March 14, 2014

AMS and EUS Submission to Board of Governors regarding the proposed tuition structure for the Masters of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering

Dear UBC Board of Governors,

This submission is being made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) and the Engineering Undergraduate Society (EUS) of UBC Vancouver in response to the request for feedback from the Vice-President Students’ Office sent to the AMS, GSS, EUS and ISA on March 3, 2014. Student representatives were invited to engage in a discussion regarding the same with the Faculty of Applied Science in the presence of the Director of the VP Students’ Office on March 7, 2014. This submission outlines the student response to and concerns with the proposed tuition and the consultation process.

Overall, the AMS and EUS extend support to the outlined proposal. The proposed program has a very high tuition; however, from seeing the budgetary documents for the proposed program, this is due to significant costs of the program. Though the program is heavily subsided by the government and industry, this level of tuition is still required for the program to be cost neutral. The AMS and EUS were glad to see a significant concern for student costs, and commend the Faculty for budgeting for an average of $10,000 per student to give out in scholarships and bursaries. The AMS and EUS would strongly encourage the Faculty to use this money towards needs-based bursaries exclusively, to ensure that all students who wish to attend this expensive program are able to.

The AMS and EUS are concerned at the differential between international and domestic student tuition. While the differential may represent a similar proportion to elsewhere in the university, this program does not receive direct support from the government for domestic students, and therefore there is not clear justification for such a large differential.

The AMS and EUS would like to express their gratitude to the University for working on previous recommendations with respect to the student consultation process and providing a line-by-line budget breakdown at the meeting. This allowed the AMS and EUS student representatives to gain better insight to the financial allocation of the program.
That said, there are 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 commend the Faculty of Applied Science for their openness to dialogue, however are disappointed with the lack of time for gathering feedback from various student groups. The AMS and EUS were expected to meet given a few days’ notice and produce a submission to the proposed fee structure within two weeks.

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 week for this item. This would enable the AMS, GSS, ISA and student societies to discuss the proposal with a more diverse range of students in greater detail without feeling rushed into decisions, and ensure proper accountability to students at large when developing new programs.

The AMS and EUS, on behalf of UBC students is grateful to the University and the Faculty of Applied Science for including student input through various points in the process. The AMS strongly encourages the University to act on the above-mentioned recommendations in order to enhance and improve future consultation processes.

Sincerely,

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