

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified in 1976, article 13b of which states that «Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education», we demand that the government of Quebec:

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**abandon its plan to impose a new tuition fee increase in 2012;**

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**undertake a reform of Aide financière aux études (AFE) with the goal of reducing, or even eradicating, student debt;**

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**perform an in-depth review of AFE's parameters.**

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## Collective funding for a collective institution

Too often, Quebec's current financial situation serves as a dishonest pretext for the disciples of the knowledge economy. The ship, they would have us believe, is punctured on all sides, so we must imperatively scuttle the university's institutional mission and its accessibility, just as with the entirety of public services and social programs. We propose the opposite route: let's plug the gaps. If the province's public finances are in a bad state, this is because of political choices made during recent years by different governments following the judicious advice of their lucid advisors.

They consistently present the current situation of the public coffers as unavoidable. The cuts and privatizations in the educational sector seem to be fated. This is false. Very specific political decisions taken by successive governments have brought about the current situation. They have caused the problem – and now they propose an even more destructive solution. Our response will be a categorical refusal. We are not blind before such hypocrisy, and we will struggle for a massive reinvestment in our institutions, financed by collective and equitable means.

Considering that the under-funding that universities have endured for many years constitutes a threat to the quality of university education in Quebec, we enjoin the government of Quebec to:

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**undertake a massive reinvestment in Quebec's university institutions, financed by equitable and collective means.**

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## The university we want for the world we want

In order to advance the collective debate and to lay the groundwork for the university of the 21st century, we invite all members of Quebec society to participate in a broad-based consultation of the Quebec's society on the matter. We are outraged by the consultation that the Minister of Education announced lately. We already know who the deck is stacked against, as we have been told that the subject of discussion will be the modalities of a tuition increase, an end-goal we cannot endorse.

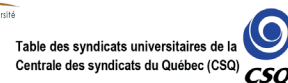
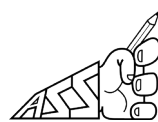
Considering that a true consultation cannot solely consist in a discussion on tuition increases, nor can it address piecemeal – especially not in one day – the problems afflicting Quebec's universities, we demand

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**that a broad-based, democratic debate taking the form of an Estates General on Quebec's universities be held with the aim of establishing a long-term development plan.**

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The reflection we need to undertake on the university of tomorrow is also a reflection on the society we want, the world in which we want to live. What will remain of Quebec when its institutions of higher learning have become machines for producing a workforce for leading industries? For if the university is foundering, it's above all because our society as a whole has been dragged adrift. The university we want is also the world we want.



[universitequebecoise.org](http://universitequebecoise.org)

# The Quebec university manifesto

For a free, accessible, democratic and public university

Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ)

Conseil québécois des syndicats universitaires (CQSU-AFPC)

Fédération des associations étudiantes universitaires québécoises en éducation permanente (FAEUQEP)

Table de concertation étudiante du Québec (TaCEQ)

Conseil provincial du secteur universitaire (CPSU-SCFP-FTQ)

Fédération des professionnelles (FP-CSN)

Fédération du personnel professionnel des universités et de la recherche (FPPU)

Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ-CSN)

Fédération québécoise des professeurs et professeurs d'université (FQPPU)

Table des syndicats universitaires (TSU-CSQ)

For several years now, Quebec's universities have been undergoing a radical transformation. Governance, tuition fee increases, underfunding, privatization – we are presently witnessing an unprecedented attack on the principles and missions that have underlain the role of our province's universities since their foundation. It would seem we must «adapt», that is, abandon a universal, public education system, the fruit of a social and political mobilization unique in Quebec's history.

We are students, professors, course lecturers, members of professional, technical and administrative staff, trade workers, and teaching and research assistants – and we will not be fooled. We reject a false consensus and a hypocritical lucidity: today, we are speaking out to demand loud and strong the university we want for ourselves, for our children, and for our grand-children. This manifesto is a promise – a promise not to abandon the struggle as long as Quebec's universities are not independent, public and universally accessible.

## The university's mission: towards a free university

The unanimity behind the issue of underfunding must not cover up the debate on the university's ultimate purpose. Questions of institutional finance and management must be addressed within the framework of an in-depth redefinition of the university's mission. Against the unilateral and hegemonic vision of the knowledge economy, we oppose our own: a plural and democratic mission that puts teaching and the transmission of knowledge at the heart of the 21st-century university.

In order to preserve and reinforce the university's critical institutional mission within Quebec society, and considering that the university's primary function is not to train a workforce in view of economic development or future personal accumulation of wealth, we demand that the government of Quebec:

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**officially recognize that university teaching establishments in Quebec have as their primary mission the development and transmission of knowledge and culture as well as the development of critical thinking, with an eye to contributing to social and human development.**

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## Between under-funded and ill-funded

In accordance with the principles of the knowledge economy, teaching, the university's primary and most fundamental activity, has been relegated below the «production of knowledge», particularly of practical knowledge. Research itself is undergoing a profound change – basic research is being progressively set aside in favour of heavily subsidized, immediately profitable applied projects. It's notable just to what extent nothing has been envisioned to compensate for this already palpable imbalance between applied research on the one hand, and basic research with a social scope on the other. As of now, the watchword for research funding in Quebec has become «the maintenance and reinforcing of the links between researchers and businesses to insure a better exchange of ideas and knowledge, in order to develop products and services that will find takers on the market». «Low-yielding» disciplines are evidently being cast off in this gold-rush, and it's increasingly only the richest universities that have the means to maintain these fields. For the others, the choice is terrible: get a bursary, or study philosophy? The answer is unsurprising.

Those proposals that would save universities' finances by extending user fees and privatization would only add oil to the fire: as such, we strongly reject them. A collective way of financing universities must correspond to their collective role: the state must guarantee quality, accessible post-secondary education for all its citizens, on the entirety of its territory. A public re-financing of universities must be complemented by a far-reaching reflection on the purposes of post-secondary education. The survival of the university and of its primary mission depends on it. If the university is to be collectively financed, it must above all measure up to its constitutive ideal.

Considering the increased attention to applied research and research centred on profitability, we demand that the government of Quebec:

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**favour, through adequate funding, a balance between teaching and research at each university;**

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**equitably finance the basic and applied purposes of academic research.**

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## Governance or collegiality?

The breaking wave of privatization hitting our universities will affect much more than the way they are funded and their purpose. In the past year, the very organization of CEGEPs and universities has been cast into doubt: bills have been tabled at the National Assembly to calque university decision-making bodies on the managerial model of private businesses. We refuse to allow our universities to be run according to the logic of economism, and we restate, more certain than ever, our commitment to collegiality and democracy.

Considering the importance of the independence of teaching and research, and that this independence is essential to their credibility and to the functioning of the scientific and academic communities, we demand that the government of Quebec:

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**recognize and respect the academic freedom proper to the university;**

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**recognize universities' autonomy in defining their own structures and in their decision-making, with due respect to their foundational missions;**

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**preserve the central principle of collegiality in the administration of higher-educational institutions and, consequently, favour a broad-based participation of members of the university in decision-making bodies.**

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## Education, a fundamental human right

This upheaval in university financing has had as a direct consequence an increase in the burden borne by students. As the state has progressively reduced its participation, the contribution of the student population has risen, parallel to that of private businesses. Using their desire to settle the problem of under-funding as an excuse, the government has announced that they will massively increase tuition fees in 2012, positing a false dilemma between adequate funding of universities and maintaining affordable tuition. We refuse to make this choice; we refuse to pit quality against accessibility. These two principles can and must go together, as much in education as in all public services.

Considering that the government of Quebec is obliged to recognize education as a right, not an economic privilege, by virtue of its commitment to the International