CEA Budget Brief (2026-27)

Budget Summary:

Expected Revenues:

- Total projected revenue: $100,577
    - Funding sources:
        - Student Activity Fee: $24,128
        - Grants: $6,600
        - Donations: $2,800
        - Allocation from Assembly: 67,049
- Change from last year's actual revenue: +$8,180
    - Previous year actual revenue: $92,397

Expected Personnel Expenses:

- Salaries: $38,231
- Wages (General Staff, Supervisors): $36,270
- Other (Honorarium): $3,000
- Change from previous year actuals: +$4,751
    - Previous year personnel cost: $72,749

Expected Operating Expenses:

- Total projected operating expenses: $23,077
- Key allocations:
    - General Operations: $7,872
        - Municipal Elections Event/Panels – $625
        - Meet Your Councillor Booths (3) – $225
        - Meet Your Councillor Town Hall – $300
        - Local Advocacy Week / "Are You Smarter Than Your City Councillor?" – $280
        - Political Debate (Clubs) – $100
        - Civic Award – $2,500
        - Award Gala – $750
        - Staff Appreciation – $400
        - FreshService Licensing – $1,144
        - FormStack Subscription – $292
        - Canva Subscription – $130
        - Laptop Rental Program Software – $450
        - Room Rentals – $648
    - Academic Grievance Centre: $10,525

        - Academic Bursary: $8,000
        - Meet Your Faculty: $700
        - Alumni Event: $200
        - Academic Caucus (4 × $150): $600
        - Academic Success Week: $275
        - Award Gala: $750
    - Community Development Summit: $2,400
    - Housing Resource Centre: $2,280
        - Housing Resource Fairs (2) – $1,300
        - Community Barbecue – $550
        - Housing Rights Town Hall – $230
        - Roommate Matching Event – $100
        - Community Cleanups (2) – $100

Variances and Notable Issues

Previous Budget vs Actuals (2025-26)

The Commission of External Affairs budgeted revenues of $96,162 but generated actual revenues of $92,397, resulting in a shortfall of approximately $3,765. This variance was primarily attributable to lower-than-anticipated grant and donation revenues.

Personnel expenditures totaled $72,749 compared to a budget of $75,017, resulting in savings of approximately $2,268. This underspend was largely driven by lower wage expenditures than originally anticipated.

Operating expenditures were also lower than budgeted across several portfolio areas. While the budget anticipated significant student-facing programming, programming activity was more limited than originally planned across the External Affairs portfolio. As a result, several event, outreach, and operational accounts were underutilized. Within the Academic Grievance Centre, the Academic Bursary allocation was not distributed as anticipated, contributing to a substantial underspend relative to budget. Additionally, the Laptop Lending Program was not formally launched during the fiscal year, resulting in lower software and operational expenditures than originally projected and no associated revenue generation. The portfolio's reach and service delivery capacity were also constrained by the absence of a dedicated resource centre space, limiting opportunities to expand programming and increase utilization of available services. Similarly, general advocacy initiatives were delivered at a smaller scale than originally projected.

Overall, the portfolio concluded the year with a surplus of approximately $5,226, driven primarily by lower personnel costs and reduced program expenditures.

Current Budget vs Previous Actuals (2026-27 vs 2025-26)

The 2026–27 budget reflects a significant expansion of student-facing advocacy programming and services to align with student needs and comply with policy-mandated initiatives. Revenue is projected to increase by $8,180 relative to the previous year's actual results, rising from $92,397 in 2025–26 to $100,577 in 2026–27. This increase is driven by a higher Assembly allocation, which increased from $66,000 in 2025–26 to $67,049 in 2026–27, as well as anticipated growth in external funding. Grant revenue is budgeted to increase from $2,500 in 2025–26 actuals to $6,600 in 2026–27, while donations are budgeted to increase from $0 in 2025–26 actuals to $2,800 in 2026–27.

These increases reflect efforts to diversify revenue sources and reduce reliance on student-funded revenue streams. Donations are primarily acquired through fundraising initiatives and community partnerships. While fundraising activity was limited during 2025–26, the portfolio partnered with Society 58 to produce and sell keychains, with revenue from that initiative still to be collected. Moving into 2026–27, the portfolio will take a more proactive approach to securing external funding by seeking multiple grants, sponsorships, and donations from stakeholders interested in supporting specific initiatives throughout the year. This includes outreach to municipal councillors, community organizations, and groups such as the Kingston Post-Secondary Working Group to support events like the Community Barbecue and other student engagement initiatives. The budget also anticipates an increase in PPSP grant funding from $2,500 to $5,000, which will support the House Checkers program and other housing-related initiatives. These increases reflect efforts to diversify revenue sources and reduce reliance on student-funded revenue streams.

Personnel expenses are budgeted to increase by $4,751, reflecting continued investment in staffing capacity, assistant manager positions, and delegate development opportunities.

Operating expenditures are budgeted at $23,077, compared to approximately $14,422 in actual spending during 2025–26. This increase reflects a strategic shift toward proactive advocacy programming, including municipal election engagement initiatives, expanded housing programming, enhanced academic advocacy activities, and sustained investment in the Community Development Summit.

The budget also places greater emphasis on direct student engagement through consultations, town halls, resource fairs, caucuses, and community-building events, aligning expenditures more closely with the portfolio's advocacy and service objectives.

Factors Influencing Variances:

Several factors contributed to the differences between the 2026–27 budget and prior-year results.

First, programming activity during 2025–26 was more limited than originally anticipated across multiple areas of the portfolio. As a result, actual expenditures did not fully reflect the level of student engagement, consultation, advocacy, and educational programming envisioned in the

approved budget. The 2026–27 budget therefore reflects a return to more active programming and student-facing initiatives across the General, Academic, and Housing portfolios. This increased investment is intended to better align the portfolio's activities with its constitutional and policy-mandated responsibilities, which include academic advocacy, government relations, housing education, community development, and fostering positive town-gown relations. While the previous year's expenditures reflected a reduced level of programming, the proposed budget seeks to ensure the Commission more fully delivers on the scope of work contemplated by the AMS Constitution and Assembly policies, while providing students with meaningful opportunities for engagement, consultation, and representation.

Second, the Academic Grievance Centre did not distribute the Academic Bursary during 2025–26. The current budget maintains the bursary allocation while also supporting additional academic engagement opportunities, including Academic Caucuses, Meet Your Faculty, and Academic Success Week programming. This increased investment in academic advocacy initiatives also highlights the distinct and growing nature of academic representation work. While the current portfolio combines both academic and external advocacy responsibilities, the expansion of academic programming demonstrates demand for dedicated institutional advocacy, consultation, and student engagement. Continued investment in these initiatives supports the long-term case for separating academic and external affairs functions to ensure both areas receive focused attention and adequate resources.

Third, the portfolio has placed a greater emphasis on direct student engagement and community advocacy. New and expanded initiatives include municipal election programming, councillor engagement opportunities, housing resource fairs, community cleanups, housing rights education, and broader consultation efforts. These initiatives align with the portfolio's strategic objectives of increasing student awareness, participation, and advocacy impact. Furthermore, 2026 is a municipal election year, creating a unique need for election-related programming that does not arise annually. Candidate engagement opportunities, voter education initiatives, election-focused events, and increased outreach efforts require additional resources beyond the portfolio's typical operating activities. The projected increase in revenue helps support these one-time initiatives while maintaining existing services and advocacy programming.

Employee Costs

Staffing Numbers (Current Year vs Previous Year)

Position Type	Role	Change from Previous Year
Salaried	Commissioner of External Affairs	No Change
Waged	Government Affairs Manager	No Change
Waged	Academic Affairs Manager	No Change
Waged	Housing Resource Manager	No Change
Honoraria	OUSA Delegates	No Change

Volunteer	HRC and AAC	No Change

Staffing Cost Comparison (Current Year vs Previous Year)

Category	Current Year Budget	Previous Year Actual	Change
Salaried Staff	$38,231	$37,185	+$1,046
Waged Staff	$36,270	$32,419	+$3,851
Honorarium / Transition	$3,000	$3,000	$0
Total	**$77,500**	**$72,749**	**+$4,896**

Cost Management:

The Commission of External Advocacy allocates resources across four budget areas: General Operations, Academic Grievance Centre, Housing Resource Centre, and Community Development Summit. Programming is delivered through three primary streams: Government Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Housing Affairs. Funding decisions are guided by advocacy priorities, anticipated student demand, historical spending trends, and the operational requirements necessary to effectively deliver services and programming.

Government Affairs funding is primarily focused on municipal advocacy and increasing student engagement in politics, governance, and civic participation both within the university and the broader Kingston community. Key initiatives include municipal election programming, Meet Your Councillor events, political debates, Local Advocacy Week, and other opportunities that connect students with elected officials and decision-making processes. These initiatives are intended to strengthen civic literacy, encourage democratic participation, and ensure student perspectives are represented in local decision-making. Academic Affairs funding supports Academic Caucuses, Meet Your Faculty, Academic Success Week programming, and the Academic Bursary Program. These initiatives seek to improve student access to academic support, strengthen communication between students and academic decision-makers, and provide opportunities for consultation on academic policy issues. Housing Affairs funding supports tenant education, housing advocacy, and community-building initiatives, including Housing Resource Fairs, the Housing Rights Town Hall, community cleanups, the Community Barbecue, and the Roommate Matching Event. In addition, the portfolio continues to leverage external funding through its Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Kingston, which funds the Community Service Agents and House Checkers programs. By securing municipal support for these initiatives, the portfolio is able to expand student services and community safety programming while minimizing reliance on AMS student fee revenue.

The 2026–27 budget was developed using prior-year actual expenditures as a reference point. Programming activity during 2025–26 was more limited than anticipated across all portfolio areas, resulting in lower overall expenditures than originally budgeted. Additionally, the

Academic Grievance Centre did not distribute bursary funding at the level anticipated in the approved budget, contributing to a notable academic portfolio underspend. The current budget therefore reflects a renewed emphasis on delivering planned programming and aligning expenditures with expected operational needs and student engagement objectives.

To ensure responsible stewardship of student funds, expenditures are monitored throughout the year against approved budget allocations. Event budgets are informed by historical spending data, expected attendance, and program objectives, while general operating expenses are reviewed regularly to ensure resources remain focused on student-facing initiatives. The portfolio also seeks to maximize the value of available funding through partnerships, volunteer engagement, and external funding opportunities where appropriate.