



University of Victoria  
Faculty Association

## **Submission to the Postsecondary Funding Formula Review, from the University of Victoria Faculty Association, July 15, 2022.**

This submission is on behalf of the University of Victoria Faculty Association. The Faculty Association was founded in the 1940s at Victoria College (UVic's predecessor), and in 2014 was certified as the official bargaining agent for UVic's 900 faculty members and librarians. The Faculty Association endorses the submissions presented to the funding review by the University of Victoria and by the Confederation of University Faculty Associations of BC (CUFA-BC). In this submission we provide our own thoughts about the questions you have posed, and what we consider to be the urgent needs of B.C.'s postsecondary sector.

1. What are the most important contributions the PSE system makes to the economic, social, and environmental health of BC?

The PSE system is a major driver of the economy of British Columbia. Postsecondary institutions train the skilled and educated workers critically needed in our current and future economy. PSE students are taught the technical, scientific, analytical and communication skills needed for the broad range of workplaces in BC, from technological start-ups and other small businesses, to large corporations, governments, schools, hospitals and non-profits. Postsecondary institutions are also major contributors to the economy of every BC city and town that includes a postsecondary institution. Colleges and universities provide education and employment to British Columbians in these communities, partner with and support local health care, develop research opportunities that create new businesses, and work with local community and Indigenous groups. They attract domestic and international students to all regions of BC, who spend money on local businesses and services and often go on to become valuable members of local communities. Major investments in post-secondary education don't just benefit students or the people who work at colleges and universities – they benefit our communities and our province as a whole.

Technical, scientific and health-related skills are very much needed in new and growing fields in BC's economy. We are all aware of that. BC's economy desperately needs more engineers, computer scientists, nurses and physicians, among many other highly trained workers who are taught at our universities and colleges. We also need those trained in green engineering, earth and ocean science, environmental studies, sustainable business studies and many other related fields to contribute to improving BC's environmental sustainability.

The last few years have also shown us that other skills taught at universities and colleges are equally crucial if we are to avoid or at least reduce growing social tensions, conflict and instability. BC desperately needs more informed and educated citizens, who fully understand the colonial and racist history of this province and nation, and thus understand why it is necessary to seek reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and to work towards a more equitable society. Since climate change is a human created problem, we also need citizens who understand the human dimensions of the issues

and scholars who can help us understand and effectively challenge resistance to climate crisis mitigation strategies.

More generally, citizens need to learn the analytical skills to differentiate between scientific and historical truth and falsehoods that are peddled as truth, but are used to foment conflict and divide and alienate citizens from the larger community. This crucial knowledge, and these analytical skills, are taught well in our postsecondary institutions, particularly but certainly not exclusively in faculties of humanities, social science, education and law, developing the citizens desperately needed not only to create a more prosperous province, but also a more cohesive and equitable one. One example of many is the field of Gender Studies, once marginalized even within universities. Now Gender Studies graduates are very much in demand, by government, non-profit and private sector employers who recognize the need to hire employees with the skills and knowledge to help them develop workplaces truly committed to equity, diversity and inclusion. Our postsecondary institutions also train the teachers, social workers, child and youth care workers and many other professionals who teach and model essential citizenship skills in the broader community.

Universities in BC also provide essential Fine Arts education, including visual art, art history, music, theatre, film, dance, and more. The arts are unifying societal force, offering critical insight into urgent social issues. They offer comfort and joy, speak across language and culture, and foster innovative thinking and empathy. Indigenous arts is a growing area of practice, serving to lift up our Indigenous communities and strengthening their voices across our province. The arts address sustainability, social justice, climate change, visual literacy, gender equity, and cross-cultural understanding. The arts are one of the most important economic drivers in the province, employing many people at all levels, and attracting national and international audiences. Imagine a BC without the arts – we would be greatly impoverished.

2. What could the system be doing differently to enhance its contributions to the economic, social, and environmental health of BC?

### **Research and Graduate Student Funding**

If BC wishes to develop a stronger and more robust economy of innovation, equity, reconciliation and environmental sustainability, then it desperately needs to increase its funding for university research. Increasing funding for graduate students is the most cost-effective way of doing this. At present, BC's postsecondary funding formula does not recognize the value of graduate students to BC's economy in the same way as is true in Ontario and Quebec. It does not provide a funding formula that covers the high cost of graduate education and also fails to fund graduate places above enrolment targets, thus failing to incentivize increased graduate enrolments that are very much needed.

The BC government also provides a very limited number of graduate scholarships compared to Ontario, Quebec and Alberta. This reflects a long outdated idea that BC can simply import highly educated talent from other provinces, rather than develop it here. If BC wants to have a strong culture of research and innovation, the kind that drives economic development, environmental sustainability, and real progress on equity, social justice and reconciliation, then it needs to dramatically increase its funding for graduate students. Increased funding for graduate students in STEM is crucial, but so is increased funding for all graduate students, including those in Indigenous Studies, humanities, social sciences and fine arts. Graduate students in the latter fields help to

develop new and successful approaches to reconciliation, equity, social justice and social cohesion. Increased funding for graduate students is crucial for economic development, environmental sustainability and progress towards a less divided and more equitable society.

As a Faculty Association, we also recognize that working with more and better graduate students, who will be attracted to BC's research universities by higher levels of funding, will also contribute to the research that our faculty members are able to do. As outlined in UVic's submission, faculty at BC's research universities already contribute a great deal of ground-breaking research, which makes a major difference at all levels, from understanding the furthest galaxies, to working in and with local Indigenous communities to develop Indigenous-centred solutions to problems created by centuries of colonialism. Currently at UVic researchers across campus cannot compete for graduate students with Central Canadian universities, who can offer much more competitive funding. If BC increased its funding for graduate students this would contribute to the quality and extent of research conducted both by graduate students and their faculty supervisors, and would also attract the highest echelons of research talent among faculty, as strong research faculty seek to work with high quality graduate students. Being able to attract more and higher quality graduate students would also support the undergraduate experience, as across UVic many programs lack an adequate number of teaching assistants (drawn from graduate students), to provide essential lab and tutorial experiences for undergraduate students.

### **Co-op learning**

As UVic's submission notes, the co-op program at UVic is the strongest in Western Canada. It provides meaningful work experiences for students across the campus. While co-op placements are highest in Engineering, where co-op is a required part of the program, the number of co-op placements are increasing robustly among undergraduate and graduate students in Social Science, Humanities and Fine Arts, contributing to their ability to move directly into meaningful and productive employment after graduation. For example, a recent UVic survey of graduates of the co-op program found that 25 per cent of both Engineering and Humanities co-op graduates reported finding permanent jobs as a result of their co-op placements. More funding of co-op programs, in all fields and across the province, will contribute a great deal to allowing graduates to move more directly into productive and meaningful work in a range of fields, contributing to economic growth, environmental sustainability, reconciliation and a more just, equitable and cohesive society.

### **Indigenizing the Universities**

As part of its contribution to reconciliation, UVic is working towards further indigenization of the university, and towards making the university a more inclusive and welcoming space for Indigenous students, faculty and staff. The UVic FA has partnered with UVic to develop an Indigenous Recruitment Fund, which has helped the University to significantly increase the number of Indigenous faculty on campus. However, more work needs to be done, so that the work of indigenizing the University does not add dramatically to the workload of Indigenous faculty. Further targeted funding for Indigenization efforts at the post-secondary level would allow universities to hire more Indigenous faculty, providing more options for Indigenous students, and reducing the unrealistic burdens placed on existing Indigenous faculty members. UVic currently has departments or major programs with Indigenous faculty focusing on Indigenous issues in Education, Humanities, Human and Social Development and Law, but more targeted provincial funding will be needed to offer Indigenous programs for students across all universities. Such funding, and increased hiring of Indigenous faculty, would also allow universities to consider mandatory courses on reconciliation for

all students, an option that currently remains unrealistic, given the existing major burdens placed on Indigenous faculty members on BC campuses.

### **Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism**

Universities like UVic are gradually moving towards more concrete efforts to make the university experience a more inclusive and accessible one for students, faculty and staff. However, racism and other forms of exclusion remain common experiences for members of equity deserving groups on campus. Targeted cluster hires of equity deserving groups, such as Black scholars, would provide invaluable role models for equity deserving students on BC campuses, while not isolating and marginalizing equity deserving faculty, as is often currently the sad and damaging reality. More funding to eliminate existing barriers to inclusion facing equity deserving faculty is also needed.

Other supports are crucial if faculty, staff and students are able to reach their full potential. As UVic's submission notes, there is a severe shortage of childcare spaces for UVic students, faculty and staff on campus. With a younger faculty cohort, and an increasing number of mature students attending universities, this demand will only increase. If the many faculty, staff and students with young children do not have access to quality childcare, they cannot achieve their full potential as researchers, teachers, staff and learners. While this impacts all parents, it remains true that a lack of adequate childcare is a particularly serious barrier to the equal and equitable participation of women at all levels of the postsecondary sector.

If universities are to contribute to the development of a more equitable and inclusive society, they must model what they teach. Currently, all BC universities rely excessively on low paid precarious sessional instructors to teach a high proportion of their courses. This is deeply exploitative of the instructors and does not always provide students with the best experience, as many sessional instructors are not available to mentor, provide reference letters or other support that more secure and well paid faculty can provide. In an increasing number of fields, particularly health, science and engineering, it is also becoming increasingly difficult to hire sessional instructors at the low wages offered, which has further negative implications for students, who need to complete their programs in a timely way. The BC government should provide funding to allow universities to reduce their reliance on precarious workers, hiring more full-time faculty, and where appropriate, converting sessional instructors to faculty positions. An increasing number of these faculty positions are "teaching stream" faculty, who have better wages and more security than sessional instructors, but teach a large number of courses and have no time to do significant research. If research universities are to remain competitive in research, the majority of faculty must remain research stream faculty, and government funding should prevent the overwork of teaching stream faculty members.

Universities are attracting a broader demographic among students, which is excellent news as universities seek to be more equitable and inclusive. However, many of these students require additional supports, as the UVic submission noted. The pandemic revealed to many students with a disability that online learning made university studies much more accessible. To continue to provide such learning opportunities for students with disabilities, without doubling the already excessive workload of faculty members, government funding for accessible learning options must dramatically increase.

3. What do you see as the key economic, demographic, social and technological trends that will impact post-secondary education in BC over the next 30 years?

It is impossible to have a crystal ball, but some trends seem clear. There will continue to be an increasingly diverse demographic of students entering postsecondary institutions, as well as more students, from all demographics, who have come to expect truly equitable universities and workplaces. These students will demand a more diverse faculty cohort that more closely reflects the demographics of students. Significant increases in diversity among students, staff and faculty will further drive the demand for more equitable, inclusive universities, that truly embrace anti-racism, inclusion, decolonization and reconciliation. These processes require adequate resourcing from government, as they cannot continue to be undertaken through extra work expected of faculty from equity deserving groups. As noted above, the demand from students for more truly accessible education will also require further resources, so that courses can be offered in both online and face to face modes, without expecting faculty members to take on the double work of teaching in both modes simultaneously.

Another change that has been long predicted but will be happening over the next decade, is the retirement of almost all faculty from the baby-boom generation. There will therefore be an urgent need for faculty renewal. In the current competitive faculty hiring environment, particularly in the health, science, business and engineering fields, universities will have to pay higher salaries if they wish to attract top researchers and teachers. This is also true as more universities seek to hire more Indigenous faculty and faculty from other equity deserving groups. Many of these faculty members are currently in considerable demand, and command competitive salaries. If universities truly want to develop a more diverse faculty cohort, they need adequate resources. This provides further reason for the BC government to invest much more strongly in graduate education in all fields, and across all demographics, if there is to be a new generation of faculty, trained in British Columbia, with an understanding of complex BC realities, and with an interest in remaining here.

Another trend that will continue to impact BC PSE is the high cost of housing across BC, and particularly in Victoria and Vancouver. To further support the recruitment of strong graduate students and faculty members, the government must fund dedicated housing for graduate students (including those with families) and recently hired faculty members. Housing shortages and the high cost of housing, are currently an additional barrier to recruiting strong graduate students and faculty members, including Indigenous scholars and scholars from other equity deserving groups.

4. How do you think the PSE system needs to evolve in response to those trends?

Research universities need to be adequately funded to enable them to attract top graduate students and faculty members across all fields and all demographics, and to have the resources to invest in equity, inclusion, anti-racism and reconciliation. They also need to be able to be more nimble in making decisions about salaries.

The limitations placed on university compensation by the BC government, through PSEC, very much limits the capacity of BC universities to attract the strongest and most diverse faculty cohort. These limitations do not fetter our competitor research universities in other parts of Canada, who are able to set their own salaries through free collective bargaining. More autonomy for BC universities, in determining compensation and in making crucial academic decisions, would be an important move forward.

Money is important in attracting top faculty, but universities that embrace collegial decision-making, which allow faculty members a significant voice in the direction of their units and the university as a whole, are also appealing both to current faculty and to ambitious new faculty members, looking for institutions where they can have a voice and make a difference. For these and many other reasons, we would caution against the increasing corporatization of the universities, which is happening across North America, including in BC. The increasing concentration of power and resources within constantly growing university administrations often detracts from the core academic mission of the university, as well as from meaningful participation of faculty, staff and students in determining the direction of their institutions. We argue that if universities are to continue to serve British Columbians, and further the economic, environmental and social needs of the province, the primary focus of universities must remain on research, teaching and serving our communities.

5. What modifications to the funding formula would you recommend considering the above?

We strongly agree with CUFA-BC's submission that argues that public universities must be largely funded through public funds. The pandemic starkly demonstrated the dangers of an over-reliance on the tuition fees of international students in funding BC's universities. An increasing number of exposés of the dangerous and limiting conditions that can be attached to both Canadian and international business support for university research also demonstrates the crucial importance of public funding of university research and teaching.

If universities are to become more diverse and inclusive, they must also be more accessible. This means that tuition must not continue to make up a growing proportion of university funding. Students must be able to access university education without taking on crushing debt loads.

We also agree with UVic's contention that government must fully fund university enrolment, and strongly support increased investment in co-op and other work-integrated learning opportunities for students across all fields. To enable BC research universities to compete for excellent graduate students across Canada and internationally, we also argue for a significant investment in graduate fellowships across all fields. We strongly support higher levels of provincial funding per graduate student, and a system that incentivizes universities to enrol more graduate students by funding actual rather than targeted enrolments. Adequate funding per graduate student and funding for students beyond graduate enrolment targets will enable universities to provide employment and support for graduate students as they manage their education and living costs, and will make incalculable investments in BC's innovation agenda, knowledge economy, and a society that truly reflects equity, reconciliation and inclusion for all.

Sincerely,



Lynne Marks  
President  
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