



Submission to the UBC Board of Governors Regarding the General Tuition and Fee Increases for 2021-22 Year

Dear Board of Governors,

This submission is being made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society of UBC Vancouver in response to the consultation regarding general tuition fee increases for the 2021-2022 year. As the Board considers the tuition fee increases, we urge Governors to consider the weight of their decisions in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic and financial crisis and that has disproportionately affected students, particularly international, racialized and disabled students. The financial pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused a loss in income, widespread financial insecurity, heightened food and housing insecurity, and increased healthcare emergencies.

The AMS is vehemently opposed to all tuition increases.

We would like to bring your attention to the countless submissions made by students in the consultation process that overwhelmingly oppose tuition increases. Year after year, UBC approves tuition increases, with little specific commitments or transparency of where student fees will be directed for the upcoming year. The tuition consultation website does not specify any costs associated with the programs or initiatives to justify the increase. Additionally, last year UBC committed to the creation of an affordability plan, but has not made significant progress on this item - leaving many students in the dark and unable to access the many affordability initiatives at UBC.

While we recognize that the University is facing significant financial pressures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this does not and should not impact our institution's obligation to support students. It is imperative that student-facing programs should be a priority for funding and the University must seek continuity in funding these programs.

This past year, issues of [urgent food insecurity](#), housing insecurity¹, and mental health concerns² have arisen on UBC campus³. This has been compounded by the pandemic, which has left students struggling with a loss of income, potential increased healthcare costs, in addition to

¹ <https://www.ubyssey.ca/news/covid-housing-insecurity/>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7473764/>

³ https://bog3.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2020/11/5_2020.11_Food-Insecurity-Update.pdf

deaths in the family. This is not a new trend. In the 2020 Academic Experience Survey, 20% (undergraduate) and 21% (graduates) stated that they may not be able to come back to UBC for financial reasons. 47% of students are considering deferring their enrollment or postponing their post-secondary education.⁴ The University cannot say that issues are being addressed, and the University can no longer say that it is a global leader in sustainability when its own students are starving. We were not able to receive any model as to what the University budget for the upcoming year would look like without tuition increases and we hope that the Board of Governors considers this alternative.

With every tuition increase, the University drives students towards financial hardship and creates further barriers for marginalized students. Tuition increases effectively create more barriers for students from diverse backgrounds. This compounds existing socioeconomic barriers that are affected by the intersections of racism, ableism, sexism, and transphobia. If UBC aims to address inequities and student mental health, raising tuition only further inhibits these commitments.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Saskatchewan has proceeded with a tuition freeze for the 2020/2021 year. Other North American colleges and universities that have taken the lead in reversing tuition increases include William and Mary, Kansas City University, Delaware University, and Central Michigan University.⁵ In response to the financial pressures students have been facing, other Canadian postsecondary institutions such as the University of Northern British Columbia⁶ have taken initiative in providing financial relief to students to cover the costs of tuition increases. Other postsecondary institutions such as the California State University system⁷, which is composed of over 485,000 students, have also taken initiative not to raise tuition.

The AMS opposes the tuition proposal presented by the University, and we call on the Board of Governors to execute the following:

- 1. Reject the administration's tuition proposal and limit tuition increases, especially for international students.*
- 2. Dedicate resources towards developing a comprehensive plan to address affordability, that looks at all aspects of costs that students incur and sources of income, including involving student societies as partners.*

⁴ Statistics Canada (May 2020). *Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Post Secondary Students*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2020032-eng.htm>. Refer to Appendix A.

⁵ Dickler, J. (May 2020) *Colleges consider a tuition freeze amid pandemic*. CNBC. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/07/colleges-consider-a-tuition-freeze-amid-pandemic.html>

⁶<https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/local-news/unbc-students-to-be-sheltered-from-tuition-fee-hike-1.24298342>

⁷https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-01-26/cal-state-will-not-raise-tuition-for-next-academic-year-amid-pandemic-hardships?_amp=true&__twitter_impression=true

- 3. Work with student unions to advocate to the Province on increased operational grant funding as part of the Province's upcoming Operational Funding Review.*

We hope that incremental tuition revenues go towards providing low-barrier financial relief for students, including an expanded housing and technology bursary, COVID-19 related relief (in the form of awards to compensate time graduate students were not able to make progress towards their degree), self-isolation supports for both domestic and international students, and looking towards the future for providing hybrid learning infrastructure in a post-pandemic world.

We urge the University to reconsider its current rate of tuition increase, and honour its commitments to equity, compassion for students, and access to education, regardless of socioeconomic background.

During this time, we want to thank the Board of Governors for their continued commitment to ensuring that all student voices are heard at the Board of Governors and throughout the University. We hope to see this continue and we look forward to working with UBC to make education affordable and accessible to all current and future UBC students as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kind Reagrds,



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President



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