AMS Submission to Board of Governors regarding the proposed tuition structure for the Combined Masters in Public Health and Diploma in Dental Public Health

Dear UBC Board of Governors,

This submission is being made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of UBC Vancouver and the Graduate Student Society (GSS) of UBC Vancouver in response to the request for feedback from the Vice-President Students’ Office sent to the AMS, GSS, International Student’s Association (ISA) and the Dentistry Undergraduate Society on February 16th, 2014. This submission outlines our concerns with the proposed tuition and the consultation process.

Both the AMS and GSS cannot extend its support to the outlined proposal since there are several significant concerns with the proposal. First, there is no justification provided for the difference between domestic and international fees. The program does not receive funding from the government to cover some of the costs of domestic students, therefore, there is no rationale for the international tuition of more than $22,000/year more than domestic tuition. The AMS understands that these are the rates already set for the MPH and DMD programs by the Board of Governors, however, precedent alone is not sufficient justification.

Second, the justification implied, though did not explicitly stated, that the costs of the program will simply be the addition of the costs of the two programs together. While that may be a reasonable way to decide the new fees for this program, the proposed fee structure does not actually do this. In the program, students will take 38 credits in the Faculty of Dentistry for the diploma portion and 36 credits in the School of Population and Public Health for the Masters of Public Health portion: approximately half, or 1 ¼ years, of the credits will be taken for each portion. If the program were simply adding the two program costs together, the calculation (for domestic tuition), would look something like this:

1.25 years of MPH x $4,436 (current per year cost of MPH) = $5,545

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1.25 years of Diploma x $11,968 (current per year cost of DMD) = $14,960
$5,545 + $14,960 = $20,505 (total cost of tuition for 2.5 years)

Divided into 7 instalments, this would be $2,929.29 per instalment. Currently, the 7 required instalments are $5,468.05\(^2\). The same calculation for international tuition gives a total fee for $48,757.50, or $6,965.36 per instalment, rather than the proposed total fees of $13,001.92 per instalment.

We recognize that the total costs of the program may in some ways be higher than the calculation done above. Thus, the AMS and GSS would be open to hearing what aspects of the program require a higher fee for better learning outcomes and an enriched academic experience. However, the current proposal gives a false impression and implies that it is a simple calculation of adding costs together. It is explicitly stated in the Senate documents that once at steady state the program will have a total surplus of $59,787, meaning the fees are significantly higher than the costs of the programs.\(^3\) This is a huge surplus for a program that only aims to have 9 students at steady state. The AMS does not agree with charging each student more than $6500 above the actual cost of their program, and therefore cannot support this proposal.

We would also like to highlight no attempt at increasing financial assistance for prospective students in the proposal. As students advocating for students, we would like to see concrete measures that will be taken to ensure equal opportunities for students who require financial aid in order to access this program.

There are also significant concerns with the process in which this consultation was carried out. Our largest concern as student representatives is the extremely short timeframe in which the tuition consultation process was conducted. We are disappointed with the lack of time for gathering feedback from various student groups. At previous new program tuition consultations this year an in-person meeting with the Faculty was arranged to answer questions in regards to the proposal. This was not done in this case due to the extremely short timeline of four days, and therefore many questions have not been answered in full. We recognize that some concerns that were raised, such as the domestic and international student tuition difference, may have proper justification, however, this was not provided in the tuition rationale. A place for dialogue was not created, and the AMS and GSS do not feel that this should be considered full student consultation.

In the future, we recommend the University to amend its new program tuition consultation guidelines and take proactive measures to involve students in the consultation process for at least 30 days rather than the provided four days for this item. This would have enabled the

\(^2\) Ibid. Pg. 68.
\(^3\) Ibid. Pg. 68.
AMS, the GSS, the ISA and the Dentistry Undergraduate Society to discuss the proposal with a more diverse range of students perspectives for a more meaningful tuition consultation, without feeling rushed into decisions, and ensure proper accountability to students at large when developing new programs.

The AMS and GSS strongly encourage the Faculty of Dentistry and by extension, all Faculties in the future to provide a detailed breakdown that includes clear financial allocations in the proposed tuition rationale. Many of these breakdowns were available in the documents for Senate’s approval of the program on January 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2014, and it is unclear, if the documents are freely available online for the Senate, why they were not provided to students in the tuition consultation process, where it is arguably more relevant. The AMS believes that this would serve as a more comprehensive and concrete rationale than the broad overview made available.

On behalf of UBC students we are grateful to the University for including student input through various points in the process. The AMS and GSS strongly encourage the University to act on the above-mentioned recommendations and continue to consult with the AMS, GSS and ISA on the process, in order to enhance and improve future consultation processes.

Sincerely,

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