



Setting Student Success

Recommendations for the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills

Foreword

Hon. Selina Robinson
Minister of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills

We would first like to thank you for your continued support of and contributions to the post-secondary students in this province. We as student leaders are adamant of the value that post-secondary students bring to our economy, to our province, and to our country, and we feel fortunate to have the privilege of working with a government and a ministry that also recognizes that value.

The University of the Fraser Valley Student Union Society (UFVSUS) represents over 11,000 students from UFV's four campuses across the Fraser Valley. As a student organization not affiliated with any provincial student lobby groups, we feel very fortunate to have the ability to meet with you regarding the key issues being felt by our students.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the four main priorities that we have repeatedly heard come from concerned students at UFV. We thank you for the time that you have taken to meet with us, and we hope that we will have many opportunities to further go into detail about the student experience.

UFVSUS Executive Team
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Ashley McDougall
President
president@ufvsus.ca



Jayden Hovey
Vice President External
vpexternal@ufvsus.ca



Alana Awram
Vice President Internal
vpinternal@ufvsus.ca



Gabriella Wertheimer-Cinque
Vice President Students
vpstudents@ufvsus.ca

Housing

It has been stated many times that British Columbia faces a housing crisis. It is of no surprise to the residents of the province nor to the government that we are living in one of the most expensive regions in the world to both rent and purchase a place to live. Students, who face insurmountable obstacles to affordability in this province, struggle especially with the demands of an expensive market.

For UFV students who must find accommodations for themselves, the average rent in the Abbotsford-Mission region is now closing in on \$1500 per month (CMHC). While we are excited to see the development of a new residence building on UFV's Abbotsford campus beginning soon, we recognize that construction is not a process that can be completed overnight.

The tripling of our number of beds on campus is an exciting prospect, but from 200 to 600 beds for a university that sees enrolment as high as over 11,000 per year, and the fact that student housing on campus maintains a lengthy waitlist every semester, there is no shortage of students who are eager to see more affordable student housing to support them during their studies.

With Chilliwack being one of Canada's fastest growing communities (CBC News), and the close connection between our Abbotsford and Chilliwack campuses, now is the time to get ahead of the curve and begin looking at developing high-density student housing in the Abbotsford and Chilliwack region to support the continued growth of our communities and our education in the Fraser Valley.

Recommendations

1. Ensure a commitment to funding the development of new student housing that meets, and then keeps pace with the increasing demand for student housing throughout the province.
2. Establish a permanent, accessible Provincial Student Housing Fund which BC Post Secondary Institutions can borrow from to finance and fast-track the development of new student housing residences on campus.

Food Insecurity and Financial Aid

Tied closely with the undue financial burden that the Fraser Valley housing market has put onto the students of UFV, the rising price of food has been of increasing concern for our students. For full-time and part-time students, the additional costs of education combined with the limited amount of available time to be earning an income means that often students could be forced to make sacrifices in order to get by.

The UFVSUS Food Bank has seen rising usage by our students who are seeking assistance in paying for groceries. The usage numbers for our Food Bank has increased substantially in the last year alone. With the inflation price on food reaching nearly 10% in

2022 (Statistics Canada), combined with the rising prices of all other living essentials, students could either be forced to delay their studies to earn a livable income, or forego higher education all together.

Now is the time to invest in our students to secure a future of skilled labour in the province through new streams of support for low-income students in the province who struggle to make ends meet during their studies.

The development of a program specifically designed to support student food security, as well as increasing the amount awarded for the BC Access Grant would be positive steps in the direction of supporting BC students during this time of financial insecurity.

Recommendations

1. Establish and invest in a program of targeted Student Financial Aid in the form of a Food Security Grant, intended to support low-income students facing food insecure living situations.
2. Doubling the maximum amount of the BC Access Grant for students in programs two years or more to \$2000 per year to support low and middle-income BC students to manage the high cost of living in British Columbia.

Sexualized Violence and Misconduct Policy

It is absolutely essential that all post-secondary institutions have a policy for the handling of cases of sexualized violence and sexual misconduct that is thorough and trauma informed. The existence of the Sexualized Violence and Misconduct Policy Act is a strong first step by the province in ensuring that post-secondary institutions have a policy in place. However, there are gaps in the scope of the law which have resulted in institutional policies that are often inadequate.

Furthermore, the Act does not contain any form of response by the ministry when an institution fails in its responsibilities. As it stands currently, the Act states that every institution must have a sexualized violence and misconduct policy, and that it must be reviewed either every three years or by the request of the ministry.

Along with this document, we have included Students for Consent Culture's (SFCC) "Moving Beyond Potential: A Call for Action on Campus Sexualized Violence" which UFVSUS endorses as a clear and well-researched standard for post-secondary sexualized violence policies and oversight mechanisms.

For these reasons, we are calling for an amendment to the Sexualized Violence and Misconduct Policy Act to include the "11 Minimum Standards" written by SFCC to ensure that all institutions are required to have a comprehensive and well executed response to cases of sexualized violence. Furthermore, we would like to see the creation of an accessible reporting system that all students have access to when they feel that their institution is not adhering to the requirements of a proper policy.

Recommendations

1. Provide a provincial framework for the oversight of post secondary institutions' sexualized violence policy revisions and ensure there is an accessible reporting structure that students have access to when they feel that their post secondary institution is violating their responsibilities and/or failing in their duty of care.
2. Amend the Sexualized Violence and Misconduct Policy Act to include the Students for Consent Culture 11 minimum standards.

International Students

International students bring tremendous value to British Columbia. International students account for 10.5% of BC's total export value (Kunin), \$3.8 billion in direct contribution to provincial GDP and over \$645.4 million in tax revenue (Government of Canada). On top of the economic benefits that international students provide to our provincial economy, they also bring a wealth of experience, knowledge, new perspectives, and build on BC's multicultural mosaic.

One of the biggest challenges that many international students at UFV have raised to the UFVSUS team is the unpredictable and often large jumps in tuition and fee prices year over year. Often, it is outside of the control of the institution when they are forced to rely on international student fees to balance yearly budgets due

to the underfunding of domestic students; but this creates an inequitable burden and raises barriers to accessibility in addition to the many challenges already facing international students, many of whom are seeking to remain and work in Canada after their studies.

UFV remains provincially underfunded by \$3,738 per full-time-equivalent student at \$9,189 compared to the provincial average of \$12,927. We propose that if the provincial government re-evaluated its provincial institutional funding to a more equal distribution, and introduced a framework for consistent pricing for international students, it could lower barriers to entry that would allow for more students to bring their skills and knowledge to BC, while allowing for predictability for current and future international students.

Recommendations

1. Provide consistent provincial institutional funding per full-time equivalent student so as to ensure proper institutional support and equitable resource distribution, to alleviate the need for post-secondary institutions to put the burden onto international students.
2. Establish a system whereby international students have a clear and defined expectation for year-over-year tuition increases during the course of their studies.

References

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Note: Data represents private and public post-secondary international students in BC. Source: Government of Canada, Economic Impact of International Education in Canada - 2020 update: produced for Global Affairs Canada by Canmac Economics Limited (accessed October 11, 2022) <https://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/impact-2018/sec-2.aspx?lang=eng>

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