

STUDENT Initiative Fund – Information for website/handbook

The STUDENT Initiative Fund (SIF) is a STU Mental Health / Healthy Campus enterprise which provides financial support and professional mentorship for student-led projects and events to improve student mental health and well-being. This program allows students and student groups to build valuable skills, knowledge and experience while also identifying and closing gaps in programming on campus and thus improving the student experience for their peers. Students will receive financial and mentorship support throughout the process, allowing big ideas to become a reality!

Individual or student groups can apply to receive funding, professional support and guidance for student-led initiatives on campus. The purpose and preferable outcome of these initiatives must connect with specific goal(s) found in the Mental Health Framework.

In 2021-22, applications will be received for online/remote activities and for in-person initiatives that demonstrate compliance with current public health and university health and safety guidelines.

Up to \$10,000 / year will be available for these student-led ideas and initiatives. Students interested in receiving funding through the Student Initiative Fund will undergo an application and selection process.

St. Thomas University Mental Health Framework

All applications to the STUDENT Initiative Fund must align with one or more goals outlined within our Mental Health Framework. The framework provides a model to discuss, strategize, and respond comprehensively to mental health. The framework recognizes four areas, all of which require thoughtful and effective initiatives to provide a comprehensive response:



All project proposals for the STUDENT Initiative Fund must align with one or more goals identified in our Mental Health Framework. These goals include:

Area 1:

1. Students feel a sense of belonging at STU and have meaningful relationships with other students;
2. Students exhibit healthy exercise, sleep, and nutrition habits; and
3. Students possess basic Mental Health awareness.

Area 2:

1. Students possess effective coping skills;
2. Students exhibit and/or are open to help-seeking behavior;
3. Early Identification and Referral systems are clear and well-used.

Area 3:

1. Appropriate mental health services are available to students in a timely manner.
2. Emergency response protocols meet best practice standards.
3. Effective liaising with hospital, community and family supports.

Area 4:

1. Faculty and Staff understand mental health and their role supporting and referring students;
2. Policies and procedures meet best practice standards and are well-communicated;
3. Sufficient resources are dedicated to meet goals.

NOTE: The STUdent Initiative Fund will NOT fund events or initiatives that may have the effect of marginalizing, discriminating, harassing, and/or excluding any identifiable group of persons.

What kinds of expenses are available for funding?

For in-person OR virtual initiatives, expenses could include:

- Speaker fees;
- Fees for service for external contracts (ex. Fitness classes, training opportunities, etc.)
- Cost of rentals or equipment for an event;
- Technology or streaming-related expenses for virtual events;
- Marketing, promotion or communication costs;
- Purchase of food, beverages or equipment for catered events;
- Venue costs if off-campus;
- Other expenses deemed appropriate by the SIF Selection Committee.

Activities/expenses that are NOT eligible for funding include:

- Events or initiatives that have the effect of marginalizing, discriminating, harassing, and/or excluding any identifiable group of persons;
- Guest or participant gifts, charitable donations, wages or volunteer recognition;
- Expenses in support of individuals attending, or presenting at, a meeting, conference or activity.

EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE STUDENT INITIATIVE FUND APPLICATIONS:

STUdent Initiative Idea	Goal(s) Addressed
Wellness Documentary Movie Night, Panel Discussion	Area 1 – goal 1 & 3
Workshop, workshop series or resource development for a particular need (ex. “How To Be a Better Ally”)	Area 1 – goal 1 & 3 Area 2 – goal 1 & 2
“Brunch & Learn” Event / Series with internal or external speakers	Area 1 – goal 1, 2 & 3 Area 2 – goal 1 & 2
A Mental Health / Wellness themed Exhibition	Event specific; potential to address goals in Area 1 and 2.
Mindfulness-focused event, series or resources for students	Area 1 – goal 1, 2 & 3 Area 2 – goal 1
Unique mental health and/or wellness training opportunity for students	Event specific; potential to address goals in Area 1 and 2
Unique health class/series (ex. Cooking, fitness opportunity, etc.).	Area 1 – goal 1 & 2

Application and Selection Process:

Applications for the SIF will be accepted twice, in September and January of each year. A session will be held twice each year, prior to the application deadline, to provide information and guidance to interested students and answer questions about the process. Student can also receive mentorship as they prepare their application by emailing humberk@stu.ca and/or brettm@stu.ca.

Applications must be submitted online. All applications will be reviewed by the STUdent Initiative Fund committee which is comprised of staff and student representatives. Applications will be reviewed based on an evaluation rubric.

All approved applications will be paired with a staff member who can provide guidance and mentorship to the successful student/group. **PLEASE NOTE: While the staff mentor can provide support in the process, it is the responsibility of the successful applicant(s) to plan and execute their idea.**

All approved SIF applications must execute their idea within that academic year. Multi-year or repeat initiatives are acceptable but will require a new application and evaluation.

For more information about the STUdent Initiative Fund, contact Kelly Humber Kelly at humberk@stu.ca.