



June 9th, 2022

Re: Submission to the UBC Board of Governors Regarding *Campus Vision 2050*'s Terms of Reference

Dear members of the UBC Board of Governors,

This submission is being made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of UBC Vancouver in regards to the proposed *Campus Vision 2050* Terms of Reference (ToR). The ToR outlines the principles and targets of the plan, which will serve as a 30-year vision for the Vancouver campus and update two land policy documents: the Land Use Plan and the Vancouver Campus Plan.

The AMS is supportive of the ToR and views *Campus Vision 2050* as a significant opportunity for the University to make progress on the priorities of its 56,000+ members. The ToR, as they stand, are in alignment with several of the AMS's commitments and vision for the campus in the next 30 years and provide a balanced response to UBC's needs for growth and long-term sustainable development through reducing emissions, preserving designated green spaces (UBC Farm, Botanical Gardens, etc.), and promoting climate action. Specifically, the ToR aligns with student priorities of affordable housing, food security, rapid transit, and enhancing access to our campus. However, the AMS contends that the proposed exploration of up to 20% growth is a start, rather than a long-term solution to increasing issues of affordability and lack of available housing on campus.

While UBC has the most student residences in Canada, the cost of housing in Vancouver has more than doubled over the past decade, rent prices have increased, and an on-campus housing waitlist has grown to over 6000 students. It is important for the institution, if it wishes to remain a leader in providing student housing, to recognize and address that students are acutely feeling the effects of increasing unaffordability. According to the 2021 Academic Experience Survey (AES), 40% of students reported experiencing financial hardship, largely due to housing and tuition prices.

Housing affordability and availability remains a top priority for the AMS. *Campus Vision 2050*'s Engagement Summary Report also identifies affordability as a top community concern. To address this need, we urge the University to support building high-density and low-cost housing for students, faculty, staff, and community members. High-density, low-cost housing (high-rises, towers, etc.) will maximize the ToR plans to increase academic lands and neighbourhood development by up to 20%, while also preserving green spaces and community amenities. The University will benefit in providing low-cost or below-market rental rates for housing on campus



as it is an effective tool for the recruitment and retainment of students, faculty, and staff. As such, the AMS supports calls to reserve at least 50% of new development for affordable rental housing, and an additional 50% of that for below-market housing.

Campus Vision 2050 must also address affordability concerns holistically; 1 in 3 students face food insecurity, and this is correlated with high housing costs. We strongly urge UBC to take steps that will ensure food security, as this is essential to the wellbeing of the campus community. To further support affordability efforts on campus, the AMS reaffirms the need to plan for two skytrain stations at the Vancouver campus. The expansion of the Skytrain to UBC is important in developing a safe, convenient, and efficient transportation network for the campus community, allowing for sustainable and affordable travel. Rapid transit is essential in ensuring that the campus remains physically accessible to students, faculty, staff and residents of the University.

Students have repeatedly voiced concerns over the lack of physical accessibility and safety on campus. According to UBC's Wayfinding program, 49 out of 189 buildings on campus are inaccessible for disabled members of our community. *Campus Vision 2050* must prioritise a barrier-free and universally accessible design for academic spaces and neighbourhood development.

Physical accessibility must work simultaneously with financial accessibility. Providing sufficient low-cost housing is key in reducing financial barriers to access on campus. This is also central to the Student Affordability Task Force's recommendations to the University; one of which is to provide systemic and comprehensive solutions to address food insecurity, housing unaffordability, and transportation issues.

We appreciate the Board of Governors for their consideration of this submission. We also extend our sincere gratitude for your efforts in engaging with the student community and student priorities in the planning of *Campus Vision 2050*.

Sincerely,

Dana Turdy
VP Academic and University Affairs
Alma Mater Society

Eshana Bhangu
President
Alma Mater Society