially in times of economic depression. Government loans should offer funding in these circumstances.

The scholarships and financial assistance that are available for international students at McMaster University should also be easily accessible. An international student focus group at McMaster found that students had a lack of awareness for scholarships and financial assistance that they could receive as international students. The university should better advertise these opportunities, highlighting that international students are eligible.

### ***Financial Assistance for Students with Refugee Status***

Principle: Financial need should not be a barrier for students of refugee status who want to achieve a post-secondary education.

Concern: Financial assistance specific to students of refugee status is difficult to access.

Recommendation: McMaster should continue to offer financial assistance programs towards students of refugee status.

Recommendation: The Government of Ontario should further subsidize tuition and provide sizeable grants to students of refugee status.

Refugees are at a high risk of experiencing poor health care, poverty, low education, and homelessness.<sup>50</sup> Without financial assistance, refugee students may be unable to access postsecondary education. Students with refugee status are eligible for financial assistance through OSAP, but often OSAP is not enough to cover tuition and cost of living.<sup>51</sup> Other financial aid, specifically aid that is targeted to refugee students is sparse at Ontario universities as well as via external organizations.<sup>52</sup> In addition, it is difficult to access because they may not have documentation of their academic skills or extracurricular involvement in their home country.<sup>53</sup> McMaster and the McMaster Students Union (MSU) recently partnered to support a student refugee program. The MSU contributes to the program through a \$1.53 fee charged annually to every undergraduate student. McMaster's additional contribution will bring the annual budget of the

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<sup>50</sup> "Understanding the Racialization of Poverty in Ontario: An Introduction in 2007." August 2007. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://www.learningandviolence.net/lrnteach/material/PovertyFactSheets-aug07.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> Fernlund, Christopher, Anser Abbas, Alisa Bristow, and Brandon Sloan. "International Students Policy Paper." March 2014. Accessed October 29, 2016.

[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/82/attachments/original/1473369114/International\\_Students\\_document.pdf?1473369114](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/82/attachments/original/1473369114/International_Students_document.pdf?1473369114).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

program to almost \$100 000. Donations from individuals are also accepted. This fund supports the sponsoring of a student refugee through the World University Service of Canada (WUSC).<sup>54</sup> This is a significant move by the MSU, and McMaster should continue to offer financial aid in other avenues as well.

Students with refugee status would particularly benefit from free financial aid, such as grants, that does not need to be repaid. As such, McMaster as well as the Ontario government should offer more free aid.

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<sup>54</sup> "McMaster and McMaster Students Union Partner to Aid Student Refugees." McMaster Daily News. October 6, 2015. Accessed October 29, 2016. <http://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/article/mcmaster-and-mcmaster-students-union-partner-toaid-student-refugees/>.

## Employment

**Principle:** Qualified international students in Ontario should be able to access meaningful employment on and off campus during the course of their studies, as well as having sufficient opportunities to establish a career post-graduation.

**Concern:** International students often have difficulty obtaining meaningful employment and work experiences in Canada during their studies.

**Recommendation:** Businesses in the community and McMaster should increase the number of work and volunteer opportunities that are available specifically to international students.

**Recommendation:** The provincial government should actively help ensure that employers have accurate information regarding the hiring of international students and universities should provide employment skills training that is more accessible for the international student population.

**Recommendation:** The federal government should facilitate the process by which international students can obtain a work permit, so they can gain meaningful work experience in Canada.

**Recommendation:** The federal government should extend the post-graduation work permit duration cap to facilitate immigration into Canada.

International students trying to gain employment face many barriers in gaining employment both during the course of their studies and after graduation. While international students are permitted to work on campus during their study duration, there are limited opportunities available for students to work on campus. International students can obtain a work permit to work off campus during their study duration and during the summer,<sup>55</sup> but the process is difficult. Students must obtain a Social Insurance Number and there are specific eligibility requirements for the permit.

Post-graduation, international students are only allowed to work in Canada for the length of time that they studied in Canada, up to three years.<sup>56</sup> This poses barriers for those who wish to launch a career post-graduation and limits the opportunity to immigrate to Canada. Relaxing the restrictions on post-graduation work permits can allow international students to properly set up a career in Canada, should they choose to do so. Immigration minister John McCallum stated that “international students are the perfect candidates to become Canadian citizens...”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Government of Canada, “Work off campus.” Last modified February 3, 2015. Accessed October 27, 2016. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/work-offcampus.asp>

<sup>56</sup> Government of Canada, “Determine your eligibility - Work after graduation.” Last modified May 27, 2016. Accessed October 27, 2016. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/workhttp://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/work-postgrad-who.asp>

Currently, the post-graduate work permit program is not designed for international student success. A Citizenship & Immigration Canada report on the program showed that it is creating a low-wage, underemployed work force amongst the international students because of increased barriers to accessing stable, long-term employment.<sup>52</sup> This is why the Canadian Government should modify the program to extend the amount of time international students can work in Canada, as well as remove barriers to obtaining a work permit and citizenship.

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Moira MacDonald, "Canadian government signals renewed openness to international students." University Affairs. May 10, 2016. Accessed October 28, 2016.  
<http://www.universityaffairs.ca/news/news-article/canadian-government-signals-renewed-openness-international-students/openness-international-students/>

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Simona Choise, "Work permit program for international students needs reform, experts say." The Globe and Mail. April 7, 2016. Accessed October 31, 2016.  
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/work-permit-program-for-international-students-needs-reform-experts-say/article29563194/students-needs-reform-experts-say/article29563194/>



## Policy Statement

**Whereas:** McMaster University should ensure that international students are given the same opportunity to be welcomed into the McMaster community through Welcome Week.

**Whereas:** International students should be familiar with resources aimed at supporting students in adapting to job market opportunities.

**Whereas:** McMaster should ensure international students have access to properly equipped resources, within the institution and within the community, to ensure success in their university experience.

**Whereas:** International students should have important information and resources communicated to them through accessible avenues.

**Whereas:** International students should have equal access to healthcare coverage, as compared to domestic students while studying at McMaster.

**Whereas:** Principle: International students should not face disproportionate barriers to pursue quality education at McMaster University as a result of the socioeconomic status of their home country.

**Whereas:** McMaster University should support international students in their advocacy efforts.

**Whereas:** International students should be able to commence their studies at McMaster University in a timely fashion.

**Whereas:** McMaster University should provide high quality and timely advice regarding visas and immigration to current and potential students.

**Whereas:** International student tuition costs should be comparable to that of domestic students' and should not increase in an unregulated fashion from year to year.

**Whereas:** International students should pay the real cost of their tuition which should not be raised to make up for a lack of funds at McMaster University.

**Whereas:** McMaster University should spend revenue generated from international student tuition on support services and should clearly present how this money is spent.

**Whereas:** Academically qualified international students should not be prevented from attending post-secondary education due to financial barriers that they may face.

**Whereas:** Financial need should not be a barrier for students of refugee status who want to achieve a post-secondary education.

**Whereas:** Qualified international students in Ontario should be able to access meaningful employment on and off campus during the course of their studies, as well as having sufficient opportunities to establish a career post-graduation.

**Be It Resolved That:** If needed, McMaster should give international students the option of receiving assistance during their move-in period, whether it is early or late, through the help of the Residence Community Advisors and Residence Orientation Representatives.

**Be It Further Resolved That (BIFRT):** Residence Orientation Representatives should provide international students with substantial programming during Welcome Week that gets them accustomed to the community as well as connects them with other international students.

**BIFRT:** The Student Success Centre and International Student Services should directly connect with the different international student communities on campus, including but not limited to cultural clubs that have a high prevalence of international students.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should provide comprehensive orientation programming, as well as transition, academic supports, and English language supports throughout each international student's time of study. A proportion of international student tuition should be used towards funding these services.

**BIFRT:** The University should partner with the City of Hamilton, other educational institutions, ethnocultural associations, and other relevant organizations collaborate with, and organize events for, international students attending post-secondary education in Hamilton

**BIFRT:** McMaster University should provide financial, staffing or in-kind support to Global Hamilton Connect, the local young professional organization that seeks to connect international students and young immigrants to Hamilton as a place to live and work after graduation.

**BIFRT:** The Student Success Center and the International Student Services should remodel their system of communication to international students; they should consider innovative strategies such as partnering with student clubs to better disseminate information.

**BIFRT:** UHIP should cover a range of medical resources, comparable to what OHIP provides to domestic students.

**BIFRT:** The Government of Ontario should allow international students to enroll in OHIP for the duration of their study period.

**BIFRT:** McMaster University, its admissions office, and the federal government should work together to attract students from a variety of different countries, accommodating for different challenges they may face as a result of their home country.

**BIFRT:** International Student Services should create and support an international student advisory board to promote sustainable advocacy efforts by international students.

**BIFRT:** The Government of Canada should work to ensure the processing of student visa applications is as efficient as possible to mitigate delays.

**BIFRT:** The Government of Canada should reimburse processing fees to international students who are subject to delayed study permit processing.

**BIFRT:** McMaster University should be able to connect international students with an external visa and immigration advisor, to facilitate connections between the government and students

**BIFRT:** The University should increase international students' awareness of the realistic options, and resources (including off-campus services) they could seek for advice, on visa processing and immigration.

**BIFRT:** The Ontario tuition funding framework should be reworked to account for international students and regulate their fees in a comparable way to that of domestic students.

**BIFRT:** McMaster University should have publicly available, predictable increases in international student tuition.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should advocate on behalf of international students to ensure tuition reflects the real cost of education.

**BIFRT:** McMaster University must be held accountable for how they spend the tuition of international students and provide information on how it is being spent.

**BIFRT:** McMaster University should use tuition set-aside funds for needs-based financial assistance for incoming international students.

**BIFRT:** Recommendation: The provincial government should establish a plan that offers loans to international students in the event of an unexpected economic change.

**BIFRT:** More needs-based scholarships and financial assistance should be publicized to academically-qualified international students.

**BIFRT:** McMaster should continue to offer financial assistance programs towards students of refugee status.

**BIFRT:** The Government of Ontario should further subsidize tuition and provide sizeable grants to students of refugee status.

**BIFRT:** Businesses in the community and McMaster should increase the number of work and volunteer opportunities that are available specifically to international students.

**BIFRT:** The provincial government should actively help ensure that employers have accurate information regarding the hiring of international students and universities should provide employment skills training that is more accessible for the international student population.

**BIFRT:** The federal government should facilitate the process by which international students can obtain a work permit, so they can gain meaningful work experience in Canada.

**BIFRT:** The federal government should extend the post-graduation work permit duration cap to facilitate immigration into Canada.