



November 10th, 2022
UBC Board of Governors

Re: Proposed Tuition Increases for Domestic and International Students

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 following proposed tuition increases for the 2023/24 Fiscal Year: 2% for domestic students, 5% for new international students, and 3% for continuing international students.

The AMS unequivocally maintains its position on tuition increases: annual increases are unsustainable and have a dramatic effect on students' financial situations. While these increases may seem insignificant on paper for Governors as you vote, in the context of the current affordability crisis students suffer, the adverse impact of the proposed tuition increases will be magnified. We are obligated to point out that students are experiencing heightened troubles when it comes to the cost of education - the housing crisis, food security crisis, a possible recession, and skyrocketing inflation. Tuition is merely one factor, but it is one of the main financial stressors for students, with 51% of students reporting experiencing financial hardship related to tuition. This is also one factor that you can directly influence. Additionally, the AMS is advocating to the provincial government for a tuition freeze or reduction and remains committed to advocating with a holistic perspective that goes beyond just the University. While we have seen recently that tuition freezes are possible (the Ontario government announced an [extended tuition freeze](#) for the 2022-2023 academic year, saving students about \$450 million annually compared to tuition costs in 2018-19), we must still turn to the Board of Governors as the decision makers for tuition increases that will have an immediate impact on our membership. We also urge the Administration to put in greater efforts to secure increased funding from the province as opposed to relying on annual tuition increases from our student body.

The [2022 Academic Experience Survey](#) (AES) points out that 40% of undergraduate and 50% graduate students are food insecure. More students are also taking out student loans and facing student debt after graduation, with a third of students reporting that they rely on student loans for financial support. The situation is even worse for international students, as international students at UBC pay four times the amount as domestic students. International students [have also been found](#) to have access to fewer employment opportunities than their domestic counterparts post-graduation. UBC, like many Canadian universities, has become too reliant on international student tuition to compensate for the decreasing funding from the provincial government. International student fees have become vital to university budgets, with international student fees [contributing around \\$7 billion](#) to Canadian universities each year. Other post-secondaries have recently made progress in addressing tuition costs for international students; earlier this year Laurentian University moved to freeze international student tuition and in January Brock University introduced a tuition plan for international students to address affordability concerns. We urge the University to be a leader in this area and address the unique financial circumstances of international students. The lack of leadership in this area by a University of UBC's stature is unbecoming, and we are

supremely disappointed to see that continuing international student tuition is not only proposed to increase, but to increase by 3%, which is higher when compared to previous years.

Along with these affordability challenges, only 14% of students believe that the University cares about the cost of education, a number that has been declining over the years. While the SATF recommendations have been approved by the Board of Governors, it is vital that the University adequately resources these recommendations moving forward to make meaningful progress regarding affordability. We will reiterate that there needs to be ongoing and substantial funding for food security programs on campus. One time funding combined with unsustainable annual tuition increases are adding to students' legitimate frustrations that the University lacks care for their financial situations. We will also take this opportunity to point out that it is frustrating to have an annual repetitive conversation in which we are told that there is minimal funding to adequately resource student services and the initiatives students interact with most. It is ironic that the Central Budget receives a contribution upwards of millions of dollars from Student Housing and Community Services (SCHS) in the VP Students Office, yet the services we wish to see expanded in that very portfolio are the ones we have to repeatedly plead for.

We understand the rationale presented for the proposed tuition increases- labour costs, supply chain issues, inflation, surging construction costs for capital infrastructure, and more. We understand that the University is facing these challenges and that incremental revenue from tuition increases is seen as the primary solution for subsidising these costs. However, we urge you to reflect that the students who are bearing this cost are facing similar challenges at a profoundly personal level when they have to make difficult decisions between groceries, rent, educational materials, and tuition.

You, as Governors of a Public Institution, have a responsibility of being good stewards of the funding that UBC operates on- this also means showing compassion to students at a time of crisis and making a decision that can help relieve one of the primary stresses we face. We remind you that one in five students reported that they may not return to UBC due to financial reasons, a statistic that is even higher for graduate students. The University is at risk of losing students- the students who are behind the accolades UBC boasts- to the affordability crisis.

The Board has a responsibility to prioritise the wellbeing of the largest stakeholder group on campus, and we, as the elected student representatives, urge you to keep students at the top of mind when voting on the proposed tuition increases. As Governors, you have the opportunity to make a significant impact on students by voting against these increases. We hope the members of the Board of Governors earnestly take this correspondence on behalf of students in consideration and reflect on the gravity of the potential consequences of your decision. Like always, we extend sincere thanks for allowing us the opportunity to provide feedback and the student perspective.

Sincerely,



Dana Turdy
VP, Academic and University Affairs
Alma Mater Society



Eshana Bhangu
President
Alma Mater Society