UBC Board of Governors c/o UBC Board of Governors Secretariat
6328 Memorial Road, Room 121
Old Administration Building
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

March 4, 2014

AMS/GSS Submission to Board of Governors regarding the proposed tuition for 2014/2015

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. We would like to thank the university administration for this opportunity to discuss the 2014-2015 tuition increase proposal. We would also like to thank Louise Cowin in particular for allowing us to make suggestions on the content of her video presentation to students. We hope that this excellent collaboration with her office will continue in the future.

Turning to the actual proposal, we note that the proposed 2% increase in domestic tuition respects the cap mandated by the provincial government.

As the AMS has clearly stated in an External Policy adopted by Student Council on August 31, 2011 (no. 2011-07), we are, however, opposed to any increase to international fees that are above 2%, even though government regulations permit post-secondary institutions to do so.

We would also like to point out that this policy states that the AMS would welcome decreased tuition fees if the university was able to generate income from non-student sources to compensate for the lost revenue. Such decreases should also not negatively impact the quality of student’s academic experience. We should add that a referendum question urging the AMS to advocate for lower tuition fees passed overwhelmingly in January 2014, with 8730 votes in favour or 90.9% of the votes cast on this question. (The exact question was: “Should the AMS, guided by the principle that education is a right, advocate for reduced tuition for both national and international students?”)

We would also like to take this occasion to enquire as to how UBC’s Policy 72 is being enacted. We would like to be informed about the concrete steps taken by the university to ensure that no student is refused access to UBC because of financial considerations. And
although we have been informed of the overall amount of student aid distributed by UBC to students through this consultation process, we would like a more detailed analysis of the impact of these grants on student accessibility, especially among the segments of the student population with the greatest need.

We would also like to take this opportunity to make a comment on the consultation procedure. We would first like to commend you for not asking leading questions in your survey and for not discouraging potential commentators by providing a survey that is too lengthy. We would, however, like to suggest that simply providing an empty (and rather small) comment box might also prove daunting for many students, who may not know what to say or how to frame their comments. Moving forward, we would like to propose that the AMS collaborate with UBC to develop a few questions (three or four) to remedy this situation. These questions should be concise, targeted and neutral. We feel confident that doing this would increase the quality of student responses by providing a framework with respect to the major issues. At the same time, well-crafted questions would not be overly restrictive and allow students to express themselves freely.

We would also like to thank the university administration for providing students with two town halls to present their points of view and ask questions. We would, however, like to point out that it would be preferable to not hold one of these sessions during reading week, when most students are not on campus. We would also strongly recommend that these meetings be held on different days of the week and times of day to maximize the number of students who might be able to attend the meetings.

Sincerely,

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