



# **Responses and Responsibilities: Complexity of International Students' Work and Learning Experiences**

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CANADIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS II:

HOW POLICIES AND PROGRAMS SUPPORT OR HINDER THE CHANGING STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC

Session Code: EDU3B

Tuesday June 1, 2021

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM MST

# Land acknowledgement



<https://students.ubc.ca/ubclife/welcome-musqueam-territory>

The research project that we will be discussing in this presentation was conducted at UBC Vancouver campus which is located on the traditional, ancestral, and uncaded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) People.

# Hard Working Student (HWS) Research Project

A SSHRC-funded longitudinal mixed methods study taking place at UBC and the University of Toronto

Grant Number 435-2018-0078



<https://blogs.ubc.ca/hardwork/>

The study explores undergraduate students' term-time work patterns and experiences.

- Data collection is still underway.
- Data analysis is at an early stage.

This presentation draws upon **qualitative** data collected at **UBC** and focuses on the **16 international students** in the sample.

Previous literature has documented the challenges that international students often face in securing work while studying and after graduating.

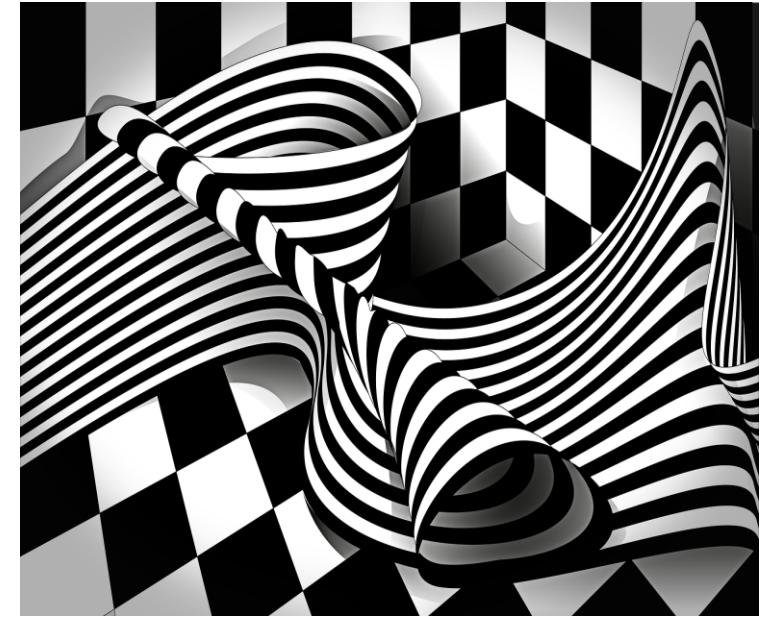
Examples include:

- Arthur & Flynn (2011)
- Goodwin & Mbah (2019)
- Nunes & Arthur (2013)
- R. A. Malatest & Associates (2018)
- Tran & Soejatminah (2017)



# Key take-aways

1. **International students are diverse**, and they navigate school and work challenges with varying levels of familial, social, and professional support.
2. To make up for differences in their social and cultural capital (vis-à-vis domestic students), high tuition levels, and the need to gain career-related Canadian work experience if they seek PR, **those who work tend to work extremely hard and much of this ‘acculturation’ work is invisible and individualized.**

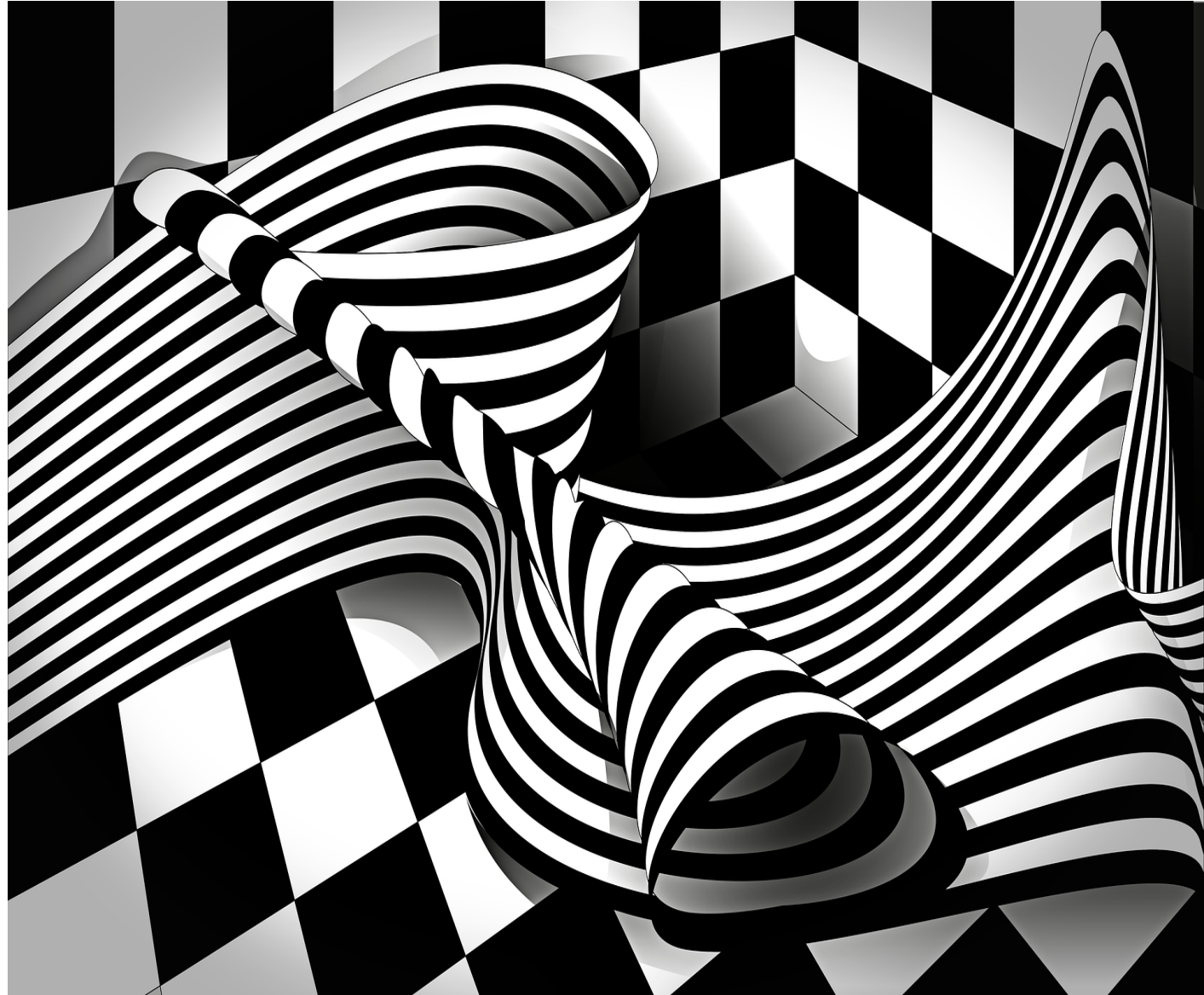


# Key take-away 1

**International students are diverse**, and they navigate school and work challenges with varying levels of familial, social, and professional support.

## **Snapshots of diversity**

- Commuting
- Travel during breaks
- Parental support
- Tuition and living expenses
- Scholarships



# Commuting



... for my 20<sup>th</sup>  
birthday my  
parents got me  
a car.



... if I work a  
2 hour shift,  
I'll spend 2  
hours  
commuting.

I don't have a car,  
so all of those  
downtown or  
East Van  
[Vancouver] jobs  
... although they  
look very  
promising, I can't  
do them because  
I would have to  
commute an hour  
and a half or so -  
just one way -  
and it's just not  
affordable.

# **Travel during breaks**



... my family does a lot of travelling. Because I live in [Asian country], during the summer we usually go back to [European country]. And like, my family's scattered all over Europe, so we always spend quite a bit of time doing that.



I probably will not go home until I graduate ... I knew I wouldn't be able to because I wanted to save up.

I am able to send money home now, which for me matters a lot, especially knowing that my sister is now starting primary school.

But then again, my mom and my dad keep falling ill and coming out of that so there is a bit of fear for the future I guess.

... if I am away for  
4 months then I  
need to pay the  
rent for 4 months.


So I decided to  
stay here for 2  
months and then  
working so the  
money I earned  
can pay for the  
rent.





... maybe extend the **winter** break a little bit. Because honestly, I don't get to go home during winter break because it's such a short amount of time and I'm going to be travelling for like 3 days and then I'm there for like another 6 or 7 days, and it's expensive ... so I just choose not to go back.

# Parental support

The image is a composite of two photographs. On the left, a close-up portrait of a man with dark hair and a light beard, wearing a red coat, looking off to the side. On the right, a man in a dark pinstripe suit and tie is adjusting his tie, with a close-up of his wrist showing a chronograph watch with a brown leather strap. A blue speech bubble with a white border is positioned over the right side of the image, containing text.

... my parents are like okay if you don't like what you're doing ahead you can always come back and join the [parents' business] empire.

I need to repay my parents because they are kind of loaning me the money right now.

UNTIL DEBT  
TEAR US APART

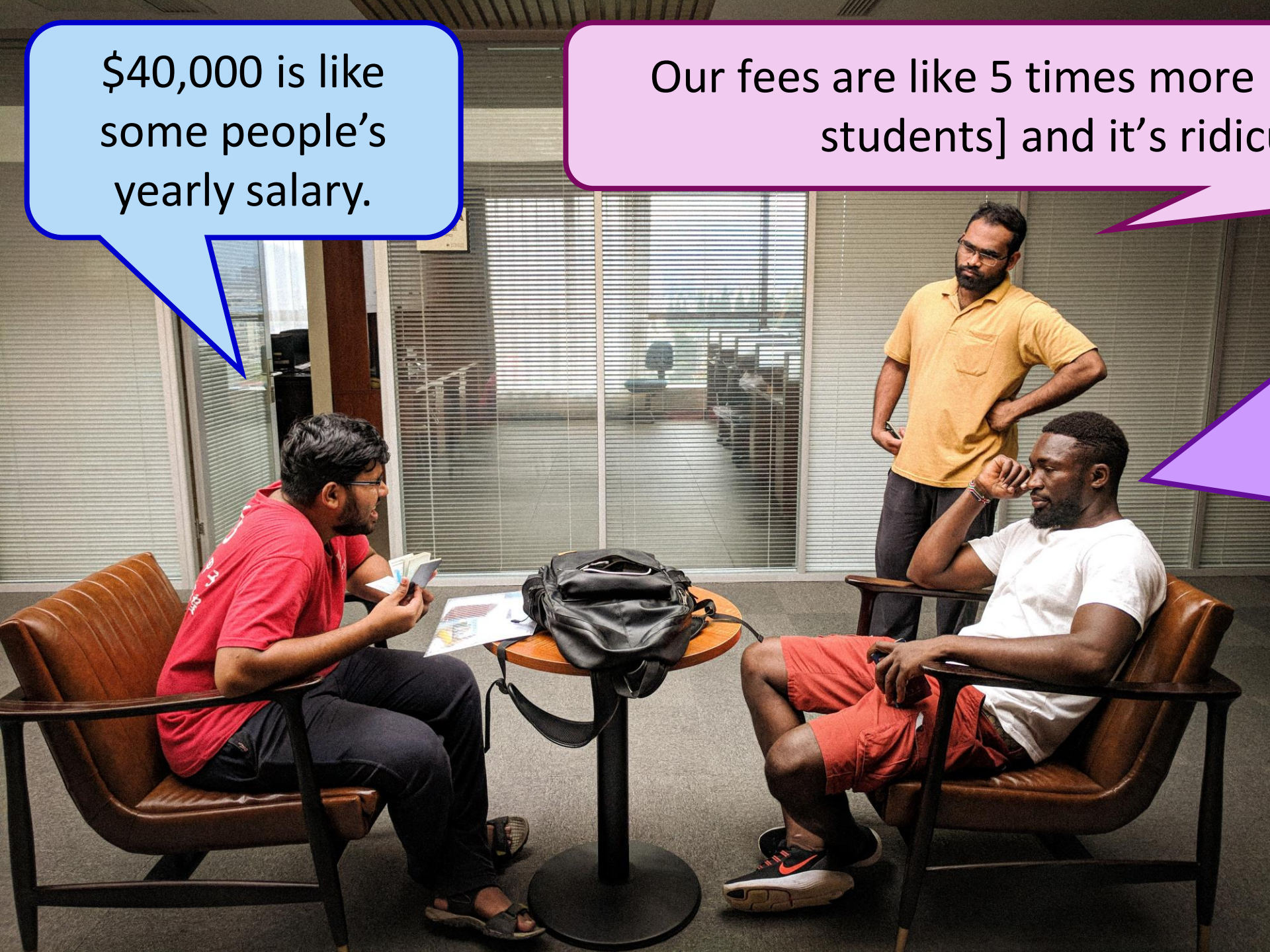


# **Tuition and living expenses**

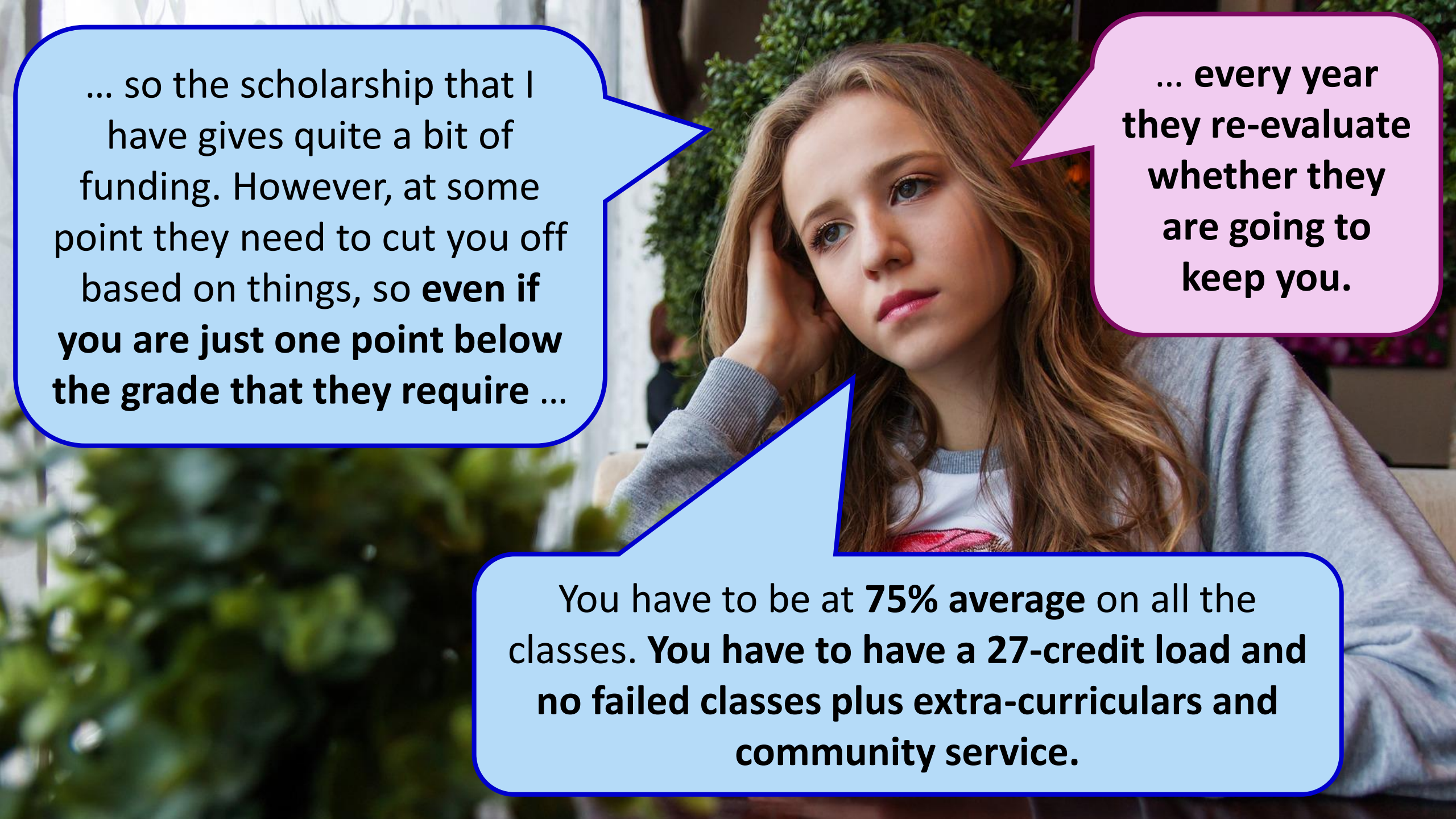
\$40,000 is like  
some people's  
yearly salary.

Our fees are like 5 times more [than domestic  
students] and it's ridiculous.

... per month  
it's a lot of  
expenses,  
because there  
is rent, there is  
food,  
insurance,  
phone.



# Scholarships



... so the scholarship that I have gives quite a bit of funding. However, at some point they need to cut you off based on things, so **even if you are just one point below the grade that they require ...**

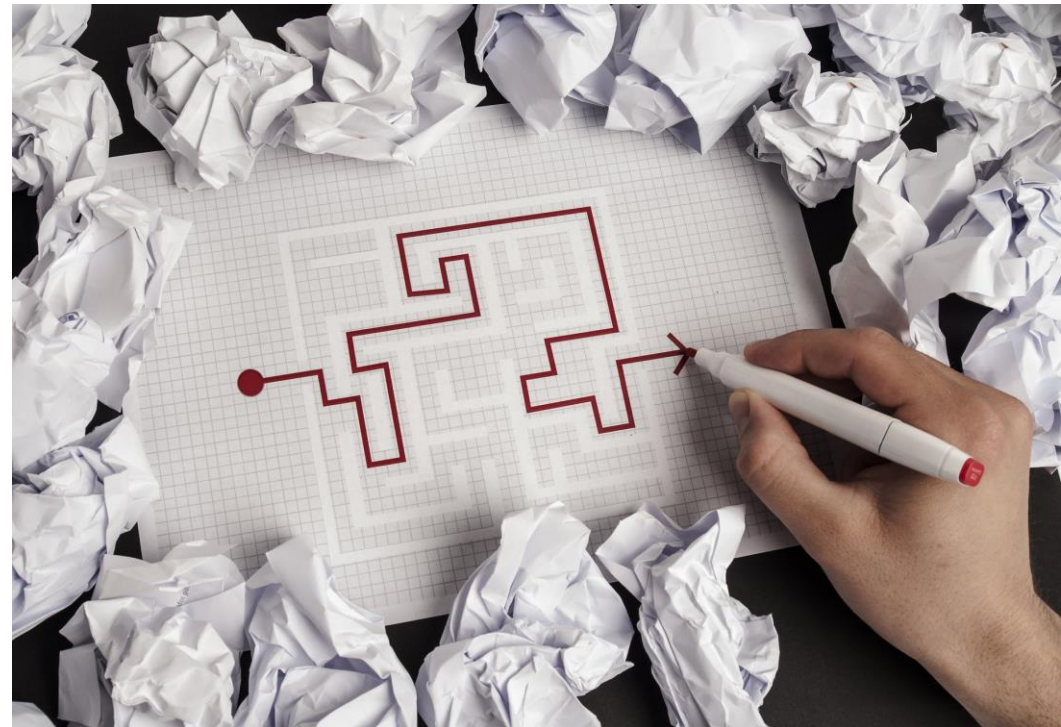
... **every year they re-evaluate whether they are going to keep you.**

You have to be at **75% average** on all the classes. **You have to have a 27-credit load and no failed classes plus extra-curriculars and community service.**

# Key take-away 2

To make up for differences in their social and cultural capital (vis-à-vis domestic students), high tuition levels, and the need to gain career-related Canadian work experience if they seek PR, **those who work tend to work extremely hard and much of this ‘acculturation’ work is invisible and individualized.**

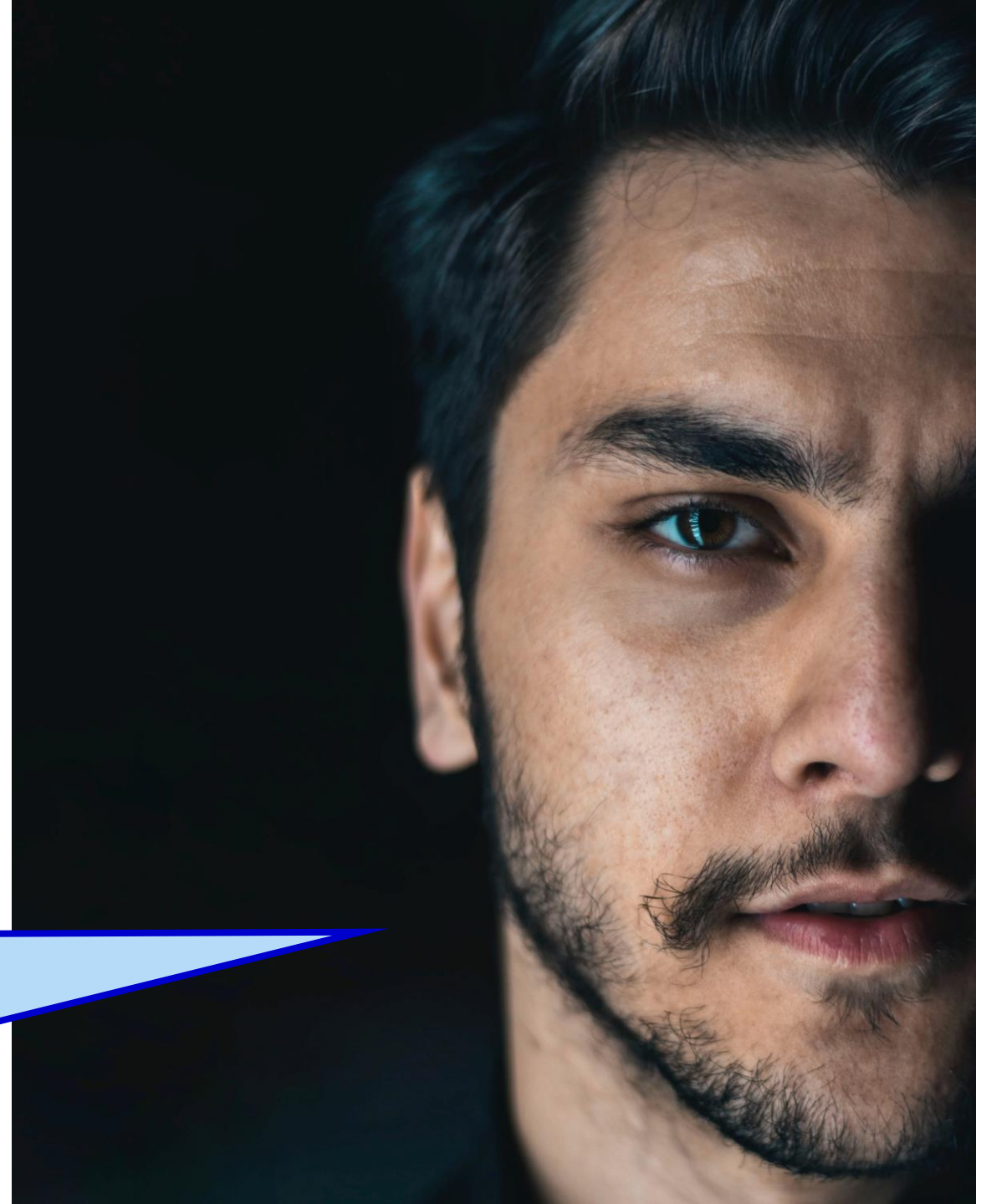
- **Employment and immigration**
- **Barriers to employment**
- **Navigation strategies**



## HWS Quantitative Data

International students, on average,  
worked more than domestic  
students in 2018  
(**16.65** vs. **13.97** hours).

I pick up so much that at the  
end of the day I am like three  
jobs, two research projects  
and classes.  
It's way too much.



# **Employment and Immigration**

# Education to Immigration



University  
education

**60% of international  
students plan to apply  
for permanent  
residence in Canada**

<https://cbie.ca/infographic/>



Canadian  
citizenship

# PGWP Pathway



# 16 international students

- 1 is now a permanent resident
- 1 does not intend to apply for PR
- 1 has not yet discussed their plans
- 13 intend to remain in Canada after their studies





**I came to UBC for that  
reason [immigration]  
and not for the degree.**


That's actually the main  
reason I'm here.

# **Barriers to Employment**



I applied to about 65 jobs before I got one.

So that was like a full-time job over the summers - like just applying for jobs.

A young man with dark curly hair and a goatee, wearing a white and blue baseball-style t-shirt, is looking towards a young woman. The woman has dark wavy hair and is wearing a bright yellow long-sleeved top with a key necklace. They are standing outdoors in front of a stone wall and some greenery. A third person with long blonde hair is partially visible in the foreground on the left, out of focus.

And I was stressed about the interview because I am not a native English speaker.

English is my third language ... there is still a lot of colloquial terms and stuff that I will never understand.

... back at home, we don't have the culture of working at all.

**Until when you are done with your university degree, no work at all.**



# Navigation Strategies



... there were instances where it was extremely hard, there were instances when I was demotivated, depressed, there were instances where it wasn't working my way but then ... I realized ... the best way to kind of fit in is to mold yourself.

**It is impossible to mold the entire puzzle but what you can do is you can mold yourself to be the piece that fits into the puzzle.**



... anything that is remotely related to either finance or accounting, I would grab that because I just want to get a foot in the door.

After that, I will be able to get bigger companies and better positions I feel.



... I worked at a grocery store for a while, I worked at a cafeteria and those are jobs that I didn't quite enjoy too much. So it's just like, **those are the kind of jobs I don't wanna do.**

**But it helps me understand the Canadian workers and the culture here.**

# **Responses and responsibilities**

We're all trying to pay rent, trying to get our GPAs up, trying to build our resumes to do the next thing. And because it's such a consistent experience, nobody cares how hard it is because everybody's doing it, right? Like we're all fighting for it, so who cares about your individual experience?



# Institutional responsibilities:

- Ensure equitable access to work-related information and opportunities for all students (domestic and international)



## Question on costs of higher education and internationalization:

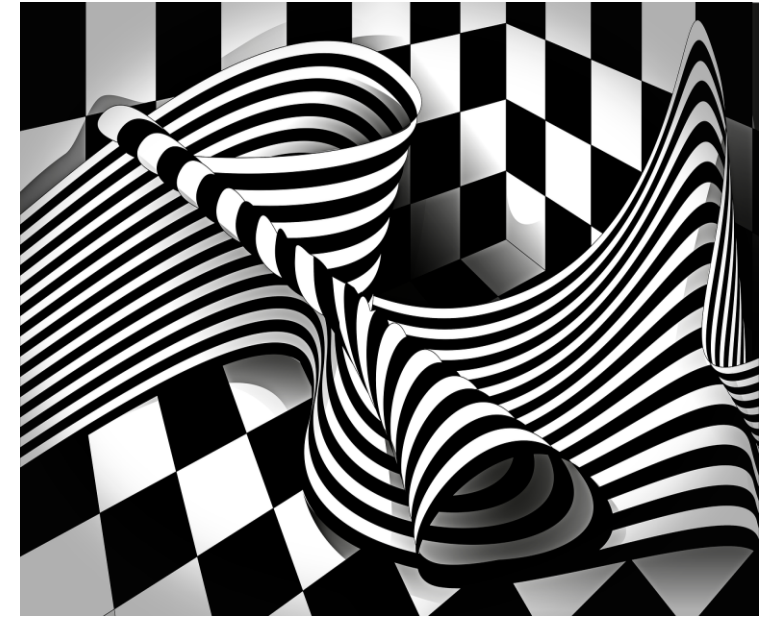
How might the costs of university be shared when international students plan to become permanent residents? (E.g., see the Graduate Retention Program in SK)

<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/education-and-learning/graduate-retention-program>



# Key take-aways

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# Stay connected!

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## The Hard Working Student Research Project

<https://blogs.ubc.ca/hardwork/>

