

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF SENATE

February 16, 2023

The meeting was held at 1:32 p.m. via Zoom.

SENATORS:

M. Adler	M. Kim	S. Powell
P. Barmby	K. Kirkwood	A. Pyati
A. Baxter	D. Kotsopoulos	C. Robinson
J. Binoy	J. Lacefield	S. Roland
M. Bordignon	Y. Laforet-Fliesser	H. Samson
A. Bryson	D. Laird	M. Sanita Lima
S. Burke	L. Latif	A. Shepard
C. Burucúa	C. Lengyell	D. Smith
K. Choi	D. Lee	C. Steeves
M. Cleveland	A. Liu	L. Stephenson
K. Coley	L. Logan	F. Strzelczyk
G. De Viveiros	D. Malloy	J. Sutton
D. Ferri	C. Marshall	D. Tempesta
L. Frederking	M. McMurrin	J. Toswell
R. Forrester-Jones	M. Milde	J. Watson
A. Fremeth	L. Miller	J. Welch
J. Garland	J. Minac	S. Whitehead
B. Gillies	K. Mooney	J. Yoo
T. Granadillo	I. Namukasa	
A. Haque	B. Neff	
N. Harney	A. Nelson	
L. Henderson	C. Nicholls	
A. Hodgson	T. Orchard	
M. Joannis	T. Peace	
T. Joy	K. Pollock	

Observers: C. Bressette, R. Chelladurai, J. Doerksen, D. Facca, E. Gardner, J. Hussain, R. Isard, S. Lewis, M. McGlynn, O. Oloya, R. Strickland.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thomas Peace offered a Land Acknowledgement.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That the minutes of the meeting of January 20, 2023, be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

S.23-20 **REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

The President's Report, distributed with the agenda, contained information on the following topics: Black student scholarships and recipients celebrated, the grand re-opening of the D.B. Weldon Library following a renovation, Ivey faculty ranking third globally in sustainability research, seeking nominations for 2023 Green Awards, Ivey's year of centennial celebrations, accolades, and a leadership update.

In his remarks, the President additionally commented on the following items:

- The conclusion of Linda Hasenfratz's four-year term as Western's 23rd Chancellor on June 30, 2023. Senators were reminded that the deadline for submitting nominations is March 2, 2023.
- The upcoming Spring Open House on Saturday March 25, 2023. The President explained the importance of that event and encouraged Senators to consider volunteering to promote Western's programs for prospective students and their families.
- Searches remain underway for the Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President (International), Vice-President (Research), University Registrar and Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies) and are moving ahead.
- The President thanked Michael Milde, whose second term as Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities ends this summer and announced the Acting Dean, Jan Plug from the Department of English and Writing Studies.
- The U15 Presidents meeting in Ottawa; the President noted governmental efforts that are underway to increase the involvement of the university sector in research security.

S.23-21 **REPORT OF THE PROVOST**

F. Strzelczyk, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) presented the verbal report and commented on several items under the academic portfolio for the information of the Senate.

F. Strzelczyk noted the ongoing search for the Vice-President (Research) is nearing completion, and the announcement is expected to be made soon. Furthermore, the search for the University Registrar continues and the search for the Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies) was launched.

F. Strzelczyk provided an update on the budget and planning. A brief overview of the Global Engagement Plan was also presented with respect to the internationalization process. As part of the updates on enrolment, the Provost further described the new admission strategy.

F. Strzelczyk commented on the graduate students' housing and funding. She acknowledged

the student housing issue has become an increasing challenge over the last year due to the high cost of living expenses and inflation. Some senior leaders recently met with representatives of the Society of Graduate Students (SOGS), which advocates on behalf of graduate students. The Provost acknowledged the substantive SOGS' Report on housing and food insecurity (Appendix A).

To address the questions that were received prior to the meeting from graduate student Senators, F. Strzelczyk presented slides with information regarding Western's efforts on graduate student funding, comparison across the U15 and the further steps planned to be taken in order to handle the affordability issue (Appendix B).

F. Strzelczyk announced the launching of the SOGS Bursary Fund with over \$500,000 for the next 3-year cycle to address the urgent needs of graduate students. She also advised that SOGS's membership fees can be redirected to other important graduate students' issues. The Provost concluded the report by expressing her gratitude to representatives of SOGS for their work.

REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS / AGENDA COMMITTEE

S.23-22 ITEM 5.1 – Membership – Nominating Committee

Dale Laird was nominated from the floor of the Senate and was acclaimed to the Nominating Committee for a term to June 30, 2023.

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

S.23-23 ITEM 6.1 - Membership – Subcommittee on Western Approved Micro-credentials (SWAM)

Katina Pollock was acclaimed to the Subcommittee on Western Approved Micro-credentials (SWAM) for a term to June 30, 2023.

S.23-24 ITEM 6.2 – Membership – Honorary Degrees Committee

Stacey Hann was acclaimed to the Honorary Degrees Committee for a term to June 30, 2023.

REPORT OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC POLICY

S.23-25 ITEM 7.1 – Revisions to the “Structure of the Academic Year” Policy (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation)

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of the Senate Committee on Academic Policy, Senate approve that effective September 1, 2023 the “Structure of the Academic Year” policy be revised as shown in Item 7.1.

CARRIED with two opposed and two abstained.

A Senator raised the concern regarding possible issues with delivery of the required number of instructional days and scheduling classes. They noted that procedures for aligning an additional non-instructional day on Monday with the academic schedule for the term should be elaborated by the Senate. A Senator asked whether a non-instructional day could be considered last Friday of September to prevent its potential impact on the scheduling of classes and labs.

F. Strzelczyk, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) acknowledged the importance of observing for the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation by creating opportunities for reflection. She also shared with the Senate practices of other Universities across Canada, and noted that the discussions with respect to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation have taken place with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives.

C. Bressette, Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President (Indigenous Initiatives) noted that the Office of Indigenous Initiatives will lead the observance this year with the help of various Faculties and the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

In response to a question from a Senator regarding the implementation process, F. Strzelczyk further advised that in consultation with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, Faculties and Schools should explore opportunities to reflect on the significance of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

**REPORT OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC CURRICULUM AND AWARDS (ACA) -
Consent Agenda**

REPORT OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITY PLANNING (SCUP)

S.23-26 **ITEM 9.1 – Subcommittee on Enrolment Planning and Policy (SUEPP) Report**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That, on the recommendation of the SCUP, Senate approve the plans and processes for first-year, first-entry undergraduate enrolment for the University and Affiliated University Colleges as outlined in Item 9.1 and the use of the 2023-24, 2024-25, and 2025-26 enrolment projections as shown in Item 9.1 for University budget planning purposes.

CARRIED

In response to a question from a Senator regarding possibly increasing the number admitted to health care professionals' programs, F. Strzelczyk, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) advised that the particular quota for students in these fields is mandated by the government.

John Yoo, Dean of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry confirmed that the number of student enrolments in health care is managed according to annually approved government regulations.

Jayne Garland, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, noted that the enrolment numbers for health specializations that are not mandated by the government reflected the current provincial funding situation due to the high tuition fees. Funding for expanding these places remains a point of advocacy in negotiations with the government. Additionally, she noted that nursing admissions had doubled over the previous year.

S23-27 **ITEM 9.2 – Update on Budget and Planning Process**

F. Strzelczyk Provost & Vice-President (Academic) presented an update on the budget planning process and commented on the following items:

- The budget planning cycle, timeline, and current budget model.
- The governmental grant and domestic tuition programs remain frozen at their previous levels.
- Emphasized the future goal to expand undergraduate international enrollment.
- Advised that the budget recommendations for the Faculties have been sent to the Deans and noted the change to IBA mechanism on the three-year trial basis.
- Highlighted funding for PhD students and announced continuing of Undergraduate Summer Research Internship Program and Post-doc Fellowship Program.
- Outlined the further steps that would occur before budget approval.

REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH BOARD – No Report

Report of the Academic Colleague – No Report

S.23-28 **CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

REPORT FROM THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC CURRICULUM AND AWARDS (ACA)

S.23-29 **ITEM 12.2(a) – Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Department of Languages and Cultures: Renaming of the Honours Specialization and Specialization in Spanish Language and Hispanic Cultures and the Certificate in Practical Spanish**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, Senate approve that effective September 1, 2023, the Honours Specialization in Spanish Language and Hispanic Cultures be renamed as the Honours Specialization in Spanish, and

That the Specialization in Spanish Language and Hispanic Cultures be renamed as the Specialization in Spanish, and

That the Certificate in Practical Spanish be renamed as the Certificate in Spanish, and

That students currently enrolled in the modules/certificate be permitted to graduate with the old name of the module/certificate on their diploma until August 31, 2026, upon request to the Office of the Registrar.

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

S.23-30 **ITEM 12.2(b) – Ivey Business School and Faculty of Social Science, Department of Political Science: Revisions to the Program Requirements of the HBA / Honours Specialization in Political Science Combined Degree Program**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, Senate approve that effective September 1, 2023, the program requirements of the HBA / Honours Specialization in Political Science combined degree program be revised as shown in Item 12.2(b).

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

S.23-31 **ITEM 12.2(c) – Faculty of Engineering: Revisions to the Admission Requirements of the Biomedical Engineering Options**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, Senate approve that effective September 1, 2023, the admission requirements for the following Biomedical Engineering Options be revised as shown in Item 12.2(c):

Chemical Engineering and Biomedical Engineering Option

Electrical Engineering and Biomedical Engineering Option

Mechanical Engineering and Biomedical Engineering Option

Mechatronic Systems Engineering and Biomedical Engineering Option

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

S.23-32 **ITEM 12.2(e)(i) – School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Introduction of a Master of Health Sciences (MHSc) in Global Health Systems**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, and conditional on approval by the Quality Council, Senate approve that effective September 1, 2023, a Master of Health Sciences (MHSc) in Global Health Systems be introduced as shown in Item 12.2(e)(i).

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

S.23-33 **ITEM 12.2(e)(ii) – School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Introduction of a field in Health Equity and Sustainability in the Master of Health Sciences (MHSc) in Advanced Health Care Practice (AHCP)**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, Senate approve that effective September 1, 2023, a field in Health Equity and Sustainability be introduced in the Master of Health Sciences (MHSc) in Advanced Health Care Practice (AHCP), as shown in Item 12.2(e)(ii).

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

S.23-34 **ITEM 12.2(e)(iii) – School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Introduction of a field in Clinical Epidemiology and Research Management in the Master of Clinical Science (MCISc) in Advanced Health Care Practice (AHCP)**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, Senate approve that effective September 1, 2023, a new field in Clinical Epidemiology and Research Management be introduced in the Master of Clinical Science (MCISc) in Advanced Health Care Practice (AHCP), as shown in Item 12.2(e)(iii).

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

S.23-35 **ITEM 12.2(e)(iv) – School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Revisions to the Master of Science (MSc) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Mathematics and Withdrawal of the MSc and PhD in Applied Mathematics**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, Senate approve that effective January 1, 2023, the Master of Science (MSc) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Mathematics be revised as shown in Item 12.2(e)(iv), and

That effective January 1, 2023, admission to the MSc and PhD in Applied Mathematics be discontinued, and

That students currently enrolled in the MSc and PhD in Applied Mathematics be permitted to graduate upon fulfillment of the program requirements by August 31, 2027, and

That the MSc and PhD in Applied Mathematics be withdrawn effective September 1, 2027.

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

S.23-36 **ITEM 12.2(e)(v) – School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies: Introduction of a Flex-time Registration Option for the PhD Programs in the Faculty of Engineering**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, Senate approve that effective May 1, 2023, a flex-

time registration option be introduced for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs in the Faculty of Engineering as shown in Item 12.2(e)(v).

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

S.23-37 **ITEM 12.2(f) – Revisions to the Articulation Agreement for the Admission of Graduates of the Business-Finance Diploma Program at Fanshawe College into the Major in Economics or Major in Financial Economics**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, Senate approve that effective February 16, 2023, the articulation agreement for the admission of graduates of the Business-Finance Diploma Program at Fanshawe College into the Major in Economics or Major in Financial Economics be revised as shown in Item 12.2(f).

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

The following items reported through the Subcommittee on Program Review were received for information by unanimous consent:

- S.23-38 – ITEM 12.2(g) – Report of the Subcommittee on Program Review – Graduate (SUPR-G): Cyclical Review of the Graduate Program in Business Administration
- ITEM 12.2(h) – New Scholarships, Awards and Prizes (Donor-Funded)
- ITEM 12.2(i) – New Western-Funded Scholarship

ITEMS FROM THE HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

S.23-39 **ITEM 12.5(a) – President’s Medal for Distinguished Service**

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That Senate approve, on the recommendation of the Honorary Degrees Committee, the amendment to the Criteria for Selecting the President’s Medal for Distinguished Service award recipients as of February 16, 2023.

CARRIED BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

S.23-40 **ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA**

ITEM 12.1(a) – Revisions to the Terms of Reference of the Honorary Degrees Committee

A Senator requested this item be removed from the Consent Agenda as they had a concern as to whether the procedures for revoking an honorary degree could be included in the Terms of Reference of the Honorary Degrees Committee. A second issue pointed out is a possible

conflict of interest between voting and non-voting ex-officio members of the Honorary Degrees Committee. A Senator further suggested that the Associate Director of Convocation should be a non-voting member.

Amy Bryson, University Secretary, advised that the Honorary Degrees Committee discussed the procedures for the rescission of an honorary doctorate, and it was decided that due to the extraordinary circumstance, any issues would be handled on a case-by-case basis.

It was decided that the revisions to the Terms of Reference of the Honorary Degrees Committee be tabled and sent back to the Honorary Degrees Committee for consideration.

ITEM 12.2(d) – Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry: Revisions to the Progression Requirements of the MD Program

It was moved by M. Milde, seconded by C. Steeves,

That on the recommendation of ACA, Senate approve that effective September 1, 2023, the Progression Requirements of the MD Program in the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry be revised as shown in Item 12.2(d).

CARRIED

A Senator requested this item be removed from the Consent Agenda as they had a concern regarding the proposed language of the MD Program. Furthermore, concerns were raised with respect to the Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and Decolonization (EDID) issues and as to whether it could be included in the program with respect to diversity.

J. Yoo, Dean of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry advised that the following modification to Schulich programs has been made with respect to the accreditation process on the purpose of transition from time-based to competence-based education. He noted that the change in wording is an attempt to make the curricula more contemporary.

S. Venance, Vice Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education, at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, acknowledged that EDID are strategic priorities for the School. These priorities have been embedded into all curricula and governance procedures.

Additionally, J. Yoo mentioned the recent appointment of the Acting Associate Dean of EDID, at Schulich for guiding the commitment to EDID.

ITEM 12.4(a) – Vice-Provost’s Annual Report on Faculty Recruitment and Retention

A Senator requested that this item be removed from the consent agenda for clarification regarding the data presented on the faculty recruitment and retention report, particularly broken down by the gender factor with respect to equity issues. Moreover, this report is the first to include data that can be used to determine the effects of COVID on faculty numbers. The full text of questions submitted in advance of the meeting was posted in the Agenda at Item 14.0 prior to the meeting.

In response to questions regarding the report, M. McGlynn, Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy & Faculty), clarified various metrics, including probationary teaching scholars, equity issues, retirements, limited-term appointments, presented data broken down by workload proportion and the increasing number of clinical faculty that reflect the clinical demand. In her comments, M. McGlynn stated that at this point it is too early to estimate the impact of COVID.

S.23-41 **DISCUSSION AND QUESTION PERIOD**

The full text of questions submitted in advance of the meeting were posted in the Agenda at Item 14.0 prior to the meeting. The questions and responses are summarized below.

Following a request for further information regarding the efforts and plans of the University to support graduate students, F. Strzelczyk, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) addressed this question during her report.

A student Senator recognized the significant amount of effort put into the initiative. Prior to the implementation of the funding program, he outlined possible steps that may occur. He indicated that in addition to meeting with various groups and student representatives, support for the program continues to be provided. The document that outlines the student survey on housing and food insecurity is attached to the Senate Minutes (Appendix A).

A Senate Observer commented on housing and food insecurity issues experienced by graduate students and described SOGS initiatives. She additionally expressed gratitude to all participants who were involved in this process.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

A. Shepard
Chair

A. Bryson
University Secretary



Summary of SOGS Housing and Food Security Survey

Executive Report from Society of Graduate Students 2022-2023

OVERVIEW: The leadership team of the [Society of Graduate Students](#) (SOGS) ran a survey to the membership from October 31, 2022 to November 15, 2022 to get an idea of the scale and scope of housing and food security challenges faced by current graduate students. This survey was an opportunity for the Society to identify service gaps and financial support needs amongst the current (2022-23) graduate student population at Western University, and to bring these gaps and needs to the attention of stakeholders and leadership partners on campus.

Unique Qualtrics survey links were sent to graduate students enrolled at Western University in November 2022. All information from this survey was anonymized. The SOGS Vice-President of Student Services, SOGS Governance and Policy Manager, and SOGS Communications Promotions Manager were the only people with access to the raw data.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1. Demographics:** 1429 respondents: 62% domestic and 38% international. 77% of respondents were in the first 2 years of their graduate degree reflective trends of current and incoming graduate students at Western University.
- 2. Housing:** 76% of respondents faced challenges with finding housing in London, Ontario with affordability ranked the highest challenge. 46% of respondents pay over \$1000 in rent/month. Students reported opting for the following to keep rental costs within the scope of affordability: virtual studies, live with parents, commute, live with roommates, and/or rely on family or spouse's income.
- 3. Food security:** 44% of respondents identified as food insecure. Within this pool of respondents, 41% were PhD students and 25% were Master's thesis students *suggesting a trend among funded students.*
- 4. Essential items:** 55% of students cannot afford essential items (i.e., hygiene products, clothing, sanitary products, etc. Within this pool of respondents, 46% were PhD students and 20% were Master's thesis students *suggesting a trend among funded students.*

This raises concerns of equity, diversity and inclusion where socioeconomic status of a student and/or their family will be the primary determinant of their ability to pursue higher education at Western University.

Demographics

STUDENT STATUS: We received a total of **1429 responses** which is approximately **21% of our membership**. **62%** of respondents identified as **domestic** and **38%** as **international** students.

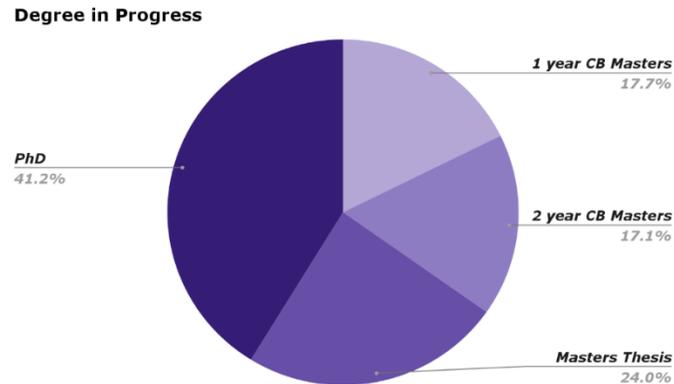


Figure 1. Graduate degree in progress among respondents at WesternU

DEGREE TYPE: Overall, **60%** of respondents indicated they were in a **Master's** program while **40%** indicated they were in a **PhD** program. Furthermore, **34.8%** of respondents were enrolled in a **course-based** degree while **65.2%** were enrolled in a **research-intensive** degree. Since research-intensive degrees indicate research stipends, 65% of respondents were receiving research funding and 35% were receiving no research funding (Figure 1).

YEAR OF DEGREE: **77%** of respondents were in the **first 2 years of their degree** where the trends observed in this report are reflective current and incoming graduate students at Western University (Figure 2).

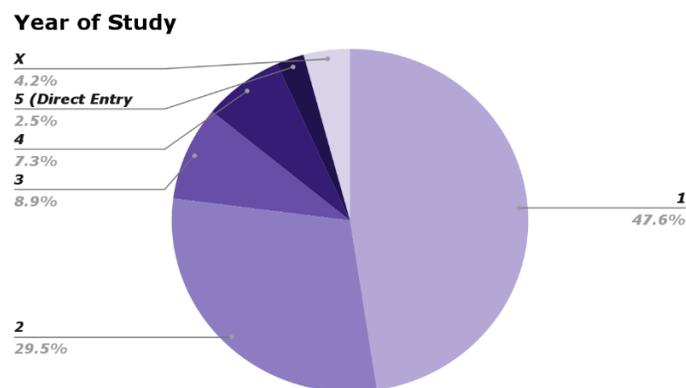


Figure 2. Year of study in graduate degree among respondents at WesternU

SUMMARY OF STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC:

1. 1429 responses: 62% were domestic and 38% were international
2. 77% of respondents were in the first 2 years of their graduate degree.
3. 60% were in a Master's degree and 40% were in their PhD.

Housing

RANKED CHALLENGES: 76% (n=1086) of respondents had experienced **challenges with finding housing**. Of the challenges ranked, **70% (n=1000)** of respondents ranked **affordability** as the **highest challenge**, while **proximity to campus** and **safe & secure area** were given a **median rank of 3**, followed by accessible: bus routes, houses, and childcare in ranked order of challenges faced when looking for housing in London, Ontario (Figure 3).

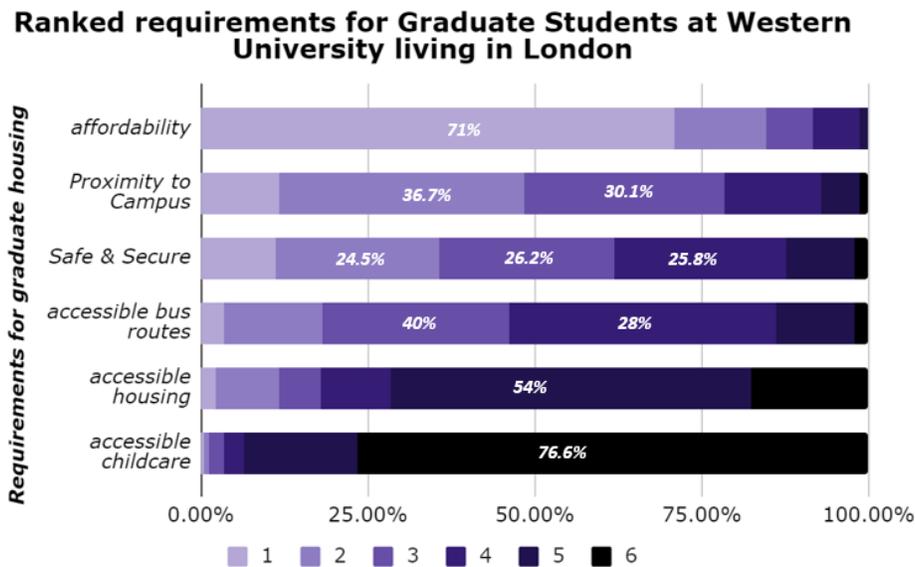


Figure 3. Ranked challenges graduate students at Western University faced when seeking adequate housing where 1 being ranked highest and 6 least priority.

CURRENT RENT RATES: Approximately 56% of respondents pay over \$1000 in rent. Included values from "others." This indicates that according to a 12-month lease, majority of graduate students at WesternU could be expected to pay approximately \$12 000/annually in rent (Figure 4).

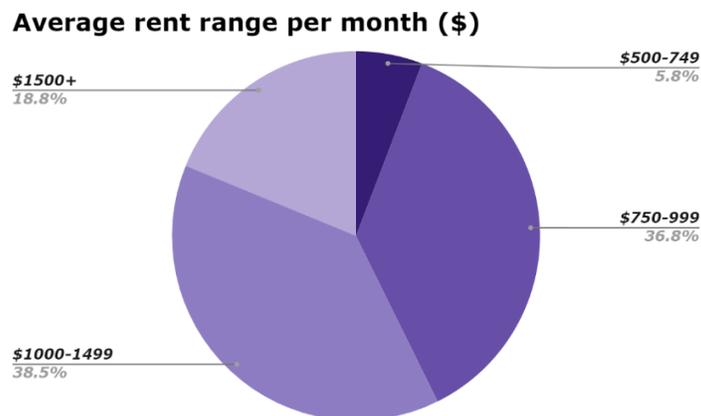


Figure 4. The average rent range a student pays per month in London Ontario.

NUMBER OF ROOMMATES RELATIVE TO RENT RATES:

60% of respondents **live with at least 4 roommates** and **pay \$500 per month in rent**. Graduate students that pay approximately \$750/month display variation in the number in the number of roommates. This can reflect proximity to campus increased number of roommates for the same price and reduction in roommates further from main campus (Figure 5).

Note: For simplicity, this number excludes responses from "other." However, this is to give an estimate of rent prices graduate students at WesternU could be expected pay per unit.

Rent rates convolved with number of roommates

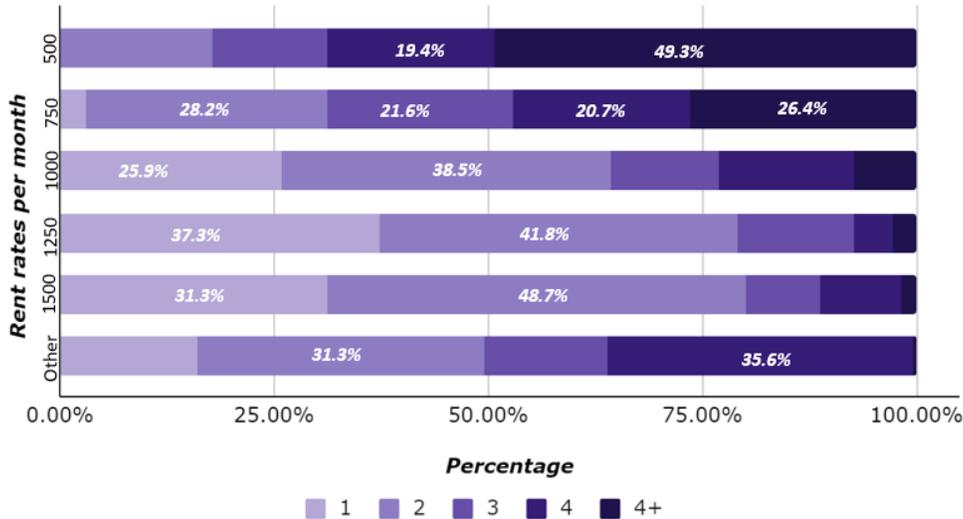


Figure 5. The relationship between monthly rent rate ranges relative to the number of roommates in London Ontario

NOTABLE MENTIONS IN "OTHERS":

There were several mentions in "other" that further elaborated the challenges experienced with finding housing in London, Ontario.

- **Out of province** students had to opt for **virtual studies for graduate education** due to challenges with finding affordable housing.
- **Students living with a disability** were unable to find **accessible and affordable housing** for their needs.
- Several students had to **commute** from **out of city, live with parents, or rely on a spouse's income** for financial support to meet their housing needs.
- Furthermore, some rent rates may not include essential amenities for students such as electricity, internet, rental insurance etc.

SUMMARY OF HOUSING CHALLENGES:

Key highlights from our findings are:

1. 76% of respondents experienced challenges with finding adequate housing.
2. Affordability was ranked the highest challenge among 70% of respondents.
3. Approximately 56% of our respondents pay \$1000 or more/month in rent
4. Several students had to pursue virtual studies, commute from out of city, live at home, unable to find accessible housing, rely on family/spouse income.

Food Insecurity

44% (n=648) of respondents identified as food insecure.

FOOD INSECURITY AND DEGREE TYPE:

Within in this pool of respondents, **41%** were **PhD students** and **25%** were **Master's thesis students**. Furthermore, **55%** of respondents reported that they **cannot afford** to purchase **essential items**; **46%** of these respondents **were PhD students** and **20%** were **Master's thesis students**. This appears to suggest a trend among funded students (Figure 6).

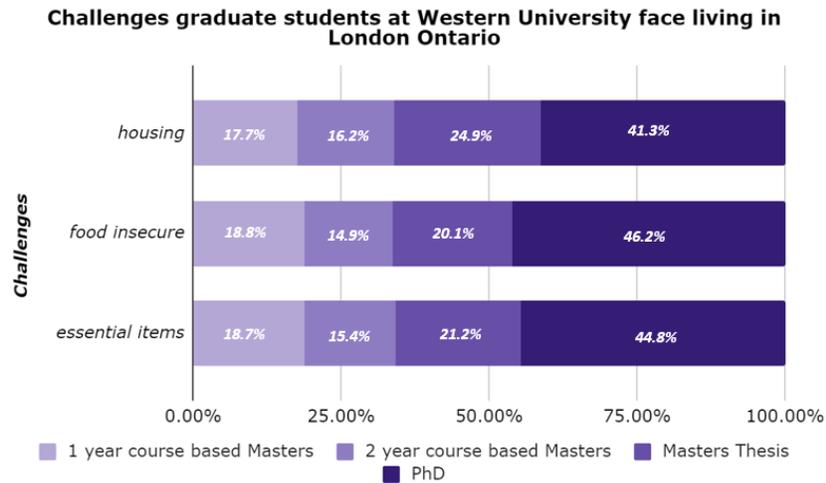


Figure 6. The relationship between challenges faced by graduate students at WesternU in London Ontario and their graduate degree in process.

FOOD INSECURITY AND YEAR OF STUDY:

80% of respondents who were in the **first two years** of their graduate degree reported **experiencing challenges acquiring affordable, accessible, and safe housing**, identified as **food insecure** and **unable to afford essential items** such as personal hygiene items, clothing, among others (Figure 7).

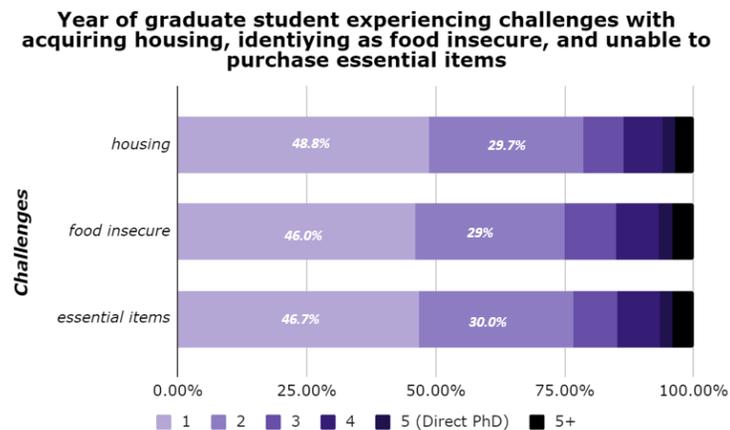


Figure 7. The relationship between challenges faced by graduate students at WesternU in London Ontario and their year of study

FOODBANK USAGE:

9% of respondents reported use of the **SOGS or PSAC Food Bank programs** with **64% identifying as PhD** and **18% as Master's thesis students**. **70%** of these respondents were in the **first 2 years** of their **graduate degree** (Figure 8).

4% of respondents reported use of the **London Food bank** to meet their food insecurity needs with **50%** identifying as **PhD** and **29%** as **1-year course-based Masters** students. **80%** of these respondents were in the **first 2 years** of their **graduate degree**.

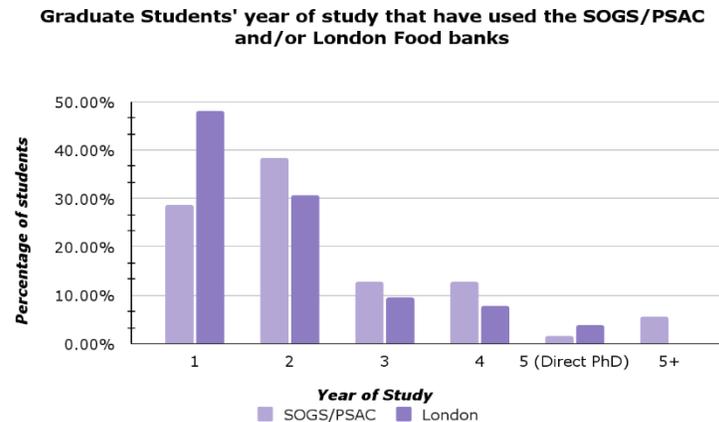


Figure 8. The relationship between SOGS/PSAC food bank usage and year of degree

SUMMARY WITH FOOD SECURITY:

Key highlights from our findings are:

1. 46% and 55% of our respondents identified as being food insecure and unable to purchase essential items respectively.
2. Within this pool, 80% of the respondents are within the first 2 years of their graduate degree reflecting the expected challenges of incoming, current and future students.
3. Within this pool, 66% of the respondents were PhD or Masters thesis students indicating a trend among funded students

Overall, respondents identified that the majority of their challenges with food security were due to the **increased food/essential items cost**, followed by **the increased cost of housing** and **no/stagnant funding packages** for their respective graduate program.

Connecting with WesternU's Strategic Plan for 2030

According to **WesternU's Strategic Plan for 2030**, of few of the goals are centered around increasing student enrolment, retention, and diversity among equity deserving groups such as:

*"...[achieving] the **highest student retention and graduation rates** among Canada's leading **research-intensive universities**."*

*"...[expanding] **student enrolment to 50,000 by 2030** (undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral, and lifelong learners) – in areas of **demand and societal need** and with **deliberate intention to be equitable and inclusive**."*

*"...[setting] goals for **increased representation** among members of **equity-deserving groups**."*

*"...[increasing] **diversity** among our **faculty and staff**, including the recruitment and retention of **Indigenous Peoples** and members of **equity-deserving groups**."*

IMPORTANCE OF GRADUATE TRAINEES AT WESTERN:

Graduate trainees are the foundational labour and academic pillars that will assist WesternU achieve **increased student retention and graduation rates**. However, without sustainable resources to acquire adequate and affordable student housing for Master's and PhD students, the **advancement and/or completion of graduate trainee education will be jeopardized**. Furthermore, the capacity of graduate students to support and enhance undergraduate trainee education/completion at the university will be diminished.

In order to achieve the university's mandate to uphold the **deliberate intention of equitable and inclusive enrolment in areas of demand and societal need**, WesternU must prepare for the wave of unique intersectional inequalities found in the graduate student population.

If the university does not offer greater housing and food support, **increased financial pressure will be exerted on student-run advocacy organizations'**, such as SOGS, that *are supporting a variety of underfunded and overused resources* -- food banks, emergency loans, UHIP subsidy, childcare subsidy, and more -- that help offset the impact of high housing and food costs in London, and stagnant funding packages at WesternU. **Student unions cannot continue to fill the financial- and service-based gaps that the university either chooses to neglect or fails to address in the blueprints of planning.**

DEMOGRAPHIC

WesternU's goal of **reaching 50, 000 students enrolled by 2030**, will likely lead to a further increased **spike of 1- or 2-year coursed-based Master's** degrees. Furthermore, this spike in non-funded Master's students will reinforce the pause of federal funding to Tri-Council scholarships to supplement graduate student income and funding packages, as well as

encourage the continued increase in international graduate student enrolment at WesternU. As a result, future graduate students will face worse housing and food insecurity challenges than those reported by survey respondents. Graduate students will be further displaced and marginalized due to: 1) **problems acquiring affordable and accessible housing** in London (private sector) and 2) the lack of on-campus housing for graduate students due to the **turn-over of existing affordable university apartments into first-year (undergraduate) only residences** (i.e., London Hall, Alumni Hall, and Lambton Hall).

HOUSING

Without adequate financial and support infrastructure offered by WesternU, the current and incoming wave of graduate students **facing intersections of inequalities**, such as lower socioeconomic status, identifying as black/indigenous/person of colour/queer, living with disability and will be further marginalized. Moreover, the graduate trainees of today will reflect the faculty and staff of tomorrow.

To compensate for their pre-disposed inequities, graduate students **will seek additional employment** opportunities external to their academics to afford the increasing cost of living within London, Ontario. This in turn will **reduce student retention, completion**, and overall **student well-being**. Furthermore, this inadvertently **creates and promotes a social hierarchy and divide in higher education**.

FOOD SECURITY

As the housing crisis amplifies, **food insecurity has become a chronic issue** across both domestic and international student populations at WesternU. This issue has been exacerbated by not only the 2022 post-pandemic goods and services **inflation**, which has driven food costs up by **approximately 12%** in grocery stores ([citation](#)), but also the drastic **surge in housing prices** in London over the last few years. This year, the Province of Ontario saw **inflation rates jump to 7% for goods and services**, resulting in an increase of the cost of basic necessities like food, **hygiene products, and clothing (up 10%)** in retail stores. Compounding the issue of inflation has been the drastic surge in real estate prices that have, in turn, dangerously increased rental rates. Unfortunately, graduate student funding packages rates at WesternU have not been recently increased to better combat the financial stressors graduate students are facing.

[Ontario food banks](#) gathered data from **April 2021 to March 2022** to illustrate the challenges and trends observed in food bank usage and funding. This is the sixth consecutive year where Ontario **food banks witnessed an all-time high utilization** of their support service with approximately **400,000 visits per month** (20% increase to the previous year and 56% increase compared to pre-pandemic numbers). The number of **first-time visitors to the food bank increased by 64%** compared to pre-pandemic years. 70% of food banks users have reported to use **68+% of their monthly income towards rent** which is more than double the affordable housing cost range (30% of their monthly income). These food bank usage trends combined with **stagnant graduate student funding packages** that are not reflective of current living costs, will lead to an escalated use of **student- and city-run food bank services**.

SOGS Initiatives

The Society's operational budget is solely supported by mandatory membership fees, with no financial or material contribution from WesternU to better support graduate students. Supporting approximately 6,800 students with unique challenges, the Society's mandate has always been to fill in the service and support gaps that the university has failed to acknowledge (i.e., funding packages do not reflect the cost of living) or take responsibility for (i.e., turning on-campus grad student housing into undergraduate only housing). The Society has launched several financial aid programs to support students in extenuating circumstances, such as the food bank program as well as the childcare and UHIP subsidies.

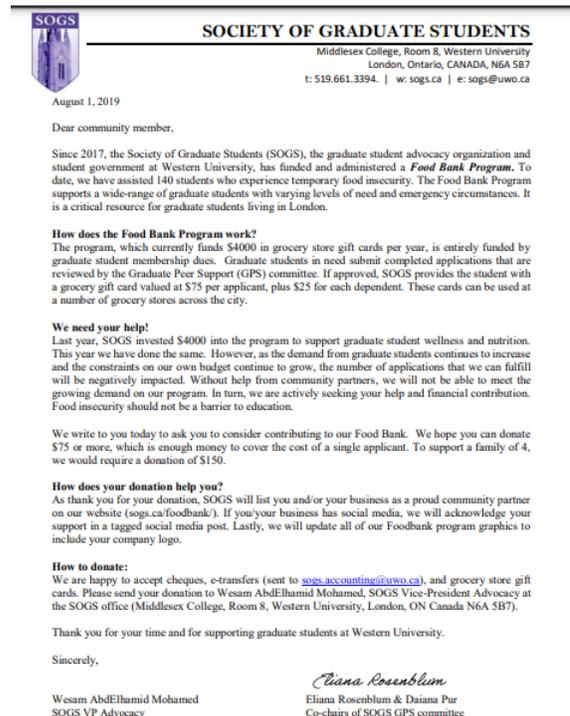
SOGS NON-TA FOOD BANK:

In 2017, SOGS created the [Non-TA Food Bank program](#) to support members in extenuating financial circumstances who were facing food insecurity. To date, the SOGS Non-TA Food Bank has **supported 471 graduate students**. The Food Bank program is open to all non-TA graduate students (approximately **5000 students**), designed to recognize the additional challenges students when they do not have an income stream coming from a funding package (i.e., a TAship). Over the last 5 years **SOGS has more than doubled its funding to this Food Bank program** to better support the growing food insecurity experienced by graduate students.

Our current Food Bank funding model involves providing **\$75 to each applicant** with an additional **\$25 per dependent** (spouse and/or children). SOGS provides members with **President's Choice (PC) Optimum gift cards** that can be used at Loblaws-owned stores (Loblaws, No Frills, Shopper's Drug Mart, and Value Mart). This gift card type allows applicants to purchase not only food but essential items tailored to their own needs (such as toiletries, home items, and clothing).

SOGS NON-TA FOOD BANK YEAR TO DATE:

SOGS budgeted \$8,000 in Food Bank funding for the 2022-2023 academic year and has already **spent approximately 95% of the funds as of the end of Fall 2022 Term**. To keep the Food Bank program operative for the remainder of the year, SOGS launched a **Donation Campaign via SGPS and received approximately \$7,240 in donations from faculty, individual staff, and student-run events**. Furthermore, given the high utilization of the SOGS Non-TA Food Bank, the Society voted to modify the policy of the Food Bank from \$75 with an additional \$25/dependent to a flat rate



of \$100 per successful application in order to not only make the program more equitable, but also more accessible.

This was not the first time the SOGS Non-TA Food Bank experienced a high utilization. In **2019**, the **Society requested financial aid from university stakeholders** to support the food bank. **WesternU's Student Experience provided \$5,000**. Furthermore, this is one of many SOGS services designed to help members with short-term or temporary financial aid issues that has been chronically used by graduate students.

Requirements to Support Graduate Students

1) *MATCHED FINANCIAL SUPPORT & SOGS FINANCIAL SUPPORT (SHORT TERM)*

WESTERNU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: THEME 1 – Greater Impact

- **Approach:** To take a health-equity lens toward supporting incoming graduate students by **doubling the Society's community-based resource funding** through matched contributions from the Society and Campus Partners and Leadership stakeholders using the Society's 2022-2023 operating budget as a baseline.
- **GOAL: To allocate \$250,000 over the next 5 years (\$50k per year) into the SOGS Operating Budget:**
 - **Non-TA Food Bank** (\$8,000 annually)
 - **Emergency Loan** (\$3,000 annually)
 - **Universal Health Insurance Plan subsidy** (\$15,000 annually)
 - **Research Completion Subsidy** (\$12,000 annually)
 - **Childcare Subsidy** (\$12,000 annually)

2) *INTERNAL NEEDS-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS (SHORT TERM)*

WESTERNU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: THEME 2 - People, Culture & Community

- **Approach:** To provide **targeted need-based scholarships** to 1- and 2-year course based Master's students, especially those with intersectional inequalities.
- **GOAL: To alleviate financial barriers for equity-deserving students pursuing higher education.**

3) *1-YEAR ON-CAMPUS RESIDENCE ACCOMMODATION (SHORT TERM)*

WESTERNU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: THEMES 1 & 2

- **Approach:** Make space available in **Bayfield Hall** and/or other residence vacancies for **incoming graduate students in need**.
- **GOAL: To provide short-term on-campus housing options for incoming graduate students that are tailored to their needs for affordable and proximal housing without the added immediate pressure of navigating London's housing market.**

4) *ANNUALLY UPDATED GRADUATE STUDENT FUNDING PACKAGES (LONG TERM)*

WESTERNU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: THEMES 2 & 3 – Western's Place in the World

- **Approach:** Build **annual OPI adjustments to graduate stipends** to address inflation and launch environment surveys every 3 years to all graduate students at WesternU receiving stipends to assess the quality and cost of living.

- **GOAL: To provide competitive funding packages that 1) reflect inflation and the rising cost of living and 2) to attract and retain emerging global scholars domestically and internationally.**

5) SAFE ARRIVAL INTERNATIONALIZATION GRADUATE STRATEGY (LONG TERM)

WESTERNU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: THEME 2 – People, Community & Culture

- **Approach:** To provide **guaranteed interim housing options** along with **emergency arrival housing bursaries** for incoming international students to ensure they have a safe transition from their point of arrival in Canada to when they move into secured housing spaces within the London community.
- **GOAL: To provide interim housing and/or financial support for international graduate students that supports their transition to London and sets them up for academic success moving into the new academic year.**

6) MULTI-PHASED ON-CAMPUS GRADUATE HOUSING (LONG TERM)

WESTERNU STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT: THEME 2 – People, Community & Culture

- **Approach:** To accommodate **the flux of incoming graduate students**, ensure **affordable and accessible housing infrastructure** are in place to accommodate the **high demands** in housing.
- **GOAL: To provide long-term on-campus housing options** for incoming graduate students that is **tailored to their needs for affordable and proximal housing.**

PROVOST UPDATE

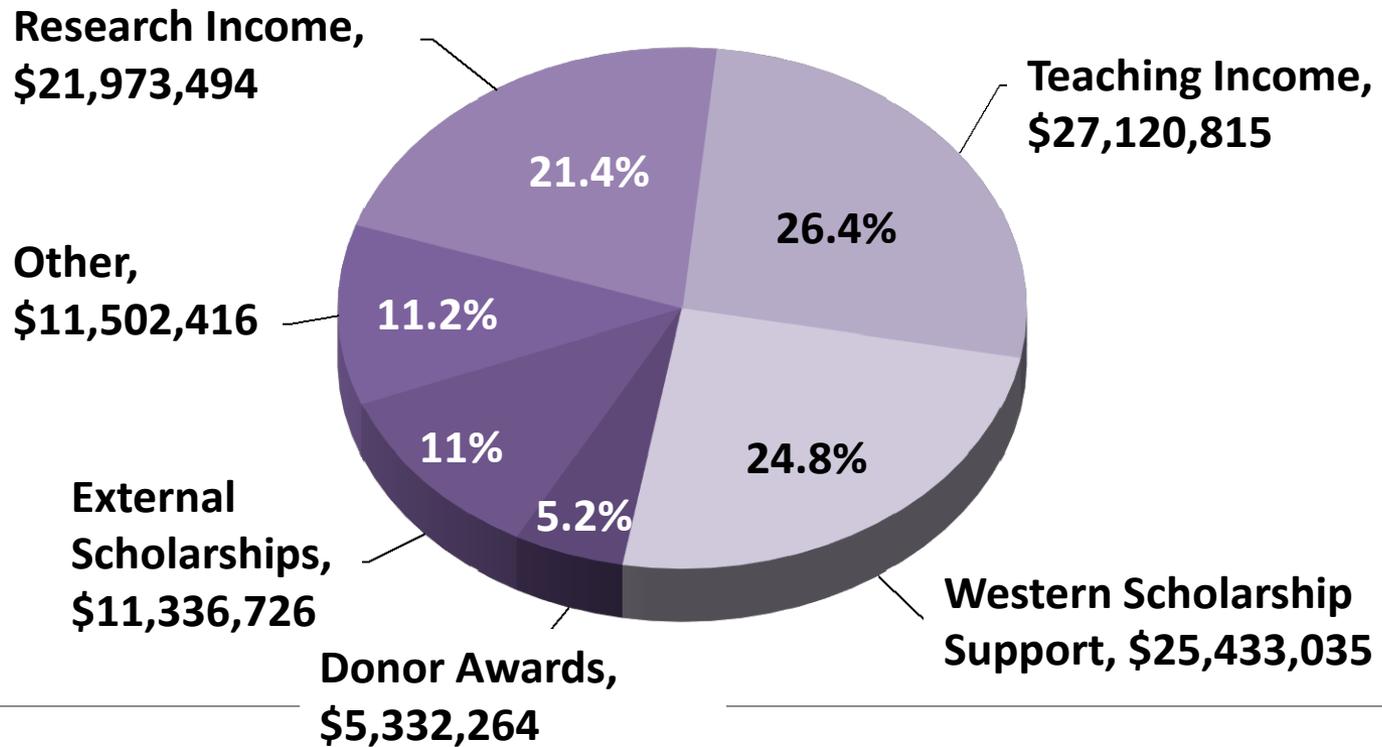
Graduate Student Funding





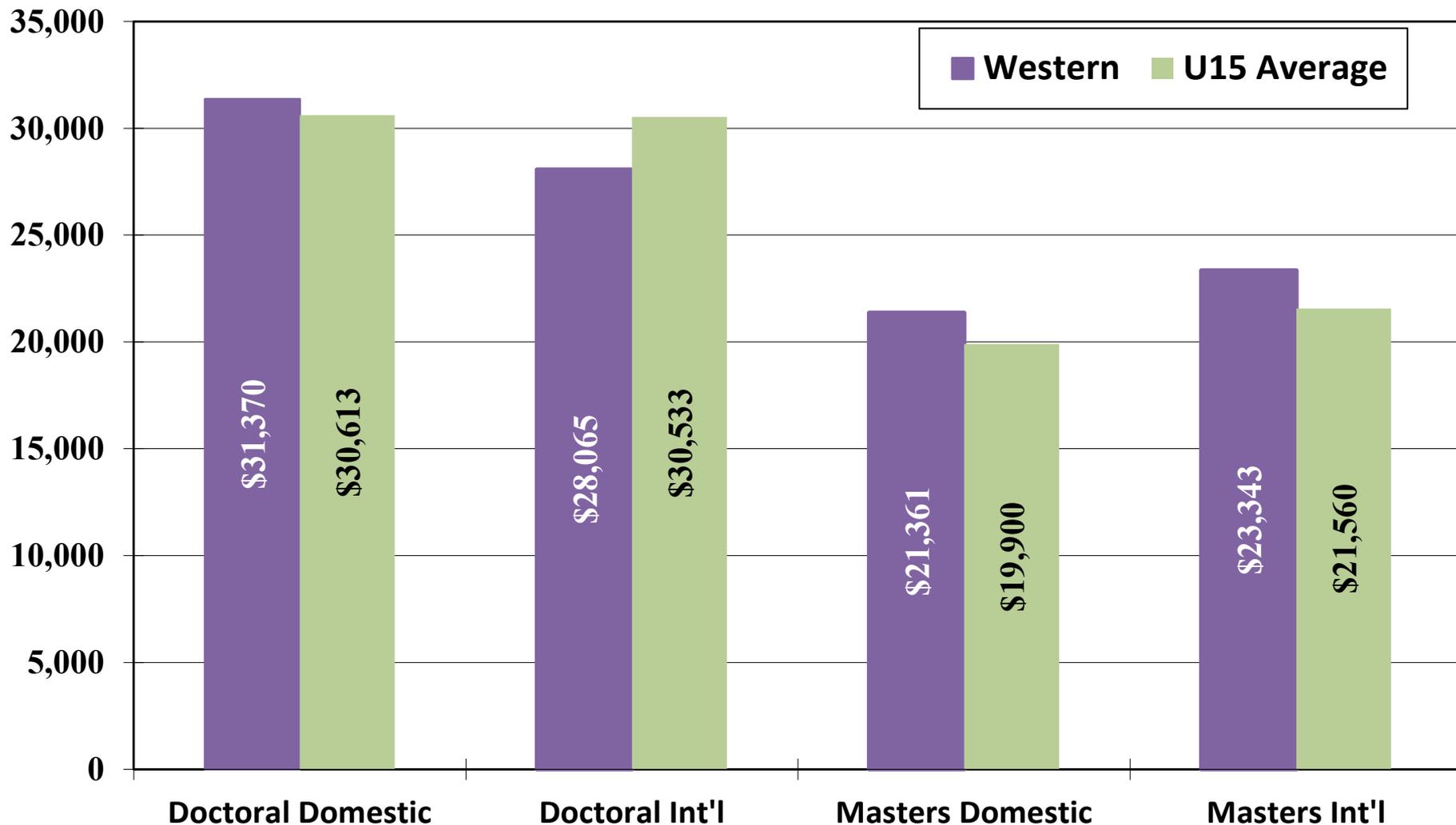
Total Graduate Funding

Total Graduate Funding for Fiscal 2022: \$102,698,751



Graduate Student Funding: 2020-21

Western compared to the U15



Next Steps:

1. Graduate Student Town Hall

2. SOGS Bursary Fund
 - **\$500,000** over next 3 year cycle
 - Needs and Emergency Based

3. Plans underway for new Graduate & Upper Year Student Housing