

UBC Tuition Increase Pushed Through

30 per cent tuition increase passes despite heavy student opposition

By Kathleen DEERING, Ubysey

VANCOUVER (CUP) -- This year's round of tuition consultations is over, as the University of British Columbia's Board of Governors (BoG) passed the 2003-04 tuition proposal early yesterday morning—despite many concerns voiced by students over the last several months.

Most undergraduate programs and post-baccalaureate fees will increase by 30 per cent. Research-based graduate tuition fees will be raised by 20 per cent. Most fees will change in May.

The BoG also passed a partial 2004-05 tuition proposal, which included a tuition schedule for some post-baccalaureate and graduate degrees.

"I'm disappointed there was not more discussion at the board meeting," said Kristen Harvey, student union president. "I felt there was very little debate ... it was great they invited more students to be there, and I wish there had been the full 300."

The BoG meeting was held Monday in order to allow up to 300 students to witness the meeting. A mass e-mail was sent out Friday afternoon. Only about 40 students were present.

Harvey was surprised at how little debate there was about the proposal itself at both the board meeting on Monday and the BoG tuition committee meeting held last Thursday afternoon.

Harvey and Brian De Alwis, graduate student society president, made a presentation to Thursday's committee, outlining five key concerns they felt the university should address. One was that last year's tuition hike will begin in September, and this year's hike would begin in May—meaning two increases for students this school year.

At the BoG meeting Piper argued that other universities had increased their tuition in May of last year after the tuition freeze was lifted. "Students got a break last year," she said, adding that UBC needed to align increases to match UBC's budget process, since UBC's fiscal year begins

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April 1.

But some students don't agree. "[The tuition increase] is too big, it's too much in one year," said Steve Price, Arts student union president. "To draw it out over a long run would be beneficial to students."

In their report Harvey and De Alwis said increasing tuition in May would cause a financial hardship for students. Piper said the university would focus next year on increased financial support for students who "fall through the cracks"—students who do not qualify for student loans with the B.C. or federal government, but still have monetary need.

Brian Sullivan, vice-president, students of UBC, said this year (taking figures up until January 22) there has been a 32 per cent increase in average monetary bursary allocation by the University to students. But although the amount of students applying for bursaries increased last year by 15 per cent, the eligibility of students only increased two per cent.

This year 15 per cent of the base increase and 20 per cent of the beyond-the-base increase (over 30 per cent) will be allocated to financial assistance, almost the

same total increase as last year, Sullivan said.

Another concern students had was what they felt was a lack of consultation done by the university this year, since much of it was done over December.

"In general, I know there was less consultation [this year]," said Harvey. "I personally don't count the exam period as meaningful consultation with students because ... students are busy...writing exams, and in the case of grad students and [teaching assistants], marking exams." Piper said due to consultation with students last year, instead of raising tuition by 60 per cent to meet the national average (with Quebec fees based on out-of-province rates, which are thousands of dollars higher than in-province) UBC based tuition increases on assessed program needs.

But Kate Woznow, an executive member of the student union said she felt there has not been adequate demonstration of why 30 per cent increases are necessary this year, and felt that there are other methods the university could look at to gain new revenue. The University was supposed to address some of these concerns with its

Benchmarking and Efficiency Analysis Report (BEAR), released recently.

Some students do not feel that BEAR was adequate. Harvey feels BEAR could have elaborated on how to make the school more efficient.

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"I think it was a great first step, but I feel there was a lost opportunity there, and that was to find potential cost-savings," she said. "It didn't mention any recommendations of where there could be cost-savings found and where the university could move forward on that."

When asked what students could expect in the 2004-05 year in terms of tuition raises, Piper could not give a definite answer. She said after the federal budget is released in a few weeks, UBC will have a better idea. "I think it's too early to contemplate what next year looks like," she said.

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Nominations for the 2003/2004 Student Union Council OPEN at 9:00am, Monday Feb. 10. Nomination Forms can be picked up @ SU office Monday to Friday 9-4. All completed forms must be passed in by Friday, Feb. 14 at 1:00pm.

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