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# THIS ALTERIATIVE INIVERSITY



# First Annual Alternative University Guide

Our first annual Alternative University Guide is designed for you, the socially conscious student—the one with a petition pen in one hand and a protest sign in the other. In this guide, you'll find everything the mainstream magazine guides won't tell you: which schools have the best LGBTO rights, the best mental health programs, and the most accessible transit. We evaluate what really matters to you: environmental practices, support for students who are parents, sexual health, disabilities support—and more. We also tell you what schools are fighting rape culture in innovative new ways and what schools have some of the most active student advocacy clubs. Armed with this guide, you'll be better informed to make the best choices for your post-secondary education—and truly find a place where you can feel school pride.

# Housing

### **Co-operative housing**

Students interested in co-ops—non-profit, affordable housing, controlled by members of the co-op with no outside landlord have options across Canada. The Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada lists independently-operated co-ops across Canada, including many throughout the Greater Toronto Area, and provides general information on the housing model. Perhaps more importantly, it also has a university student co-operative housing fund that provide loans to existing co-ops and those who may want to develop new co-op housing.

### **Green residences**

McGill's recently-opened EcoResidence is an uber green, co-ed building made out of the shell of another, older residence. It's created almost entirely from recycled materials and has energy-conserving heat and ventilation systems. The residence also has recycling and composting pick-ups, that latter of which is used to fertilize the campus gardens. Cape Breton University in Sydney, N.S. keeps its Harriss Hall residence eco-friendly with a closed-loop geothermal heating and cooling system, energyefficient kitchens, and a parking lot storm water capture system.

### **UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN** Saskatoon, Sask.

The university's innovative, still-in-progress College Quarter is a 59-hectare, mixed use space featuring residences, yes, but also ice rinks, a hotel and a 860-metre tree-lined walkway and bike path called the "GreenWay" (which is both well-lit and designed to be a micro-climate—so that you can pleasantly walk to wherever you're going in the winter). The school will also plant plenty of new trees as part of the project, increasing the overall pedestrian-friendly vibe. A bridge and crosswalk are also included in the master plan, released in 2010.

# LGBTQ community, advocacy and support

### MCGILL UNIVERSITY

### Montreal, Que.

Oueer McGill is the largest student-run LGBTO organization in Canada. The non-profit receives \$40,000 in annual funding, allowing it to have paid staff and to run projects and services both on- and off-campus. The group also hosts social and political activities, plus weekly discussion groups. Notable resources include Queerline, a listening, referral and support line for students, and Allies, a program that offers free workshops to high school students and teachers to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues. Queer McGill's advocacy has had a positive influence over school policy. Since 2011, students can use their preferred first name—as opposed to their legal name—on student documents, including student cards, transcripts, and class lists. It's a huge victory for students whose legal name doesn't represent their gender presentation or identity.

### UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

### Toronto, Ont.

LGBTOUT, founded in 1969, is the oldest LGBTQ student organization in Canada. Every September, LGBTOUT organizes Queer Orientation, a variation of frosh week that introduces new U of T students to the LGBT communities on campus and throughout Toronto. The university also offers an undergraduate degree in Sexual Diversity Studies and has a dedicated Sexual and Gender Diversity Office.

### UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA Vancouver and Kelowna, B.C.

In 2002, UBC launched the Positive Space Campaign at its Vancouver campus. The initiative is designed to increase awareness of LGBTQ issues, ensure school safety, and create a positive campus culture for the school's LGBTO students and community. There are nearly 700 positive space resources persons at UBC-students and staff who have completed workshops through the Equity and Inclusion Office. Resources persons have training on gender identification and sexual orientation issues and resources on campus. They also display positive space posters in their classrooms, offices, and living spaces to visually indicate safe and inclusive environments. The school also offers regular workshops and education sessions, open to everyone on campus.



# Mental health services, advocacy and support

### MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

### Hamilton, Ont.

Founded in 2008, COPE is a student-run initiative meant to eliminate stigma surrounding mental health issues, create awareness, and raise funds for research and resources. The program has a permanent information table in the student centre, and offers regular events such as de-stress workshops. In 2011, COPE partnered with the Mood Disorder Society of Canada to launch the Elephant in the Room campaign. As part of the campaign, students purchased giant paper elephants for \$5 and posted them around campus to indicate stigma-free areas. The initiative also hosts the Crazy for Art Festival on campus, featuring writing, visual art, and music that comments on the culture of mental health. COPE has also won the McMaster Student Union Club of the year award for the past four years.

### UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

### Victoria, B.C.

The University of Victoria holds regular roundtable discussions called "Let's Talk Mental Health" to reduce mental health stigma, and also connect students with resources that support mental health. Of particular note, the school also has an Indigenous Student Support Centre, which provides culturally-appropriate counselling services to aboriginal students who may be experiencing mental health issues. Last year, the Office of Indigenous Affairs held a Week of Wellness that raised awareness of how mental health is viewed in aboriginal cultures, the meaning of healing, and what aboriginal communities are doing to address mental health issues.

### **UNIVERSITY OF KING'S COLLEGE**

### Halifax, N.S.

The King's Mental Health Awareness Collective (KMHAC) holds weekly forums for students to discuss mental health issues. The collective also publishes a zine called Speaking our Minds several times a year, providing an avenue for students to communicate about mental health in their own words and images. Other creative initiatives include: Stand up for your Mental Health, a group that teaches stand-up comedy to people with mental illness as a way to build confidence and eliminate stigma. Students may also find an outlet at We Are Talking, a student group that meets regularly to discuss issues such as body image, the environment, and LGBTQ identity. Discussions are lead by acclaimed journalist and producer, Annett Wolf.

### **CARLETON UNIVERSITY**

### Ottawa, Ont.

In 2009, Carleton became the first Canadian University to implement a student mental health framework. The school is currently participating in the Mental Health Commission of Canada's three year national case study to evaluate "psychological health and safety in the workplace." As part of the case study, Carleton University Students' Association members will receive Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). Plus, in November, the school hosts Thrive Week, a series of events and activities around campus to improve mental health awareness.

# Sexual health, advocacy and awareness

### TRENT UNIVERSITY Peterborough, Ont.

Trent's Safe, Sexy, and Consensual Association holds campaigns throughout the year to increase awareness and eliminate rape culture on campus, as well as to promote safe, consensual sex. Campaigns include Consent is Sexy, No Means No, and Cover Me, a campaign that promotes sexual health awareness and provides students with safer sex kits.

# **UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH**

### Guelph, Ont.

Guelph hosts Canada's largest and longest-running sexual health conference—more than 35 years and counting. The school also has two associations dedicated to increasing awareness about sexual health. One, called SAFE (Sexual Assault Free Environment), promotes respectful relationships, and education on issues of sexual assault. partner abuse, and consent. The other, NAKED/ SpeakOUT, aims to eliminate forms of oppression on campus such as homophobia and transphobia. The group encourages open discussion about sex and sexuality, as well as regular sexual health checkups. It also hosts interactive events to communicate its progressive message, such as the group's annual Sexposé.

### **CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY** Montreal, Oue.

After a successful two-year campaign by the school's Centre for Gender Advocacy. Concordia's Sexual Assault Resource Centre opened in November 2013. The centre offers referrals for onand off- campus counselling for victims of sexual assault, and provides workshops for sports team coaches and residence staff on sexual assault and consent. The centre also has its own library of resources on assault, consent, and sexual health.

# Diversity and inclusion

### UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA Vancouver and Kelowna, B.C.

The university's Equity and Inclusion Office works to combat racism, harassment, and discrimination on campus and within the institution. Its mission: ensure the university is diverse and inclusive space for both staff and students. The office runs several regular equity-themed workshops, on everything from anti-racism to anti-bullying to human rights law. It also started a positive space campaign for the LGBTQ community, and runs an annual diversity and equity week, featuring Special Olympics fundraising, bannock-making, spoken word open mics, and diversity discussions—including, in 2014, one that focussed on the events in Ferguson.

### RYERSON UNIVERSITY

### Toronto, Ont.

Founded in 1999, Ryerson's Diversity Institute is dedicated to researching diversity in the workplace. The institute looks at all aspects of diversity (from race to ability to sexual orientation), with a focus on how to break down barriers to full participation. Current projects include: the Black Experience Project, a research project into the lived experience of black Torontonians; the 360 Project, a project that tackles racism in Toronto in partnership with the Urban Alliance on Race Relations; and the Immigrant, Diversity and Inclusion Project, which, in partnership with RBC, funds research into immigration challenges and provides seed money to support students working to promote diversity, such as training, internships, and project start-ups. The institute is also behind the Diversity @ Ryerson project, a map of the current diversity landscape in Canadian universities, including that of university leaders. The data are used to determine where Ryerson needs to improve and hnw

### MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY Calgary, Alta.

In 2007, Mount Royal opened its Iniskim Centre in effort to boost its aboriginal student enrollment. (The university was granted permission to use "Iniskim," which is from a significant Blackfoot Nation legend and means buffalo calling stone, from Blackfoot leaders.) The centre offers academic counselling, mental health and spiritual counselling, tutoring, a resource room, and a computer lab. In addition, the centre provides affordable housing to aboriginal students, further decreasing financial barriers. There's also the Medicine Trail program, which is run by a cultural advisor and a team of elders, that helps aboriginal students find mentorship and networking opportunities throughout the Calgary area.

# Action against rape culture and violence

### UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

### Windsor, Ont.

The University of Windsor is the first Canadian university to implement the Bringing in the Bystander program, an antisexual assault program developed at the University of New Hampshire. The program aims to empower students with the skills to intervene and stop assault before it happens—becoming participants instead of inactive bystanders. Students can take two for-credit courses, Practical Strategies for Social Change and Practicum in Social Change, in which they receive Bringing in the Bystander training and, in turn, learn how to train their peers.

### MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

### Hamilton, Ont.

In 2012, the Sexual Assault Centre of Hamilton and Area (SACHA) and YWCA Hamilton brought their joint "It's Time to End Violence against Women on Campus" project to McMaster. The two-year project focused on education and awareness campaigns on campus, but also involved a comprehensive review of the school's policy and protocols, plus research into gender-based violence on the campus. In June 2014, SACHA and the YWCA presented the school with a set of eight recommendations, including awareness campaigns and training for student leaders. The university has established a new sub-committee on Violence Against Women to implement to recommendations.

# CARLETON UNIVERSITY

### Ottawa, Ont.

In 2007, two Carleton students, Lesley Claire and Julie Lalonde, co-founded the Coalition for a Carleton Sexual Assault Centre in the wake of a particularly vicious campus attack. Together, as the coalition grew, members advocated for Carleton to create a student-run university-funded sexual assault centre. After many years of tireless advocacy (and several more assaults), the centre opened in September 2013. It provides many free, confidential services, public education, training, and more.

### DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

### Halifax, N.S.

Dalhousie's Get Consent campaign wants to jumpstart the conversation around campus culture, rape, and, as the name suggests, consent. The proactive campaign kicks into awareness overdrive in October with the hashtag #getconsent announcing events and advocacy opportunities around campus. The campaign's dedicated website hosts YouTube videos, advice on how to ask for consent and, also, advice on how to say no. As the site stresses, being drunk, silent or saying "not now" all mean no. Another sign that Dalhousie is taking the right approach to campus culture: an email that went out to all students to announce the campaign closes with the statement. "And remember, sexual assault is never the fault of the victim."

### **Transit**

### DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY Halifax, N.S.

Dalhousie is a cyclist-friendly university with more than 900 bike parking spaces, and 10 percent of students, faculty, and staff who ride bikes as their primary form of transportation. The Dal Bike Centre teaches riders about safe biking around Halifax, and offers tools, space, and education on how to tune and repair your bike. Cyclists on campus are looking at a bright future, too. In September 2014, the Nova Scotia Department of Energy offered Dal \$15,000 to help build partitioned bike lanes along University Avenue.

### UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA Victoria, B.C.

Over the past 20 years, transit ridership at the University of Victoria has increased by about 17 percent; use of single-occupancy vehicles has decreased by about 20 percent. Every student pays \$81 a month for a Universal Transit Pass (UPass) that gives them unlimited access to public transit all over the city, and 95 percent of buses in the city are equipped with bike racks. The school also has a strong cycling community with 3,000 lockup spaces for bikes, 150 bike lockers, and short-term bike lock loans from the library.

### Plus every post-secondary institute in METRO VANCOUVER

Vancouver's transit commission, TransLink, collaborates with public post-secondary schools to offer students major discounts on transit passes. Passes are \$36.75 a month compared to student metro passes in Toronto that cost \$108 each month. Ten schools in Metro Vancouver currently participate in the program.



# Student advocacy

### YORK UNIVERSITY

### Toronto, Ont.

As Canada's third largest university, York has a long history of protest and advocacy campus on culture. The Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) at York, arguably the university's most active group, was founded in 1992 and is both student-funded and student-run. It focuses on social justice and environmental advocacy and education—a big victory includes persuading the university to pledge to stop selling bottled water by 2015. This year, in response to a university administration ban of certain groups and protest actions, OPIRG also themed its annual DisOrientation Week (in which all advocacy and social justice groups on campus come together) to address the school's fear of an active campus.

### **BROCK UNIVERSITY**

### St. Catharines, Ont.

Brock's Student Justice Centre operates as a safe, judgement-free space on campus for students. Student staff at the centre are trained to support those who have been victims of injustice such as assault, harassment or discrimination. In addition to education and advocacy projects focused on sexism, racism, and homophobia, the centre also runs the only food bank on the campus. Also, it offers unique safe space events: sushi-making, poetry slams, a pow wow demonstration, wheelchair basketball, and, in 2013, a Social Justice Fair. The school also runs a positive space campaign that offers free workshops on, as the name suggests, how to become a "positive space" on campus. Workshop attendees get postcards or buttons to designate themselves and their surrounding area a positive space. Since the program's launch in 2004, more than 700 people have participated in the initiative.

### UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

### Ottawa, Ont.

The University of Ottawa's Centre for Global and Community Engagement is designed as a one-stop shop for all things volunteering and advocacy-based. The centre connects students to volunteer opportunities of interest (both on campus and off, including around the world) and also provides support to those who want to start their own grassroots initiatives.

### UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK Fredericton, N.B.

Iota Beta Chi sorority does not conform to the stereotype. Though not explicitly described as a feminist organization, women's empowerment is a major value. Every year the sorority participates in Take Back the Night, attends Pride in Fredericton, and does the Vagina Monologues. The proceeds of fundraising events such as bake sales and clothing drives go to women's shelters. "We understand sororities have a certain stigma and rushing a sorority may be harder for someone who belongs to any minority," says Stepha Zapata, 2014-2015 president of the sorority's University of New Brunswick chapter, "so throughout rush we try our best to go beyond the typical image of a 'sorority' and make ourselves more safe and open for all types of women. I, myself, am a biracial, bisexual, mentally-ill female and found a home and refuge in the sorority that is not offered to me in any other social group to date." Their chapter accepts anyone who is female-identifying (and attends post-secondary education in the city).

# Financial aid and support

### **ALGOMA UNIVERSITY**

### Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

Algoma's First Generation Project help students who are, as the name suggests, the first generation in their family to go to university or college. (It doesn't mean the first child in the family; if your sibling went to post-secondary school, you're still eligible, so long as you're a member of the first generation to go.) In addition to bursaries, the program offers hockey and concert tickets, tutoring, lending libraries, pizza lunches, "help me" sessions, and so, so much more.

## ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

### Athabasca, Alta.

The first university in Canada to specialize in distance learning, today Athabasca prides itself on being Canada's selfdeclared "open university"—it requires no previous academic achievements to apply, only that the applicant be 16. Fees are charged on a per-credit basis, making it easier to choose how much you're able to spend on tuition each year. And, distance options make it easier for those who may not be able to afford to physically attend school—say because they may have a job or need to consider childcare. "Athabasca University," the school's mission mandate declares, "is dedicated to removing the educational, geographical, financial, social, cultural and other barriers that often limit access to post-secondary achievement."

### **UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

### Toronto, Ont.

Unique among Canadian universities, University of Toronto has a policy that vows to assure financial support. Enacted in 1998, the policy's principle mission enshrines this sentiment, "No student offered admission to a program at the University of Toronto should be unable to enter or complete the program due to lack of financial means." The university pledges to work with students to find financial aid beyond provincial government loans (though it won't pay your tuition outright). While there are some catches—including a student's bad credit history the school's policy also allows for case-by-case assessment. University of Toronto also offers financial counselling to help students manage and create budgets, find grants, and work through other financial surprises—say, for instance, if your roommate has suddenly left town with no forwarding address and without paying his or her share of the rent.

### TRENT UNIVERSITY

### Peterborough, Ont.

Many schools offer entrance scholarships for academic excellence (so make sure you check them out!), but at Trent you're eligible for full tuition. Those who enter Trent with a 90 percent admission average will automatically receive a full tuition scholarship, and will continue to do so as long as they maintain an average of 90 percent or higher in five full credits each year. The school also gives partial scholarships to those with admission averages of 80-89 percent.

# Accessibility and disability support

### TRENT UNIVERSITY

### Peterborough, Ont.

Trent is the only university in Canada with MV-1 accessibility vehicles, which are specifically designed for people who use wheelchairs. Meaning, its transportation service for students who need assistance getting around campus uses vehicles that are fully accessible, equipped for three wheelchairs as well as several passenger seats for other students, staff and faculty with mobility and disability issues.

### CARLETON UNIVERSITY

### Ottawa, Ont.

Carleton's Disability Awareness Centre advocates for students with visible and non-visible disabilities. The centre also challenges misconceptions about disability by hosting regular events, such as Able Arts, a Wheelchair Challenge, Wheelchair Basketball, and Jokes On Wheels. The centre also has a political awareness committee that lobbies the administration and government to create more accessibility for people with disabilities on- and off-campus.

### RYERSON UNIVERSITY

### Toronto, Ont.

Ryerson complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, passed in 2005 to achieve accessibility for everyone with disabilities by 2025. This means the school goes beyond the standard Ontario Human Rights requirement to "accommodate to undue hardship" to instead take a proactive approach—in 2013, the school released a multi-year Accessibility Plan. In it, the school features several goals and current initiatives, including: the creation of Access Ryerson, its related advisory group, steering committee, and working groups; creating an accessibility coordinator position within the school; building more accessible spaces, including accessible classroom podiums; and much more. The school also has an academic accommodation program that tailors the teaching and evaluation of course material to suit the individual needs of students with learning disabilities



# Ethical food choices and practices

# MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY Sackville, N.B.

Mount Allison takes its commitment to local, ethical food seriously. The school promotes a "Maritime diet," meaning 40 percent of the food in its dining hall is locally-sourced. That is, grown or processed within five hours (driving) of the campus. To help close even that small distance, in 2011 the school purchased 24 acres of land to develop for crops. The produce grown at the university farm is sold to students through the meal hall. The school also makes it own compost from the campus' food waste. Food decomposes in two Big Hanna in-vessel composters the students have dubbed Ernie and Dirt, which can produce 24,000 kg of compost in eight weeks.

### UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

### Winnipeg, Man.

Non-profit organization Diversity Food Services runs all food services on the University of Winnipeg campus. Committed to sourcing sustainably grown, fairly-traded, seasonal food, Diversity ensures 40–66 percent of campus food is local (depending on the season). Diversity also offers ethnically diverse food options and employs over 20 staff from around the world. The group also works with the campus' Sustainability Office to ensure meal halls produce low waste and low carbon footprints. All halls also offer reusable take-out meal trays.

### MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

### Hamilton, Ont.

The campus' Bridges Café is a totally meat-free vegetarian and vegan cafeteria and lounge space that accommodates all religious and ethical dietary restrictions. Opened in 2005, the \$400,000 café developed from a student initiative and is one of the only all-veggie campus cafés in Canada. The menu has some weekly rotating specials, all posted on Facebook. Sample meal: "roasted veggie risotto cakes, served with a spicy chipotletomato dipping sauce and homemade veggie coleslaw." It's okay to drool.

### **GUELPH UNIVERSITY**

### Guelph, Ont.

Launched in 2004 by students, Guelph's campus food bank offers non-perishables and fresh food to all students and staff who choose to access the service. All students pay \$1 per semester to support the food bank. There is no limit to how often someone can access the food bank, and in 2013 it served more than 500 students.

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# Childcare and family support

### **UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA**

### Winnipeg, Man.

The University of Manitoba has estimated—conservatively that about 11 percent of its students and half of its staff are parents. And while it does currently offer child care services on campus, it has also decided those services can be improved significantly. With that in mind, the university recently launched a new childcare initiative, a move that follows a 2013 report prepared by a University of Manitoba childcare working group (which essentially concluded there is lots of room to grow when it comes to campus family and child support). As a first step, the school has hired a consultant to do a year-long study at the university, then make recommendations for new programs, business models, and facilities.

### UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

### Waterloo, Ont.

Waterloo has three childcare facilities on campus, and also offers some subsidies through the Region of Waterloo. But what makes the school truly cool are its camp programming, clubs, and workshops through Engineering Science Quest, a studentrun not-for-profit that provides science, math, and engineering learning opportunities to kids. The school's museums and observatories are also free if you want to bring your mini-me in for an educational, low-cost day.

### SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

### Vancouver, Burnaby, and Surrey, B.C.

Simon Fraser has a long history of progressive childcare. Its first centre opened in 1968 as a co-op; parents traded volunteer time in exchange for childcare services. The university was also the first in Canada to hire a full-time coordinator to improve its childcare standards and in the '70s built a \$1.2 million childcare complex, another first for Canada. Then, in 2012, the school opened the \$3.2 million UniverCity Childcare Centre, one of Canada's greenest, most sustainable buildings—it's designed to have completely carbon neutral energy generation. The centre will also operate as a research base, investigating topics such as children's understanding of sustainability. Perhaps even better: the new space is bigger, making room for more than 300 daycare spots.

### UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

### Vancouver and Kelowna, B.C.

The University of British Columbia's Equity and Inclusion Office runs a private and safe space for breastfeeding mothers and parents who require a clean diaper change area. The room is big enough for one person, kept sanitary and quiet, plus furnished with seating, a change table, and more. However, it's only open weekdays.

# Environmental practices and initiatives

### SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

### Vancouver, Burnaby, and Surrey, B.C.

Simon Fraser has consistently achieved its 2010 goal of reducing energy use on campus by two percent each year. The school's Green Labs program reduces waste and conserves water and energy by encouraging students and professors to change their lab habits. In the pilot year, Green Labs saved the school \$16,000 and shaved off 47 tonnes from Simon Fraser's CO2 emissions. The school was also designated a Fair Trade Campus in 2012, and is the recipient of the 2014 Canadian Fair Trade Award—a nod to its all-star purchasing practices, which respect sustainability in the communities where the products are sourced.

### UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

### Ottawa, Ont.

University of Ottawa has eight different groups and committees dedicated to protecting the environment with myriad "green" initiatives, including a green roof on the Engineering building, waterless urinals, and harnessing heat from computer servers. The school also has the largest living wall, or vertical garden, in Canada—a 24 metre (six storey) biofilter that cleans 85 percent of volatile compounds in the air. The natural air quality controller conserves energy and lowers heating and cooling costs for the entire social sciences building.

### UNIVERSITÉ SAINT ANNE Pointe-de-l'Église, N.S.

The 300 student Francophone school is powered by nearly 120 solar panels and a biomass boiler that burns roughly 300 tons of woodchips a month. These initiatives have cut Saint Anne's oil consumption by 70 percent and propane by 30 percent, and the school now spends 50 percent less on heating bills. A campus wind turbine also saves the school around \$15,000 a year.

