



Submission to the UBC Board of Governors Regarding Proposed Tuition and Non-Instructional Fees 2024-25

November 30, 2023

Dear members of the UBC Board of Governors,

This submission is made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) regarding the proposed Tuition and Non-Instructional Fees for 2024-2025.

The AMS must indicate its strong opposition towards the proposed tuition increase for the 24/25 fiscal year. We can appreciate that there are a variety of functionalities within the institution that require financial investment. Furthermore, we acknowledge the financial constraints of the institution and sympathize with the University in having to make difficult decisions annually. However, in a similar vein, we ask that UBC be able to sympathize with the financial constraints being placed on students. With Vancouver being the 3rd most expensive city in North America to live in, we find it to be tremendously unmanageable for students to have to incur these additional tuition fees. With the cost of living rising to unforeseen levels and students across the entire country struggling to make ends meet, we implore the University to consider the implications that come with introducing another increase to these fees. While a tuition increase may seem like the most feasible way for UBC to generate income, the AMS asks that the University situates this decision in its context. On one hand, UBC will gain a certain level of profit but the repercussions for many students mean that they will have to forgo meals, neglect to purchase learning materials, and relocate hours away from campus or not be able to afford living at all. **As members of the Board, you are in a unique position to acknowledge the common financial barriers that students are facing and provide them with support by not collecting tuition for the upcoming year.**

We are currently in the midst of an affordability crisis that has affected every single student on the UBC Vancouver campus. The 2023 AMS annual Academic Experience Survey revealed that 50% of respondents experienced financial hardship related to tuition and other expenses. Additionally, it indicates that 8% of students lacked a fixed regular nighttime residence. This is primarily due to the cost of living. Concurrently, food insecurity is an issue that is rampant within the UBC community with the AMS Food Bank receiving a record 16,500+ annual visits and projections this year showing a doubling in usage. This is a staggering number of people who are no longer able to afford the basic necessities. We call to your attention these numbers in order to highlight who exactly is expected to incur these additional costs. The AMS is aware that UBC must make decisions that are in the financial interests of the institution, but we also posit that no amount of perceived benefit can account for the challenges that will inevitably be faced by students.

While the AMS is steadfast in its stance against a tuition increase, we recognize and appreciate the positionality of the institution. We know that the issue of affordability has not gone unnoticed by the University. There are a variety of mechanisms being put in place to address this issue like the recommendations put forward by the Student Affordability Task Force (SATF). One of which is the development of a Multi-Year Tuition Framework that would allow for transparency and structure in tuition increases. The AMS wholeheartedly supports the implementation and creation of such an initiative as we feel it would provide students with the ability to plan financially well ahead of time. **Relatedly, we believe that as we are in the developmental stage of this**



framework, UBC should not in good faith proceed with the planned tuition increase as this commitment to the University community has not yet been fulfilled. The institution has acknowledged the necessity for transparency related to tuition and the extent of the affordability crisis, so increasing these fees would discredit the strides made with the framework and the SATF.

It is crucial to clarify that the AMS does not erroneously believe that UBC is wasting the funds generated through student tuition. We are fully aware that this money is reinvested into the University to fund new initiatives and advance the academic mission. **However, our uncertainty arises when, despite our understanding of the financial complexities faced by the University, it is repeatedly indicated that there is no funding available for new initiatives.** This position demonstrates an explicit flaw in the system of an over-reliance on the income generated by student tuition. While we acknowledge its importance, it becomes a matter of concern when no substantial new initiatives are being created, leaving us questioning whether the funds that students contribute, often at significant personal cost, are being adequately reinvested in a quality educational experience. It is essential to underscore that without students, the University cannot truly thrive.

We implore the University to explore different revenue alternatives to reduce the financial strain on students and develop a more sustainable fiscal model. **Primarily, we encourage UBC to actively lobby the government for increased funding to the University.** We understand that lobbying for additional funds is a complex and long-term process. Still, we believe it is a necessary step to preserve the longevity of our financial model and ensure that students are not disproportionately bearing financial stress. Specifically, we urge the University to request the government's contributions extend beyond the General Wage Increases provided for through operating grants. As a public institution, we are confident the University can remind the province of its responsibility to contribute not just to the operational expenses of the institution but also to the larger academic mission. Engaging in this dialogue with the government is essential to fostering a more sustainable and equitable financial future for the University and by not collecting tuition in the upcoming fiscal year, the University would encourage more prompt action from the province.

In conclusion, we acknowledge the difficulties inherent in addressing the financial challenges faced by the University. However, we urge UBC to proactively seek alternative income sources by actively engaging with the government to secure additional funding, recognize the affordability crisis being faced by students, and stay true to its commitments. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the financial well-being of the University is not solely dependent on its students. We appreciate your consideration of these concerns and look forward to a collaborative effort to find solutions that benefit the entire UBC community.

Sincerely,

Kamil Kanji
Acting President
Vice President Academic and University Affairs
Alma Mater Society