

Toronto

Financially struggling international student resorts to a crowdfunding website to pay for her education

Luana Saturnino's GoFundMe page 'Help this young immigrant mother to graduate' currently has six donors ranging from her family from back home and friends in Canada.



Luana Saturnino stares into the camera in her self-portrait she took with her son (Source: GoFundMe)

Luana Saturnino, an international student from Brazil, enrolls in journalism at Seneca College. Saturnino and her husband wanted a better future for their child Luke.

Their first year was smooth sailing, with few minor bumps here and there. Saturnino pulled through a full-time course load overcoming language barriers and unfamiliarity with the new environment.

While she was in school and Luke in daycare, her husband worked. The family survived on his minimum wage job and their savings from Brazil.

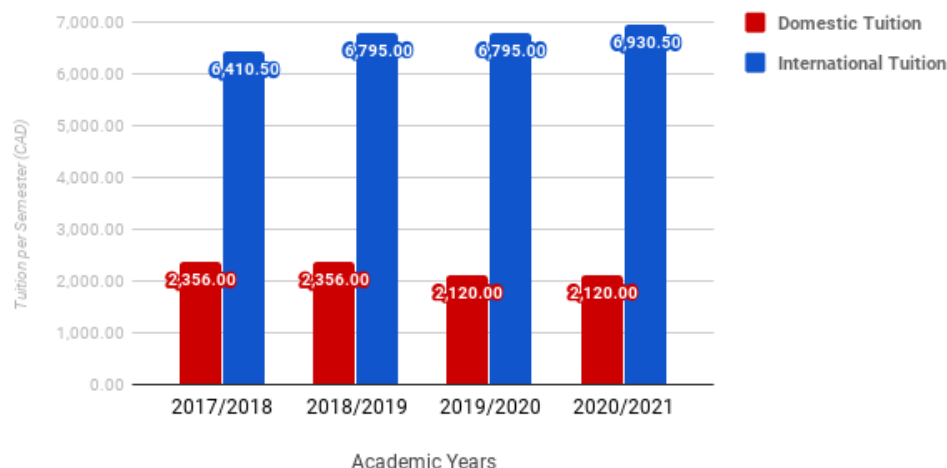
When the pandemic hit, Saturnino's husband could not work anymore; he was immunocompromised. Saturnino opened a GoFundMe page to support her final year of education. "As long as we planned, we could see that it would be virtually impossible to maintain our basic lifestyle... with the amount of money, we have on our bank account" says Saturnino.

To date, the campaign raised \$750 out of the \$15,000 goal. The fund will cover her tuition and other necessary costs such as equipment and software she will need to pursue her study.

Many post-secondary institutions have a huge difference between international tuition and domestic tuition.

Seneca JRN Program Tuition

Source: <https://www.senecacollege.ca/registrar/fee-details/>



For Seneca College's Journalism program, domestic tuition gradually decreased over the four years while the international tuition increased. On average, international students in Seneca pay three times more than domestic students.

When Saturnino questioned the college, they told her it wasn't up to the institution but the federal government. "It's really revolting to see the disparity of the financial treatment that the country is giving," says Saturnino.

Among students, both international and domestics, tuition is always a debating topic. This isn't just for Seneca College but any other post-secondary institutions.

OneClass.com, a website dedicated to sharing study notes for university students, conducted a tuition comparison analysis based on data from 2006 to 2017. Their study found, on average, international tuition increased 2.6 times more than domestics.

Many international student organizations from different schools came forward angry, calling the increase unfair and unwarranted. Currently, only the domestic tuition is under the provincial government's tuition freeze. International students demand their schools to freeze international tuition as well during this unprecedented time.

Most of the courses in the upcoming fall semester will be online

"To be honest, I don't think it will be a good semester," says Saturnino when asked about the online classes for the fall.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, most of the classes in Ontario will be offered online while the campuses stay closed. Saturnino's journalism classes will be online as well. Her classes require broadcasting equipment and software which is only available on campus. Some lectures that used to take place in a newsroom setting will have to be taught online over webcams.