



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 21, 2016

The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of The University of British Columbia recommends the restoration of the 31 million dollars that were cut from the University of British Columbia's operating grant over the last several years.

To be clear, this is only a start. The restoration of the \$31 million<sup>1</sup> 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 of British Columbia (UBC). In the long-term, the Province of British Columbia must develop a plan to increase its investment in post-secondary education and ensure a positive economic future for British Columbians.

The announcements made on September 19, 2016 demonstrate how the federal government is investing in post-secondary education. We are asking for a stronger commitment from our provincial government.

### **Our Innovative Future**

The provincial government frequently speaks about the importance of innovation to drive the economy. A report released by the Conference Board of Canada indicates that B.C. is not all that well prepared for innovation. Specifically, the report indicated weaknesses in both capacity and innovation activity such as Public R&D, Research, and Business Enterprise R&D.<sup>2</sup>

“innovation drives an economy's ability to create more economic value from an hour of work, thereby increasing economic output per capita. The resulting productivity growth creates potential for rising wages and incomes, and thus for a higher standard of living.”

Universities are the hubs for innovation in the province. UBC is well-positioned to be a leader, but the Province of British Columbia must restore basic operational funding that will help UBC improve on areas identified in The Conference Board of Canada report. Starting with a restoration of operating funds, UBC can play a leading role in province's innovation ecosystem, as they will be able to direct the funds to a variety of programs including interdisciplinary programs and the humanities. We don't know where the next innovative ideas will come from. Therefore, it is not just certain areas that require funding, but the university as a whole, and that must come from restoring basic operational funding.

### **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 with basic operational funding makes a statement that the province is serious about developing a workforce with world-class skills to engage in world-class thinking, research, enterprise, and civil society.

<sup>1</sup> [2015/2016 and 2014/2015 Operations Budget](#). *The University of British Columbia*. Web (accessed: 2016-09-13)

<sup>2</sup> [Innovation: Provincial and Territorial Ranking](#). *The Conference Board of Canada*. Web (accessed: 2016-09-13)

There is an ongoing cost to ensuring that UBC remains a world-class institution. This cost is an investment that will see returns for decades to come. Innovative institutions like UBC attract top students, faculty, and staff from around the globe, so long as they can be retained with wages that compare to the cost of living. 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—As long as their experience is positive.

In addition, world-class universities attract research funding and investment from 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 and talent.

The return-on-investment generated from the provincial government 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 top-tier institution is challenging enough in the face of the provincial government 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>3</sup>. To put this number of students into perspective, 11,000 is the equivalent to the total FTE of all Kwantlen Polytechnic University campuses combined<sup>4</sup>. This increased enrollment calls for increased investment in UBC.

Indeed, the B.C. government is the only immediate source of funding that will ensure 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

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<sup>3</sup> [UBC Enrolment Data](#). *The University of British Columbia*. Web (accessed: 2015-09-10)

<sup>4</sup> [KPU Facts](#). *Kwantlen Polytechnic University*. Web (accessed: 2016-09-13)

burdens result in graduates facing tough economic choices such as fleeing British Columbia for neighbouring provinces with lower costs of living or staying in this increasingly unaffordable province.<sup>5</sup>

“Right now, the average household would need to make \$123,000 to pay for the average monthly mortgage in Metro Vancouver. That will jump to an average household income of \$197,965 by 2025, and even highly skilled young people starting off in careers as industrial electricians, family doctors and firefighters won’t make enough to cover...”<sup>6</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 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 from its divestment in post-secondary education. They have done so by limiting the amount tuition fees can 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, may impact a student’s ability to thrive academically while at UBC. This coupled with the university’s threat to push for higher domestic tuition fees<sup>7</sup> puts undue stress on students during their tenure at the university.

Currently, the average first year UBC student arrives on campus having averaged approximately 90%<sup>8</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 basic operating fund decreases 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>5</sup> Condon, Patrick M., [Young Prospects? Vancouver’s Wealth Gap Demands a Drastic Move](#). The Tyee. Web (accessed: 2015-09-11)

<sup>6</sup> Lindsay, Bethany. [Exodus of millennials threaten Metro Vancouver economy, but they simply can’t afford to keep living there](#). The National Post. Web (accessed: 2016-09-13)

<sup>7</sup> [Budget Presentations: 2015/2016 Operating Budget](#). [University of British Columbia Credit Analysis April 16, 2015](#). Web (accessed: 2016-09-13)

<sup>8</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 that our province has potentially lost a skilled worker who could positively impact British Columbia economically and socially.

Increased enrollment, coupled with the provincial government's divestment, places incredible stress on members of the Association of Administrative and Professional Staff at UBC (AAPS). 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 departments face 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.

Our members largely provide services to research and students. Challenges in their working environment can negatively impact research initiatives, student care, and the ability to advance the institution. Despite a deeply committed, civically minded professional and managerial staff, these challenges are becoming insurmountable.

Increasing enrollment also places additional strains on the university's technological infrastructure. The university's various networks and servers provide services to a population the size of the entire Central Kootenay Region<sup>9</sup>. 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. AAPS members are consistently losing their job over lack of funding. This impacts not only UBC, but middle-class job losses also have a significant impact on the province.

In addition, the university has deferred nearly \$600 million in capital maintenance costs as of 2015, and that figure is estimated to be increasing by about \$30 million per year.<sup>10</sup> While the governments at both levels have offered some relief, this is still a very serious situation. This is not about cosmetic upgrades or fancy new buildings. Capital maintenance costs are about the health and safety of students and employees. By continually deferring capital maintenance costs the university cannot assure parents that when they send their children to UBC, their children are safe.

There is also a long-term cost and environmental impact to deferring capital maintenance. Well-maintained buildings last longer. Ultimately, deferring capital maintenance means that the university is

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<sup>9</sup> [Total Population: Municipalities, Regional Districts and Development Regions](#). BCStats. Web (accessed: 2016-09-13)

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

saving pennies today and needing to borrow 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 \$31 million in basic operating funds 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.

### **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. 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. While UBC has shown that it can have success in commercialization, the provincial government's commitment to innovation still has room for growth. In the short-term, these necessary endeavours strain the already limited resources of UBC and may negatively impact the student experience.

### **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. 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 a world-class institution of learning, research, innovation, and community engagement.

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 over 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 B.C. Societies Act.



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