



ASSOCIATION OF  
ADMINISTRATIVE +  
PROFESSIONAL  
STAFF AT UBC

*Submission by the*

Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of  
The University of British Columbia

*to the*

Legislative Assembly of British Columbia  
Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government  
Services

September 16, 2015

The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of The University of British Columbia recommends the restoration of the 25 million dollars that were cut from the University of British Columbia's operating grant in the last several years.

To be clear, this is only a start. The restoration of the \$25 million stops the government's current trend of divesting from post-secondary education and delays the erosion of the quality of teaching and research at the university. In the long-term, the province must develop a plan to increase its investment in post-secondary education, particularly if there are to be continued expectations on UBC to expand its enrollment.

### **A World-Class University is Good for the Economy**

A budget is an opportunity for a government to make a concrete statement about its priorities. Adequately funding post-secondary education makes a statement that the province is serious about developing a workforce with world-class skills and engaging in world-class research. It strongly positions the province to be competitive in the global "knowledge" economy.

There is an ongoing cost to ensuring that UBC remains a world-class institution. However, that cost is an investment that will see returns for decades to come.

World-class universities like UBC attract top students, faculty, and staff from around the globe. They become valuable members of the community, helping diversify the economy and create local jobs.

Many graduates, regardless of where they are from, choose to remain in British Columbia after graduation. They start families, build businesses, and bolster the ranks of skilled employees at established companies or organizations.

In addition, world-class universities attract research funding, both from the federal government and the private sector. In turn, research funding boosts the economy by encouraging enterprises to establish a presence in British Columbia to ensure they are near the cutting edge research being conducted at the university.

The return-on-investment generated from maintaining UBC as a world-class institution is not limited strictly to jobs and the economy. Research at UBC also contributes in other areas, such as improving health care, environmental sustainability, and support for community services.

### **Funding Cuts Negatively Impact Access to the University**

Improving UBC's standing as a world-class institution is challenging enough in the face of the province divesting tens of millions of dollars from the university, and these challenges are exacerbated by the university's growing enrollment.

In the last decade, UBC's enrollment has increased by more than 11,000 full-time equivalents (FTE)<sup>1</sup>. To put this number of students into perspective, 11,000 is the equivalent to the total FTE at Thompson Rivers University. This increased enrollment calls for increased investment in UBC.

Indeed, the B.C. government is the only immediate source of funding to ensure that increasing enrollment does not lead to revenue shortfalls. Tuition fees are already too high and have priced many qualified students out of studies at UBC.

In addition to limiting access, high tuition fees also lead to long-term economic challenges for the province. High tuition fees are a significant contributor to skyrocketing student debt. These debt burdens result in graduates facing tough economic choices such as fleeing British Columbia for neighbouring provinces with lower costs of living or staying in their increasingly unaffordable home province.<sup>2</sup> Given the affordability challenges in British Columbia, the government must encourage graduates to remain here through adequately funded universities.

A strong post-secondary system, featuring a world-class university, is a vital driver of long-term economic growth. However, it will only be able to drive that growth if UBC is sufficiently affordable so that the best and brightest students from across British Columbia and around the globe can attend.

### **Funding Cuts Coupled With Enrollment Increases Negatively Impact Access to the University**

The B.C. government has attempted to mitigate the impact on accessibility of its divestment in post-secondary education. They have done so by limiting the amount the province will permit tuition fees to increase. While such measures slow the erosion of accessibility, they also make it increasingly challenging for the university to maintain its world-class status.

Rapidly rising enrollment strains the university's resources. The strain on these resources can have a real impact on the quality of education delivered by the university and, in some cases may impact a student's ability to thrive academically while at UBC.

Currently, the average first year UBC student arrives on campus having averaged approximately 90%<sup>3</sup> in high school. To go from high school to UBC is a challenging transition. Some students are equipped to deal with these challenges on their own while others require the assistance from counseling services, academic tutors, or other professional student support personnel.

The combination of funding declines and enrollment increases may limit the availability of resources necessary to help students thrive while at UBC. In some cases, it may even mean a student does not succeed in their studies.

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<sup>1</sup> [UBC Enrolment Data](#). *The University of British Columbia*. Web (accessed: 2015-09-10)

<sup>2</sup> Condon, Patrick M., [Young Prospects? Vancouver's Wealth Gap Demands a Drastic Move](#). The Tyee. Web (accessed: 2015-09-11)

<sup>3</sup> Dehaas, Josh, [Average entering grade now 85%](#). Maclean's. Web (accessed: 2015-09-13)

This is not just a problem for students. UBC is attracting the best and brightest from around British Columbia. When they do not succeed at university, it does not simply mean the student did not complete their studies. It means the province has potentially lost a skilled worker who could positively impact British Columbia for decades to come.

Increased enrollment, coupled with the province's divestment, places incredible stress on AAPS members. Our members do not enjoy any form of job security, nor is there a set formula for compensation of excessive hours of work.

As a result, AAPS positions are often the first ones to be cut when a department faces financial challenges. Usually the remaining AAPS members are expected to work additional hours to offset the loss of their departed colleague—often these hours are entirely uncompensated.

Increasing enrollment also places additional strains on the university's technological infrastructure. The university's various networks and servers provide services to a population nearly two and one-half times the size of Penticton. This infrastructure does not just require hardware and software, but the skilled staff to maintain it and assist others in maximizing the benefits of this technology.

Funding challenges have already compelled the university to make some tough choices. In the last 12 months, nearly 100 AAPS members have lost their jobs for financial reasons. In addition, the university has deferred nearly \$600 million in capital maintenance costs, and that figure is increasing by about \$30 million per year.<sup>4</sup>

This is a serious situation. This is not about whether or not offices receive a fresh coat of paint or new carpet—it is about the health and safety of faculty, staff, and students. Continually deferring capital maintenance costs impacts the university's ability to promise parents that when they send their children to UBC, that their children are safe.

There is also a long-term cost to deferring capital maintenance. Well-maintained buildings last longer. Ultimately, deferring capital maintenance means that the university is saving pennies today and spending unnecessary dollars tomorrow. Deferring these capital costs forces future generations to cover them at a price much higher than the cost of regular maintenance.

Restoring the \$25 million that has been cut does not mean all of these issues will be resolved, but it does mean that the problem will not get worse. Restoring funding is a necessary first step while the B.C. government develops a long-term plan to adequately fund the university.

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<sup>4</sup> Standard & Poor's Rating Services. [University of British Columbia Credit Analysis April 16, 2015](#). Web: (2015-09-10)

## Sources of Revenue

AAPS understands that the funding challenges faced by UBC cannot be solved solely by the provincial government. However, the university has only three sources of revenue. The block grant provided by the provincial government, fees paid by students, and funds raised in various ways from the federal government, private donors, or commercial activity. Moreover, as we have noted before, students are already paying far more than their fair share.

Many AAPS members work in development, raising the money that helps to fund research, faculty positions and in many cases, the construction of new buildings at UBC. Both fundraising and business development take time and an initial investment from the university. That investment in fundraising pays dividends in the long-term. In the short-term, it strains the already limited resources of the UBC.

## Increased Funding Should Come with Increased Accountability

A renewed investment in UBC should not be provided with “no strings attached.” AAPS believes that with increased investment comes increased accountability. AAPS has already written Minister of Advanced Education Wilkinson, encouraging the implementation of accountability measures similar to those the province has imposed on local governments.

We recognize that the people of British Columbia have made a significant investment in UBC. We believe that this investment should be monitored in a transparent fashion.

## About the Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of The University of British Columbia

**The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of The University of British Columbia (AAPS)** is the professional association for the Management and Professional Staff group at UBC.

Management and Professional Staff (M&P Staff) play critical roles in every function of the University. Their leadership and professional expertise are essential to create a world-class institution of learning, teaching, and research.

AAPS members are highly qualified professionals overseeing information technology; conducting and facilitating research; directing academic and community programs; managing facilities and infrastructure; guiding and supporting students as academic advisors, counsellors, coaches, program administrators, career and co-op advisors, and travel abroad program coordinators. AAPS members lead industry initiatives and seek partnerships with the broader community for economic development, education, and communication.

AAPS is the legal bargaining agent for the M&P Staff group and represents its nearly 4,000 members in collective bargaining and dispute resolution with the University.

AAPS supports members in resolving workplace issues and strives to improve their work experience at UBC. The Association also creates a connected community of members through networking and professional development opportunities.

AAPS is registered under the BC Societies Act.



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