



UBC Board of Governors

cc: Dr. Santa J. Ono, President
The University of British Columbia

Dear members of the UBC Board of Governors,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of UBC, in regards to the handling of the discussions, planning, and communication about UBC's return to campus.

The Board of Governors commits itself to providing "a transparent process for decisions and designation of items for closed meetings (2.4, Board Meeting Rules and Practices)." However, since the start of 2021, the Board has met an equal number of times in closed as it has in open sessions without elucidation. The Alma Mater Society sent correspondence to the Board but received no response or open discussions on the concerns we raised. The lack of engagement with the Alma Mater Society and the trend of increasing closed discussions at Board without explication, all point to the fact that the Board has not been living up to its commitments of accountability and transparency as of late.

We greatly appreciate that the University has adopted a COVID-19 testing mandate and the President's work and efforts to make campus safer. It was attestation of the kind of leadership we are capable of demonstrating and the kind we as a community, expect of UBC with its nonesuch membership. The University has also shown leadership in this area in the past - on September 16, 2020 (64 days prior to the province-wide mask mandate implemented on November 19th, 2020), UBC implemented a mask mandate in all common indoor spaces on both Vancouver and Okanagan campuses. Taking this into account, we were surprised to see that the Board deferred to the Provincial Government to the extent that it did by hesitating to make adjustments to the Return to Campus Plans. According to the University Act, BC Public Universities are autonomous from the government and must act "in the best interests of the University" (University Act s.19.1). It is unclear to us why the Board did not protect and utilize the autonomy we have as an institution in revising the Return to Campus Plans.

Much remains to be done if the Board and University Leadership wish to heal the trust that has been fractured over the past few months. We call for greater transparency and open discussions on matters of import to the community. Additionally, we request clarity on the reasons behind why the UBC Board of Governors did not avail itself of our autonomy in taking decisive steps to create a safer campus.

We sincerely value the Board's service and commitment to working with elected student representatives. The Alma Mater Society remains committed to representing students and ensuring that their voices are heard. We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure the progress and constant improvement of this University.

Eshana Bhangu

Vice President, Academic and University Affairs
Alma Mater Society

Cole Evans

President
Alma Mater Society