



F A É C U M

Platform of Demands

Federal Elections

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Author:

Nicolas Bérubé

Editor:

Vincent Fournier Gosselin

Linda Soh

This document's contents are not necessarily representative of the author's opinion.

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FAÉCUM

3200, rue Jean-Brillant, local B-1265
Montréal (Québec)
H3T 1N8

Telephone: 514 343-5947

Fax: 514 343-7690

Website: www.faecum.qc.ca

Email: info@faecum.qc.ca

Since 1976, the Federation of student associations at the University of Montreal Campus (la FAÉCUM) represents, via its 83 member associations, the 40,000 students at the University of Montreal. Its mission is to defend students' rights and interests within the university and in society. With its numerous services and socio-cultural activities, it aims to improve the student experience at the University of Montreal.

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	1
1. Indirect costs of research	2
2. Financing of student-researchers	4
2.1 The lack of financing	4
2.2 The length of financing	4
2.3 The concentration of funding	5
2.3 The quota system	5
3. The structure of the federal granting councils	7
3.1 Student representation	7
3.2 Representation of the academic community	7
3.3 Interdisciplinarity	8
3.3 Parental leave	9
4. Research training internships	10
4.1 Social sciences and health sciences	10
4.2 Specificities of the Quebec system	10
5. Internships in businesses	12
6. Open access to scientific information	13
7. Copyright Act	15
8. Funding these Proposals	16
8.1 Funding of university-business partnerships	16
8.2 Canada Foundation for Innovation	16
8.3 Tax credits for research and development for business	16
<u>Summary of Reccomendations</u>	18
<u>Bibliography</u>	21

Introduction

The Canadian Parliament in 2007 passed an Act to amend the Canada Elections Act, setting general elections every 4 years. Since the Prime Minister has the ability to call elections at his convenience, this means that an election will be called by October 2015 at the latest.

In this context, *the Fédération des associations étudiantes du campus de l'Université de Montréal (FAÉCUM)* must develop a platform of its demands, aimed, first and foremost, at federal political parties. Prior to the elections, it is critical for these parties to demonstrate an interest in post-secondary education and to inform themselves on related issues.

Education is under provincial jurisdiction, and some might question the relevance of addressing such requests to Ottawa. Academic research—one of the main roles of our educational institutions—and its funding in particular, is largely under federal jurisdiction. These demands are part of a coordinated effort among student associations at major Canadian research universities belonging to the GU15.

As such, the FAÉCUM has evaluated several aspects of the federal programs that affect Canadian students. This platform of demands for the federal elections to take place in autumn 2015 therefore addresses the issue of indirect costs of research, the funding of research and more specific related issues, as well as the issue of representation of the university community and students on the granting agency boards. Additionally, our demands also address interdisciplinarity, open access to scientific information, copyright, and, finally, the situation of student-parents.

1. Indirect costs of research

The three Canadian research councils (NSERC¹, SSHRC² and CIHR³) are central players in the research financing in Canada. However, projects financed by these councils entail indirect costs of research that are not included in the initial financing. These are the costs involved in research activities; for example, the electricity required to operate lasers, heating a laboratory, purchasing new library books, or hiring liaison agents to help researchers patent their discoveries.

The Indirect Costs Program (ICP), established in 2003, aims to complement financing to compensate for the indirect costs of research. These costs are estimated at, at least, 40% of the direct costs of research. Other OECD countries compensate these costs at a rate between 40% and 60%.⁴

However, the PCI reimburses indirect costs at only 21.5%. The FAÉCUM wishes to increase this rate to 40%, as promised by the government when it established the program. This gap between what was promised and the current rate works out—in Quebec alone—to \$76 million for 2013-2014. For all Canadian universities, the annual shortfall is estimated at \$287 million.

This underfunding of indirect research costs, such a critical component for research, forces universities to dip into their operating budgets to compensate for these additional costs. These amounts are thus diverted from their original purpose. Severing the operating budget can affect investments in the quality of teaching or in new research projects. The shortcomings of the PCI seriously constrain the development of research and innovation in universities. The impact on the quality and standing of our universities is critical.

¹ Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council

² Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

³ Canadian Institutes of Health Research

⁴ Conseil national des cycles supérieurs de la Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (2013), *Mémoire sur le Programme des coûts indirects*.

Recommendation 1 (Position 1452)

That the Indirect Costs Program reimburse the indirect costs of research to a threshold of at least 40% of the direct costs of research.

Quebec students have identified three ways to improve the PCI and other measures described in the following sections. These will be described in Section 8.

2. Financing of student-researchers

2.1 The lack of financing

Funding for student-researchers is of paramount importance to support their academic career. Increased funding for graduate students helps to reduce program duration, reduce the dropout rate and increase their scientific impact and productivity.⁵

Student-researchers make a significant contribution to research. Indeed, they alone constitute about a third of scientific publications.⁶ Nevertheless, they are highly dependent on federal granting agencies for funding. Indeed, professors may receive grants from other sources, such as their university, partnerships with businesses, or research groups. However, every year, councils are obliged to refuse funding to many deserving applications. It is important to address this situation.

Recommendation 2 (Position 992)

That the Government of Canada gradually increase funding to Canadian granting agencies so they can support students deserving merit scholarships.

2.2 The length of financing

The granting councils have themselves noted that the financing duration of graduate students is out of touch with the actual length of their projects.⁷ Indeed, the grants available for master's projects last one year, and three years at the doctorate level. However, the actual duration of a master's program is more than two years, and doctorates can last over five years.^{8,9}

⁵ Larivière, Vincent (2013), *PhD students' excellence scholarships and their relationship with research productivity, scientific impact, and degree completion*, Canadian Journal of Higher Education, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 27-41.

⁶ Larivière, Vincent (2013), *On the shoulders of students? The contribution of PhD students to the advancement of knowledge*, Scientometrics, DOI 10.1007/s11192-011-0495-6.

⁷ Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada (2009), *Réponse de la direction à l'examen de quatrième année du programme de bourses d'études supérieures du Canada (BESC)*, En ligne : <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/f/40187.html> (consulté le 23 septembre 2014).

⁸ Association canadienne pour les études supérieures (2006), *Profil des études de maîtrise au Canada*.

Recommendation 3

That granting councils increase the duration of their granting programs to reflect the actual program duration.

2.3 The concentration of funding

In recent years, Canadian funding agencies have focused on funding programs that offer very large grants to a limited number of students, in particular with the Vanier and Banting scholarship programs. These programs provide \$50,000 for doctoral students and \$70,000 for postdoctoral fellows annually. However, studies show that the performance of a student stops increasing after a certain funding threshold, which is approximately the amount of smaller merit scholarships from the granting councils.¹⁰ It is therefore more useful to invest the money from larger scholarships in new scholarships for other qualifying students. By simply reducing the amount of Vanier and Banting scholarships to the level prior to their establishment, \$4.6 million could be freed up, which could annually finance 125 new doctoral scholarships and 52 new scholarships for postdoctoral fellows.

Recommendation 4 (Position 1451)

That federal granting councils (SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR) decrease the value of Vanier and Banting scholarships to the same level as the *Alexander Graham Bell Canada Graduate Scholarships-Doctoral* (CGS-D) and the Postdoctoral Fellowships Scholarships respectively, and that the balance be used to increase the number of scholarships awarded through the CGS-D program and the Postdoctoral Fellowships Program.

2.3 The quota system

Student scholarships are awarded to universities under various quota systems. At the doctoral level, academic institutions have quotas for the number of applications

⁹ Rosanna Tamburri (2013), *Une réforme du doctorat s'impose*, En ligne : <http://www.affairesuniversitaires.ca/une-reforme-du-doctorat-simpose.aspx> (consulté le 26 septembre 2014).

¹⁰ Larivière, Vincent (2013), *PhD students' excellence scholarships and their relationship with research productivity, scientific impact, and degree completion*, Canadian Journal of Higher Education, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 27-41.

submitted to funding agencies. Although universities conduct a selection of the best applications, the granting agencies ultimately award the scholarships. These awards are given to graduating students who can then use this funding in the university of their choosing for the following year. Since 2013, as part of the plan to harmonize the federal councils, universities now have quotas for students in master's programs on the number of scholarships awarded, and the universities choose the winners among the students admitted.

This change threatens student mobility. Applications must include a description of the research project requiring access to specialized facilities and local expertise. With the new system, in which universities evaluate grant applications themselves, they will tend to favour research projects consistent with their own infrastructure. That can disadvantage demands from other universities.

The quotas are revised periodically based on academic performance in previous years. To increase their quotas, they must rank above average for several consecutive years. As such, the general patterns established with original quotas in 1994 remain evident in the current distribution, which hardly corresponds with the distribution of the student population. This leads to to an annual shortfall of \$2.7 million in Québec.¹¹ And with the new allocation for the master's level, quotas were simply frozen for three years, adding to the injustices of the current distribution.

Recommendation 5 (Position 1162)

That Canadian research councils evaluate the relevance of application quotas in the granting competitions, and develop alternative mechanisms that address the needs of financing Canadian research.

¹¹ Fédération des associations étudiantes du campus de l'Université de Montréal (2013), *Les quotas de bourses des conseils subventionnaires fédéraux pour la maîtrise – Une situation à rectifier*.

3. The structure of the federal granting councils

3.1 Student representation

As mentioned in the previous section, granting agencies play a central role in funding student-researchers. However, no seat is reserved for students on the boards of directors of these councils.¹² The student perspective is already significant in the decision-making bodies of universities, in order to foster adequate supervision and a more complete vision. This perspective also allows councils to identify new solutions for increasingly atypical student careers, e.g. those working while in school, student-parents, changing program, taking breaks from school, returning to school, and part-time studies.¹³ Moreover, the Research Funds of Quebec, the three Quebec granting agencies, all have students sitting on their boards as well as on the inter-sectorial committees on succession and continuity (*la relève*), which consist of students.

Recommendation 6 (Position 980)

That the NSERC, SSHRC and CIHR reserve at least one seat on their respective boards for a graduate student representative, duly recommended by his or her peers, who would sit as a regular member.

3.2 Representation of the academic community

It is critical that university stakeholders decide themselves the direction of the granting councils, to contribute to a climate conducive to research and innovation. However, the NSERC board is 56% composed of members who are not active scientists.¹⁴ This trend is problematic because the academic community does not select the federal development priorities for areas of research, thus limiting academic freedom.

¹² Conseil national des cycles supérieurs de la Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (2012), *Avis sur la représentation étudiante sur les organismes subventionnaires*.

¹³ Conseil supérieur de l'éducation (2013), *Parce que les façons de réaliser un projet d'études universitaires ont changé...*, En ligne : <http://www.cse.gouv.qc.ca/fichiers/documents/publications/Avis/50-0480.pdf> (consulté le 17 janvier 2014).

¹⁴ Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université (2014), *La science à bon escient*, En ligne : <http://getscienceright.ca/fr/> (consulté le 20 janvier 2014).

Fundamental research, based on the acquisition of knowledge without a particular application or use in mind, however, is necessary for technological change. Yet, funding for fundamental research in Canada has fallen over the past years in favour of applied research.¹⁵ It is important to ensure that a majority of the directors of the granting councils are from the research community, in order to better understand the academic realities when setting development priorities.

Recommendation 7 (Position 983)

That the Canadian government modify the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Act, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Act, and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Act so that at least half of the directors on each council's board of directors belong to the university community.

3.3 Interdisciplinarity

Canada's three granting councils are currently in the process of harmonizing their policies. This endeavour demonstrates the usefulness and willingness to coordinate and centralize information and the operation of funding agencies involving various disciplines. The importance of interdisciplinary projects to advance research, however, is increasingly significant.^{16,17}

Recommendation 8 (Position 986)

That the Canadian government establish a permanent council of the presidents of federal granting agencies to improve coordination and consistency between them, particularly with respect to interdisciplinarity.

¹⁵ Conseil national des cycles supérieurs de la Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (2013), *La valorisation de la recherche fondamentale*.

¹⁶ Industrie Canada (2013), *Un aperçu de la recherche universitaire sur les intérêts des consommateurs au Canada*, En ligne : <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-bc.nsf/fra/ca02843.html> (consulté le 26 septembre).

¹⁷ Industrie Canada (2010), *Le gouvernement du Canada investit dans la recherche en santé*, En ligne : <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/064.nsf/fra/05786.html> (consulté le 26 septembre).

In addition, research projects, such as those in neuropsychology, which are located at the crossroads of the natural sciences, humanities and health sciences are difficult to place under a single research council, creating problems during the application process.

The Research Funds of Quebec (the FRQ), the Quebec counterpart to the Canadian research councils, have already taken the steps to ensure the funding of interdisciplinary projects by redirecting grant applications to the appropriate agency. The coordination of the three funds is also ensured by the presence of a chief scientist.

Recommendation 9

That the Government of Canada establish within the granting councils an adequate mechanism to process the funding applications for interdisciplinary projects.

3.3 Parental leave

Students receiving a scholarship from a federal research council are eligible for paid parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child. However, parental leave programs differ between councils and must be harmonized.¹⁸ First, the SSHRC and CIHR do not allow students to divide their payments over a longer period of time to fund part-time study. In addition, the three federal agencies do not allow parents who also receive the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan to accumulate their scholarships. However, these students may contribute to the plan if they work part-time, authorised by the federal councils. Finally, the agencies do not allow the accumulation of parental leave if both parents are scholarship holders.

Recommendation 10 (Previously adopted, as amended)

That the research granting councils harmonize their policies regarding student-parents receiving scholarships.

¹⁸ Fédération des associations étudiantes du campus de l'Université de Montréal (2014), *Les étudiants-parents et les organismes subventionnaires*.

4. Research training internships

4.1 Social sciences and health sciences

NSERC currently has a scholarship program for undergraduate research that is used to fund research internships, often during the summer, providing a unique experience that introduces students to research. These internships are offered in an academic or industrial environment, which promotes the exploration of research activities. This program has visibly contributed to the maintenance and increase of students' interest in research and is central to ensure scientific turnover.¹⁹ In addition, multiple orientation activities can help students discover and refine the choice of their future research project, which is a particularly difficult and binding decision. For CIHR, the situation is somewhat different. Funding for research-training internships comes from dedicated envelopes that are paid directly to health research centres.

Meanwhile, the humanities have no federal research initiation program. Students in the humanities and have fewer opportunities for research training and less information to guide their future research project. They are, therefore, more likely to pursue further education that is out of touch with their interests. SSHRC is the ideal organization to offer students in the humanities a program to similar to the NSERC program.

Recommendation 11 (Position 1151)

That an undergraduate internship program be established in the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

4.2 Specificities of the Quebec system

To apply for a research-training internship, students must be enrolled in a university undergraduate program. However, the Quebec education system also includes CEGEPs, the second year of which is the equivalent to the first year at university in other provinces. Undergraduate programs in Quebec universities are generally one year shorter than other Canadian universities. Thus, Quebec students are disadvantaged compared with students from the rest of Canada when pursuing higher education, since

¹⁹ Conseil de recherches en sciences naturelles et en génie du Canada (2012), *Évaluation des bourses de recherche de 1er cycle du CRSNG - Rapport d'évaluation final*.

they had had one fewer year to gain the research experience that is crucial to the competitiveness of their applications.

Recommendation 12 (Position 1152)

That the introduction programs for research councils consider a CEGEP diploma (DEC) equivalent to the first year at university.

5. Internships in businesses

Many recent graduates struggle to find jobs. Indeed, the unemployment rate among 15 to 24-year-olds is approximately 13%, compared with 6% for 25-54 years.²⁰ Many of these jobs require starting with internships in businesses.

A study shows that about 83% of interns are paid below the minimum wage, or are not paid at all. Although internships may foster professional integration, it is estimated that about 300,000 Canadian internships are unpaid.²¹ However, there is currently no requirement to report unpaid internships, or keep a record of hours worked, which drastically limits information on this issue.

Those most likely to access these unpaid internships in businesses are young people from more affluent families, providing them with an unfair advantage over youth from lower income groups.

Moreover, current students, whether paid or not, do not have the same benefits and protections as employees. They are more vulnerable to unsafe or exploitative working conditions.

Recommendation 13

That the Government of Canada amend the Canada Labour Code to include measures to protect and sufficiently pay interns.

²⁰ Statistiques Canada (2014), *Enquête sur la population active, août 2014*, En ligne : <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/140905/dq140905a-fra.htm> (consulté le 29 septembre 2014)

²¹ Canadian Intern Association (2014), *UVic masters students research unpaid internships*, En ligne : <http://www.internassociation.ca/uvic-masters-students> (consulté le 29 septembre 2014)

6. Open access to scientific information

The scientific information needed for research is transmitted primarily through scientific articles in journals and monographs that require subscriptions. Most journals are managed by multinational companies (Springer, Elsevier, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Sage, Nature, etc.), the largest of which see profits of hundreds of millions of dollars. The average cost of periodicals has increased four times faster than the inflation rate over the past 30 years, despite the presence of the Canadian consortium of university libraries. This distribution system, created long before the arrival of the internet, when information had to be distributed in print, is out-dated and unfair to the public. Indeed, taxpayers must fund research twice: first to produce it, and then to gain access.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research already have a policy on access to periodicals that require all funded researchers to freely disseminate their publications on an institutional platform.²² Institutional platforms are indeed an expedient means of circumventing publishing houses to publish findings. Granting councils are also considering creating a uniform policy between the three councils.

Although a common policy on open access dissemination is an excellent solution to this problem, these platforms remain limited in terms of quality and accessibility.²³ They remain ill suited for timely and accessible distribution by researchers and require improvement.

²² Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada (2014), *Politique de libre accès des IRSC*, En ligne : <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/f/32005.html> (consulté le 26 septembre 2014).

²³ Stevan Harnad (2013), *Recommandation au ministre québécois de l'enseignement supérieur*, En ligne : http://www.mesrs.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/administration/librairies/documents/Contributions_courriel_facebook/02-2013_-_Stevan_Harnad_-_Recommandation_au_ministre_quebecois_de_lenseignement_superieur.pdf (consulté le 26 septembre 2014).

Recommendation 14

That the Canadian research councils establish a common policy to promote the diffusion of open access scientific papers, and evaluate and allocate the necessary resources for universities to establish effective means of communication, in particular by improving institutional platforms.

7. Copyright Act

The Copyright Act was updated in June 2012 with the adoption of Bill C-11 to reflect the realities of digital information. Although this bill has improved several points, many aspects remain problematic.

Copyright exemptions are available for lesson activities specific to teaching. However, the legal definition of a lesson does not include informal educational activities and the communication of graduate students.

Additionally, communications including copyrighted material sent via telecommunications, including slideshows, must be destroyed within thirty days after the course's final evaluation, which is problematic for access to information that is necessary for courses or research that follow. In addition, digital copies provided by libraries should be destroyed after 5 days. Ultimately, the responsibility for the implementation of this law falls on universities and libraries, which generally are unable to do so.

Recommendation 15 (Position 1082, as amended)

That the Copyright Act be adjusted to correspond with the reality and the future of teaching and research in universities.

8. Funding these Proposals

Quebec students have identified three ways to fund the measures described in the previous sections.

8.1 Funding of university-business partnerships

Studies in the United States and Canada show that partnerships between universities and businesses are more costly for universities and the state than for businesses. The latter see these collaborations as a solution to rising costs in research and development.²⁴ This allows companies to reduce their investments in research by outsourcing their costs to research centers, funded partly by the state. In 2012, partnerships between universities and businesses saw their funding increase from \$586 million to \$690 million. It is worthwhile to review the effectiveness of this recent increase and of the funding already granted.

8.2 Canada Foundation for Innovation

The Canada Foundation for Innovation funds research infrastructure, but neglects maintenance costs despite the large sums at its disposal. Some of its funds, including unallocated interest revenue, which works out to \$225 million in 2013, may be transferred to the measures described in the previous sections.

8.3 Tax credits for research and development for business

Canada spends impressive sums on research and development in business, or 0.24% of its GDP, totalling \$3.9 billion: it ranks sixth among OECD countries for direct research support and second place for indirect support²⁵ Despite these investments, Canada is only 14th in the OECD for business expenditures on research and development and 18th for the number of patents per capita.

²⁴ Conseil national des cycles supérieurs de la Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (2013), *La recherche universitaire en partenariat avec les entreprises*.

²⁵ Conseil des sciences, de la technologie et de l'innovation (2012), *L'état des lieux en 2012. Chapitre 3 : Le financement canadien de la recherche-développement dans un contexte mondial*, En ligne : <http://www.stic-csti.ca/eic/site/stic-csti.nsf/fra/00064.html> (consulté le 13 novembre 2013).

With the inefficiency of these tax credits, it is high time to review the tax incentive program for scientific research and experimental development. The funding freed up after such a reflection may be used for more effective measures.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (Position 1452)

That the Indirect Costs Program reimburse the indirect costs of research to a threshold of at least 40% of the direct costs of research.

Recommendation 2 (Position the 992)

That the Government of Canada gradually increase funding to Canadian granting so they can support students deserving merit scholarships.

Recommendation 3

That granting councils increase the duration of their granting programs to reflect the actual program duration.

Recommendation 4 (Position 1451)

That federal granting councils (SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR) decrease the value of Vanier and Banting scholarships to the same level as Canada Graduate Doctoral (CGS-D) and post-doctoral fellowship scholarships respectively, and that the balance be used to increase the number of scholarships awarded by the CGS-D program and the postdoctoral fellowship program.

Recommendation 5 (Reminder of recommendation 1162)

That Canadian research councils evaluate the relevance of application quotas in the granting competitions, and develop alternative mechanisms that address the needs of financing Canadian research.

Recommendation 6 (Position 980)

That the NSERC, SSHRC and CIHR reserve at least one seat on their respective boards for a graduate student representative, duly recommended by his peers, who would sit as a regular member.

Recommendation 7 (Position 983)

The the Canadian government modify the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Act, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Act, and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Act so that at least half of the directors on each council board of directors belong to the university community.

Recommendation 8 (Position 986)

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Recommendation 9

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Recommendation 10 (Position, as amended)

That the research granting councils harmonize their policies regarding student-parents receiving scholarships.

Recommendation 11 (Position the 1151)

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Recommendation 12 (Position 1152)

That the introduction programs for research councils consider a CEGEP diploma equivalent to the first year at university.

Recommendation 13

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Recommendation 14

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Recommendation 15 (Position 1082, as amended)

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