Submission to the UBC Board of Governors Regarding the Proposed Tuition for the Masters of Geomatics for Environmental Management

On Behalf of
Alma Mater Society of UBC Vancouver
Forestry Undergraduate Society
International Students’ Association
October 5, 2015

Dear Board of Governors,

This submission is being made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS), the Forestry Undergraduate Society (FUS), and the International Students’ Association (ISA) of UBC Vancouver in response to the request for feedback from the Vice-President Students’ Office sent to these groups on September 9th, 2015 on the tuition for the Masters of Geomatics for Environmental Management.

Overall the tuition proposal is justified in the creation of a new program that differs from its counterparts throughout the world in providing instruction in geomatics, but also preparing students for environmental management more generally. The only concern is in regards to international tuition, being set from an average of five comparable programs. Though this is one of the possible ways to determine tuition, it does not seem to be the best practice because of the divergence between programs. Domestic tuition does fit other comparable masters programs in the faculty, which does make sense because it fits the needs of the faculty itself.

The faculty has made plans for student space dedicated to students, with a work station and applicable technology there, and will be hiring a staff member to oversee the program. Students in the small program will therefore have a lot of support for their work, and within the program. Additionally this program is quite small and all students will be paired with a faculty mentor, meaning that they will make connections and be supported. The tuition therefore will provide students with academic support, as well as career facing support. This space and staff allocation is great and does provide a large amount of justification to the tuition.

One aspect that is lacking is a clear plan for financial assistance, as well as an outlined goal of diversity in the program. There are plans to spend the bulk of revenue of the tuition on the student space being created right now, however once there is money to allocate to financial aid there is no plan laid out. The AMS, FUS and ISA would like the Faculty of Forestry to consider laying out a plan now for the allocation of funds, to ensure that students can be supported in the future of this program. Additionally, there are no clear outlines of the number of students being brought into the program, with a focus on recruitment from Chinese universities. There is no current plan to recruit students from a diversity of backgrounds or disciplines, and the lack of student financial assistance inhibits any real plans for recruitment in that sense. The AMS would look favourably on
the program keeping the issue of diversity in mind in terms of their recruitment practices and in the creation of a plan for financial assistance. Additionally, we would hope that a cap or ratio is set for international and domestic students to ensure that the program remains diverse and equitable in recruitment practices.

The AMS, FUS, and ISA are grateful to the University and Faculty of Forestry for including student input throughout the process, and especially in the tuition consultation. The AMS strongly encourages the University to act upon the recommendations aforementioned.

Sincerely,

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