

College finances in the second year of the pandemic, 2021/2022

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Monday, December 18, 2023

In 2021/2022, despite the ongoing challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges collectively reported a \$158.8 million budget surplus. This was lower than the \$336.1 million surplus in 2020/2021. In the five years before the start of the pandemic (2015/2016 to 2019/2020), colleges posted an average annual surplus of \$159.0 million. All dollar figures in this release are expressed in 2022 constant dollars to factor for inflation, which enables comparisons across time.

Factors that continued to affect college operations in 2021/2022 were intermittent campus closures, the continued implementation of safety measures mandated by health authorities, and the gradual lifting of travel restrictions. Colleges also faced a significant increase in operational costs due to a [40-year-high inflation rate of 6.8%](#).

Expenditures increase slightly more than revenues in the second year of the pandemic

From 2020/2021 to 2021/2022, total revenues increased to \$14.0 billion from \$13.4 billion and total expenditures increased to \$13.8 billion from \$13.1 billion. The increase of \$551.2 million in revenues was driven by an increase in college fee revenues (+\$285.1 million), ancillary revenues (+\$153.4 million) and donations (+\$85.2 million), which collectively made up 95.0% of the total increase. The remaining 5.0% was attributable to miscellaneous items such as investment income.

The increase of \$728.5 million in expenditures can be mainly attributable to the increase in spending on fees and contracted services (+\$226.5 million), building projects (+\$192.9 million) and salaries and benefits (+\$125.8 million), which together made up 63.5% of the total increase. The remaining share of expenditure increase can be attributable to other items such as operational supplies and utilities.

The change in expenditures varied across provinces and territories. Nunavut (+14.5%) reported the largest increase, followed by Alberta (+14.3%), Ontario (+9.3%), Saskatchewan (+7.8%), Prince Edward Island (+5.2%), New Brunswick (+3.8%), Quebec (+2.6%) and the Northwest Territories (+1.9%). Conversely, Nova Scotia (-9.7%), Manitoba (-5.3%), British Columbia (-1.7%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (-0.6%) all saw declines in their total expenditures. For Nova Scotia, lower spending on furniture and equipment was a large contributing factor to the decrease in capital expenditures (-81.9%).

Increased enrolment of college students contributes to increases in fee revenues

In 2021/2022, colleges reported a total of \$4.7 billion in fee revenues, up 6.5% from the previous year's \$4.4 billion. However, this growth was lower than the pre-pandemic five-year (2015/2016 to 2019/2020) average annual growth of 9.4%. [Increased enrolments of international college students](#) (+1.0%), whose fees can be as much as four times those of Canadian students, contributed to the 2021/2022 growth in college fee revenue.

Nova Scotia (-6.9%), British Columbia (-5.6%) and Quebec (-3.3%) were the only provinces that experienced a decrease in fee revenues in 2021/2022. Decreased enrolment in British Columbia (-1.2%) and Quebec (-0.1%) was the major contributing factor to their fee revenue declines.

Product and service-based revenues reach close to pre-pandemic levels

In 2021/2022, product and service-based revenues increased by 46.2% to reach \$4.9 billion, after having dropped almost 50% during the first year of the pandemic. On-campus activity returned to near-normal levels in 2021/2022, and, as a result, students and faculty increased their spending on parking fees, gym memberships, restaurants and other on-site college businesses that contributed to the growth of product and service-based college revenue.



Donations reach record-high level

In 2021/2022, donations grew by 77.3%, reaching a record high of \$195.6 million. Business enterprises and individuals contributed to almost two-thirds (63.7%) of the total, while the remaining share came from non-profit organizations and foundations. Together, Ontario (32.1%), Alberta (32.0%) and Quebec (23.5%) accounted for close to 90% of the total donations received.

Federal and provincial funding decrease

In 2021/2022, colleges received \$314.1 million from the federal government compared with \$319.1 million in the previous year. Revenues from the provincial government also decreased, down 0.02% to \$7.5 billion. During the pandemic, provincial governments provided special funding to support projects aimed at implementing new virtual learning practices and the safe return to in-class learning in 2020/2021. This support ended in 2021/2022, which was a key factor in the overall decline in provincial revenues.

In 2021/2022, Newfoundland and Labrador reported the largest increase in federal funding (+139.4%), attributable to a \$1.8 million federal grant allocated over the next five years to establish Technology Access Centres. Alberta (+5.0%) experienced the highest increase in provincial funding among all provinces and territories, marking a turnaround after four consecutive years of cuts.

Except for Ontario, public funding continues to be the primary source of revenues

Public funding made up more than half of all revenues in all provinces and territories, except for Ontario in 2021/2022. Fee revenues made up 54.3% of Ontario college revenue as compared with 33.2% of its revenue coming from federal, provincial and municipal governments. The [Ontario auditor General 2021 public colleges oversight report](#) revealed that nearly 7 in 10 dollars of Ontario's college fees came from foreign students.

Did you know we have a mobile app?

Get timely access to data right at your fingertips by downloading the [StatsCAN app](#), available for free on the [App Store](#) and on [Google Play](#).

Note to readers

In the Financial Information of Colleges (FINCOL) survey, colleges refer to colleges, institutes, CEGEPs, and polytechnics.

Revenue data are collected from each college and are distributed by type of fund, which include general operating funds (an unrestricted fund that accounts for the institution's primary activities of instruction and operations), sponsored research, and capital.

All of the financial figures are in constant 2021/2022 dollars adjusted for inflation, unless otherwise noted.

[Additional information for the 2020/2021 FINCOL survey](#) is also available.

Yukon is no longer in the survey because Yukon College became Yukon University in 2020. Yukon is included in the Financial Survey of Universities.

Available tables: [37-10-0028-01](#) and [37-10-0029-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3121](#) and [3146](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).