

Conference Report

CASA Foundations – Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

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Date: May 11th – May 17th, 2025

Location: Ottawa, Ontario

Attended by: Alex Oestreicher & Rajveer Singh

Purpose of the Conference

The CASA Foundations Conference served as a gateway for student leaders to understand the national landscape of student advocacy. The event brought together representatives from over 23 post-secondary institutions to explore how CASA operates, how it advocates at the federal level, and how student associations can collaborate to improve student life across Canada. The week-long event provided hands-on learning, networking opportunities, and a broader context to support CSI's advocacy goals.

Key Sessions Attended

1. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Student Leadership – Presented by Dr. Andrew Campbell

This was one of the most powerful and moving sessions of the conference. Dr. Campbell explored how systems of oppression, such as racism and homophobia, show up in student governance and leadership. He challenged us to reflect on how we, as leaders, can use our platforms to dismantle these barriers. The session not only encouraged personal reflection but also provided actionable insights on how to lead with empathy and equity.

2. Robert's Rules and Effective Plenary Participation – Presented by Matt

This session gave us a much-needed refresher on how to navigate plenary procedures, including making motions, amendments, and participating in structured debate. The facilitator broke down parliamentary language in a way that felt accessible, even for new delegates. This session gave us more confidence to actively contribute to future plenary sessions and policy discussions.

3. Mock MP Advocacy Meeting

Designed as a hands-on simulation, this session helped us practice how to engage with Members of Parliament on key student issues. With the help of mentors and facilitators, we created short, impactful pitches and conducted mock meetings. The feedback we received helped sharpen our messaging, body language, and strategy for real-world advocacy.

4. National Indigenous Advocacy Committee (NIAC) Overview

This session offered insight into the mission, governance, and advocacy work of NIAC within CASA. The facilitators highlighted how student associations can support Indigenous students meaningfully and ethically. The presentation also emphasized that Indigenous advocacy must be continuous and community-led, which reinforced our responsibility to listen, support, and amplify Indigenous voices at Conestoga and beyond.

5. Issues That Matter to Your Student Union – Facilitated by Hannah

This group activity invited student leaders to share real, campus-specific challenges and collectively brainstorm solutions. It created a collaborative space for open discussion, where we found common ground with other student associations on issues like housing, international student support, and financial aid. It was validating to see that many institutions are facing similar barriers and encouraging to share strategies that are already working elsewhere

Benefit to CSI / What We Want to Bring Back to Campus

Attending the CASA Foundations Conference was an eye-opening experience for us as student leaders at CSI. The sessions didn't just give us information — they helped us connect the dots between what's happening nationally and what our students are dealing with right here at Conestoga.

Here's what we are bringing back to the campus –

- **Stronger Advocacy for Real Issues**
We now have a clearer path to push for federal changes that directly impact your student experience—like better financial aid, housing support, and fairer policies for international students. We're making sure your voice is heard where it matters most.
- **More Collaboration, More Ideas**
We've built connections with student leaders from over 23 institutions. That means we're not just working in isolation—we're learning what's working at other schools and bringing those ideas back to CSI to improve your student life.
- **A Bigger Platform for Your Voice**
Being part of CASA means we're not just advocating locally—we're part of a national movement. That gives us the power to amplify your concerns and push for change that benefits all students, especially those in colleges and polytechnics like Conestoga.
- **Commitment to Equity and Inclusion**
One of the most powerful sessions we attended focused on dismantling barriers in student leadership. We're bringing that energy back with us—committed to making CSI more inclusive, more representative, and more responsive to every student.

The ideas we helped shape at CASA will continue to grow at the upcoming Policy and Strategy Conference. We'll keep you in the loop and make sure you see the impact of this work right here on campus.

We're not just bringing back notes—we're bringing back a clearer sense of purpose and we can't wait to turn that into action for our students.