



Student Society
of UBC Vancouver

Submission to the UBC Board of Governors regarding Capital Prioritization and the Life Building (Phase 2) / Integrated Mental Health Centre September 2nd, 2018

Dear Board of Governors,

This submission is being made on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of UBC Vancouver in response to the capital priorities presented to the Board of Governors at the June 2018 meeting, in particular the information presented about the UBC Life Building (Phase 2) / Integrated Mental Health Centre.

The university describes the main objective of the UBC Life Building (Phase 2) as to “Provide [a] hub for essential student services including an Integrated Mental Health Centre.” The proposed funding needed for this project is \$23 million, with half of the funding requested from the province and the other half provided by the university. The project would take 36 months to complete from the date of funding approval. Despite student support and a desperate need for enhanced space for mental health services, the Life Building (Phase 2) according to multiple university administrators, will not be completed for at least four years, if it is completed at all.

The most recent information relayed to the AMS is that the project will not begin until the completion of Brock Commons (Phase 2), which may not be completed until 2022. Which means the UBC Life Building (Phase 2), will not be completed until 2024, at the earliest. This means the university will not see an improvement in spaces for essential student mental health and wellbeing services until 2022. We have also heard that there is doubt about if the Life Building (Phase 2) will ever happen and that it may permanently remain flex academic space.

The AMS has been told the main reason the Life Building (Phase 2) is being delayed is because the space needs to be used as flex academic space. When we questioned why the university was prioritizing flex academic space over the mental health needs of students, we were told that this was a *balancing of priorities*. We fully disagree that this is a balancing of priorities, but rather, this is the result of a system that prioritizes academic needs over the basic health and wellbeing of students. This is the same system that allocated more than two thirds of the Excellence Fund for 2018/19 (\$34 million) to recruiting/retaining faculty and building research infrastructure, but didn't allocate any money to mental health or wellbeing initiatives.

We hope the Board of Governors will send a clear message that improved space for essential mental health and wellbeing services is a university priority. The AMS will actively be advocating for the creation of a funding plan for the Life Building (Phase 2) or an alternative integrated mental health centre in this funding cycle. We hope the Board of Governors will support this priority to provide funding for improved space for the services that students desperately need on this campus. We appreciate the continued work of the Board of Governors and your consideration of this submission.

Sincerely,

Max Holmes

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