



UBC Board of Governors c/o UBC Board of Governors Secretariat
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March 26, 2015

AMS Submission to Board of Governors regarding the proposed 2% tuition increase for 2015/2016

This submission is on behalf of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) 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 2015-2016 tuition increase proposal, as well as for engaging all students through online feedback and through one town hall meeting.

The AMS would like to express strong disapproval of the proposed increase. In an external policy approved on March 25, 2015, AMS council officially stated that tuition should be lowered for all UBC students, and stated opposition to any annual increases of tuition.¹ These positions echo the overwhelming majority (90.9%) of students who voted "yes" in the following January 2014 AMS referendum question: "Should the AMS, guided by the principle that education is a right, advocate for reduced tuition for both national and international students?" Given that the students the AMS represents have given a strong indication that UBC tuition should be lowered for all students, we cannot support a proposal for increasing tuition.

The most recent comprehensive data from BC Stats showed that among students who completed a baccalaureate degree, diploma, associate degree, or certificate in 2011, around half incurred some form of debt, governmental or otherwise. The median debt for baccalaureate students was \$20,000, and the median for diploma, associate, or certificate students was \$10,000.² The AMS has heard from students repeatedly that they are facing financial and affordability pressures, and this is no surprise given these high debt loads for BC graduates. Most recently, in the 2014 AMS Academic Experience Survey a majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that each of budgeting and financial planning, financial

¹ [Link to Policy](#). This policy also expresses the AMS's opposition to any increases to international tuition that exceed increases to domestic tuition; the AMS previously expressed its strong opposition to this year's 10% increase for incoming international students in a submission to the Board of Governors.

² See "BC Student Outcomes – the 2013 Highlights":
<http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Publications/AboutPublications.aspx>

need, and the cost of attending university cause them stress or anxiety on a regular basis.³ UBC tuition has more than doubled since 2002 and continues to increase annually, which means these financial pressures will likely only continue to increase as well.

Based on these facts, we believe it is imperative that the University commit to actively alleviate students' financial pressures, lest more and more UBC students graduate with unmanageable debt loads or must interrupt their studies due to financial constraints, and fewer low income students are even able to start their studies. At this time, we do not see enough evidence of such a commitment, especially given that tuition is one of the few places the University has control over alleviating financial stress for students. This year alone the University proposed a 20% increase to the cost of student housing, and further increasing tuition on top of this would only add extra pressures for many students.

We would also like to see more concrete evidence that the University is following through on its claims to cut expenses where possible in order to offset decreases to government funding. Recently across North America there have also been rising concerns that the cost of University administrator salaries is continuing to rise significantly, along with tuition.⁴ We worry that UBC too is falling victim to this trend, and would like to see more evidence from the University that student affordability is not being neglected in favour of administrator pay.

Ultimately, the AMS would like to stress that we are ready and willing to partner with the University to address matters of affordability. However, we cannot do this until we are invited to the table and provided more openness about how UBC is cutting costs and other financial pressures UBC has, in advance of being notified about tuition increase proposals. We hope that students can be included in initial discussions and decision-making around these matters, rather than simply being notified that tuition increases are going to take place.

The University has indicated that it has made efforts to advocate to the Provincial Government to increase core funding to BC Universities. In our new tuition policy, the AMS has committed to similar external advocacy. We would like to suggest partnering on these efforts as one tangible way in which the AMS and UBC can work together to address affordability, and doing so would be one way for UBC to send a clear message of interest in addressing these issues with us.

³ See pages 122-127: <http://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/AMS-Academic-Experience-Survey-20141.zip>

⁴ Recent media reports on this issue include <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/where-do-canada-s-post-secondary-dollars-go-1.2994476> (Canada) and http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/06/higher-ed-administrators-growth_n_4738584.html (US).



ams
Student Society
of UBC Vancouver

Enhancing Student Life

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