



**university of victoria**  
**students' society**

# Issues Policy

Effective Date October 24, 2019

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The Society shall limit its Issues Policy stances to issues directly pertaining to student life and post-secondary education.

## **PART 1: STUDENT RIGHTS**

**1.1 Declaration of Student Rights** – the Society recognizes the rights of all post-secondary students, subject to the limitations established by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The following rights shall be recognized:

- a. **Freedom from Harassment** - Every student has the right to a university experience free from assault, harassment, intimidation, threats, bullying, hazing and coercion
- b. **Freedom from Discrimination** – Every student has the right to freedom from discrimination and oppression on the basis of identity or any perception thereof. Prohibited grounds of discrimination include but are not limited to race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnicity, citizenship, aboriginal identity, language, creed, clerical or lay status, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, marital status, family status, number of dependents, ability, socioeconomic status, political or religious affiliation or belief, membership in legal association, place of residence, or conviction for which a pardon has been granted.
- c. **Fundamental Freedoms** – Every student has the right to the fundamental freedoms established by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part I Section 2.
  - i. **Freedom of Expression** - Every student has the right to freedom of opinion, expression, belief and political association.
  - ii. **Freedom of Association** - Every student has the right to belong to any association of their choice and shall not be subjected to any prejudicial action by any member of the university community for so belonging.
  - iii. **Freedom of Peaceful Assembly** - Every student has the right to engage in non-violent assembly.
  - iv. **Freedom of the Press** – The Society supports the freedom and independence of student media outlets. The Society opposes any attempt to censor or control content of student media outlets.
- d. **Right to Organize** – Every student has the right to form independent and democratic student associations.
- e. **Legal Rights** - Every student has the right to due process and fairness.
- f. **Privacy Rights** - Every student has the right to protection of their privacy and to have access to their personal information.
- g. **Academic Freedom** – Every student has the right to academic freedom.
- h. **Intellectual Property** – Every student has the right to the protection of their intellectual property subject to fair use.

- i. **Accessibility** - Every student has the right to accommodations that allow for their equal participation in academic and non-academic aspects of their campus community.

**1.2 University Recognition of Student Rights** – the Society supports a comprehensive declaration of student rights in University of Victoria policy.

## **PART 2: ALLIANCES**

- 2.1** Where appropriate, the Society will partner with other student associations to advocate for affordable high-quality education and related student interests.
- 2.2** Where appropriate, the Society will partner with on-campus and community groups, non-profit organisations and organised labour on issues related to public education, gender-based and sexualized violence, public transportation, affordable housing, poverty, human rights, anti-violence, ecological sustainability, and electoral reform.
- 2.3** The Society adopts a non-partisan position that does not endorse any political party.

**Adopted SAGM 2010/02/11**

## **PART 3: ANTI-OPPRESSION & EQUITY**

### **3.1 Anti-Racism**

#### **Preamble**

The Society recognizes racism is not simply a form of discrimination that robs members of full participation in the society. Racism is contingent on the establishment and assertion of a centre based on the implicit code of whiteness, which is embedded with patriarchal, heterosexist and capitalist constructions of gender, sexual orientation and ability. The university is reflective of these constructions. Therefore, the Society must be committed to a genuine and critical anti-racism strategy that shifts the focus and onus away from people of colour and Aboriginal people and moves towards focus on the centre.

The Society supports an environment that protects and promotes the dignity, worth, and human rights of every person and supports mutual respect and cooperation between individuals.

The Society is committed to supporting an environment free from intentional or unintentional racism for all society members and employees.

Furthermore, the Society acknowledges the need to be anti-racist and;

1. Recognizes that as an educational institution, the Society has a special responsibility to develop positive values, attitudes,

- knowledge and practices by developing a framework which will promote and support equity, justice and access to all.
2. Encourages mutually respectful relations that promote anti-racist understanding.
  3. Acknowledges that people encounter barriers to full participation in education and employment opportunities due to racialization, cultural/linguistic domination, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities and religion. The Society is committed to eliminate these barriers.

### **Mandate**

This policy sets the Society's position on the issue of racism. The Society is committed to:

1. Promoting the integration of issues of racism into the fabric of the Society and their inclusion as part of the agenda of all committees and activities. Racism issues are not to be trivialized or marginalized.
2. Cultivating understanding and mutual acceptance of cultural diversity among Board of Directors, Members at Large, Staff and all persons or groups utilizing Society resources and/or facilities. Further, to increase awareness of its membership on issues of racism through campaigns and literature the University of Victoria Equity & Human Rights Office should implement more effective policies to ensure that people of colour and Aboriginal people are given a fair equitable opportunity for employment.
3. Eliminating discrimination based on racialization, cultural/linguistic domination, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities and religion among students and staff
4. Taking into account the anticipated impact on the diverse community when designing new programs, policies, and services.
5. Cultivating enhanced understanding and mutual acceptance of cultural diversity among employees and the people we serve. Further, to increase awareness of its membership on issues of racism through campaigns and literature.
6. Providing Privilege Workshops annually for the Board of Directors and interested Students At Large. The workshops shall be facilitated by Women's Centre, Pride Collective, Society for Students with a Disability, Students of Colour Collective, Native Students Union or outside facilitators.
7. Working with the staff of the Society to ensure that future collective agreements and employment practices reflect the Society's commitment to a proactive anti-racism policy. The Society recognizes the systemic underrepresentation of people of colour and First Nations people within the workforce and will work towards correcting this inequity within the Student Union Building.

8. Lobbying the University Administration, Senate, and Board of Governors to develop policy and procedures to effectively deal with racism that incorporates the following:
  - a. Ongoing review and evaluation of university curriculum, programs, policies, legislation, services, and methods of service delivery with a view to removing inequities and biases.
  - b. Ensure that fairness and equity in operations and systems for everyone including appropriate class assignments, non-selective registration, equitable and respectful treatment of students, and equitable employment practices. Lobby the University of Victoria Equity & Human Rights Office to implement more effective policies to ensure that people of colour and First Nations people are given a fair and equitable opportunity for employment.
  - c. With emphasis on the areas of curriculum, staff development, personnel practices, conduct, and climate, that the University Administration promotes the integration of race relations issues into the fabric of the system and their inclusion as part of the agenda of all committees and activities. Race relation issues are not to be trivialized or marginalized.
  - d. With respect to curriculum:
    - i. Recognize that the curriculum must present a global view of society which includes the experiences and achievements of all cultural groups. Varied perspectives must be included to enable all students to develop pride in their own heritage and appreciation of the cultural heritages of others.
    - ii. Review and monitor new and existing curricula, curricular materials and learning resources for racism, negative cultural bias and Eurocentric bias.
    - iii. Develop and implement new inclusive curricula designed to eliminate racism and increase cross-cultural understanding.
    - iv. Select learning resources that reflect the experiences and contributions of our diverse society.
    - v. Provide staff and students with training, guidance and support to enhance cross-cultural understanding, respect and acceptance of all people.
    - vi. Provide continued support of ESL/core English, transition and other language programs, where there is a need.
  - e. Provide faculty, administration, staff, and students with training, guidance, and support to enhance cross-cultural

- understanding, mutual respect, addressing privilege, and acceptance of others cultural diversity.
- f. Recognize and value the importance of first language(s) and prior educational experiences of students. Support the development and implementation of additional language programs.
  - g. Establishment of an anti-racism office with an anti-racism officer and appropriate counselling services for people of colour and first nations people.
  - h. Incorporate anti-racism workshops within all orientation programs for students, faculty, and staff.

## Definitions

**Aboriginal:** The original inhabitants, or Indigenous peoples, of Canada and their descendants. Aboriginal includes status, non-status, Metis and Inuit.

**Bias:** A personally held belief or view of the world, a given situation, or individuals or groups. A bias against or towards members of a particular ethno-cultural, religious, or linguistic group can be expressed through speech, nonverbal behavior, and written and other materials.

**Centre:** Refers specifically to society's structural location of power, which is asserted through social, economic, cultural, political and/or religious means. The centre is the site from which oppression and domination emanate, and therefore the space in which they must be contested.

**Curriculum:** The term is used here inclusively to mean both the formal curriculum, i.e. the stipulated practices and procedures governing the delivery of education, as well as the informal curriculum, i.e. the unwritten practices and procedures that influence student activities, behaviours, perceptions and outcomes.

**Discrimination:** The practice or act of making distinctions between people based on such characteristics as ethnicity, nationality, language, faith, gender, disability, or sexual orientation, which leads to the inequitable treatment of individuals or groups. There are two types of discrimination - direct and systemic

**Direct discrimination:** An overt action, taken on the basis of an individual's or group's response to characteristics of culture, ethnicity, nationality, language, faith, gender, disability, or sexual orientation is meant to bring about the inequitable treatment of individuals or groups that have one or several of these characteristics.

**Systemic discrimination:** Differential treatment through seemingly neutral policies or practices that are reinforced by institutional structures and power and that result in the inequitable treatment of members of particular groups. Systemic discrimination practices are those that have an adverse on one group and are not clearly related to job performance or job requirements.

**Dominant/Majority Group:** The group of people in a given society that is largest in number or that successfully shapes or controls other groups through



social, economic, cultural, political, or religious power. In Canada, the dominant group is composed of White, English-speaking, middle-to-upper income, Christian Canadians.

**Ethnic Group:** A community maintained by a shared heritage, culture, language, or religion; a group bound together by ties of cultural homogeneity, with a prevailing loyalty and adherence to certain beliefs, attitudes, and customs.

**Ethnocentrism:** A condition characterized by pre-occupation with one's own cultural or national group and belief in the superiority one's own race and culture.

**Eurocentrism:** Exclusive or almost exclusive attention to events and peoples originating in Europe, as well as consideration of information from the perspective of White people who came to North America from Europe.

**Harassment:** A persistent and continuing communication of negative attitudes, beliefs, or actions toward an individual or group, with the intention of disparaging that person or group. Forms of harassment include name-calling, jokes and slurs, graffiti, insults, threats, discourteous treatment, and written and physical abuse.

**Institutional Racism:** Exercise of notions of racial superiority by social institutions through their policies, practices, procedures, and organizational culture and values, either consciously or unconsciously. Institutional racism results in the unequal treatment of, or discrimination against, individuals or groups with non-dominant identities.

**People of Colour:** A term which applies to all people(s) who are not seen as White by the dominant culture. This would include Aboriginal, Black, Chinese, South Asian, South East Asian, Filipino, and Latin American Canadians. The term originates in the United States, and is one attempt by Black and brown people to name themselves, not as "non-whites," "minorities," "visible minorities," or "ethnics," but as people with a positive identity.

**Prejudice:** Prejudging individuals or groups of people based on negative and incorrect information. Prejudiced attitudes are used to rationalize unequal treatment of people, which reinforces stereotypes and prejudices.

**Racialization:** A process through which people of colour and Aboriginal people are marginalized. This concept recognizes that "race" is not a real biological category, but is used as a social category that reproduces oppressive relations. Racism operates through racialization.

**Racism:** A set of mistaken assumptions, opinions, and actions resulting from the belief that one group is inherently superior to another. Racism refers not only to social attitudes toward ethno-cultural minority groups, but also to social structures and actions that limit, exclude, discriminate against, and oppress such individuals and groups. Racism may be present in organizational and institutional structures and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviour of individuals.

**Stereotype:** A false or generalized conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. Stereotypes are sustained by the

tendency to perceive selectively only those pieces of new information that correspond to the conception.

**Whiteness:** An implicit code of norms that is based on and reflective of power relations within society. Whiteness does not simply refer to the colour of a person's skin, as such individuals may carry varying levels of whiteness depending on their relative positions within the structures of the society in which they find themselves.

**Adopted AGM 1996/10/17  
Amended SAGM 2005/02/10**

### **3.2 Homoantagonism and Transantagonism**

- a. The Society supports the designation of a constituency group office in the Student Union Building for students of marginalized gender identities, and romantic and sexual orientations. The Society supports that this room be large enough to reasonably support the day to day operations of the constituency, and that the space have a gender neutral, accessible washroom.

**Adopted SAGM 1994/02/16  
Amended SGM 2016/03/31**

- b. The Society condemns all discrimination based on sexual orientation and romantic orientation.

**Adopted AGM 1995/10/25  
Amended SGM 2016/03/31**

- c. The Society condemns all discrimination based on gender identity.
- d. The Society supports that all couples and individuals regardless of gender identity, gender expression, romantic orientation, or sexual orientation be given equal priority in rental units.

**Adopted AGM 1995/10/25  
Amended SGM 2016/03/31**

- e. The Society supports legal marriage rights for same sex couples.
- f. The Society supports gender inclusive washrooms and will lobby the University to increase the accessibility and the number of gender inclusive washrooms on campus. The Society will ensure that gender inclusive washrooms are available and accessible in the Student Union Building. The Society recognizes that not providing equal access to washrooms is a form of discrimination, and will ensure that all UVSS events provide equal access to washrooms for everyone.
- g. The Society supports the right of all students to use their chosen name and self-identified gender and for this to be recognized on class lists, in classes and on university identification.
- h. The Society supports the Trans Day of Remembrance and condemns homophobic, transphobic and gender-based violence.

### 3.3 Sexism

- a. The Society supports the University of Victoria's Equity policy for Female Faculty.  
**Adopted AGM 1989/10/26**
- b. The Society opposes the implementation of any new abortion law.  
**Adopted AGM 1989/10/26**
- c. The Society supports:
  - i. The fundamental right of all women to control their bodies
  - ii. Access to safe, reliable birth control and family planning information and the right of choice in method
  - iii. Freedom of choice in the matter of abortion
  - iv. Access to quality health services and counselling which meet the needs of women students and respect a woman's control of sexual orientation
  - v. Freedom of expression of sexual orientation
  - vi. Freedom from sexual assault and other forms of violence
  - vii. The right to an education environment free of sexual harassment
  - viii. The right to effective, legal and academic grievance procedures recognized by students, faculty and support staff, and
  - ix. The right to celebrate International Women's Day on campus  
**Adopted AGM 1989/10/26**
- d. The Society supports the right of women to have a statutory national holiday on International Women's Day.  
**Adopted AGM 1989/10/26**
- e. The Society supports the annual memorial march for missing and murdered Indigenous women and supports recognition of annual Sisters in Spirit vigils in solidarity with local Indigenous communities.
  - a. The Society supports the recognition of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women and that students be granted academic amnesty to participate in memoriam.

## **PART 4: ANTI-VIOLENCE**

### 4.1 Harm Reduction

- a. The UVSS believes part of creating a more inclusive community, that is committed to anti-violence initiatives, is recognizing the importance of centering harm reduction. Harm reduction refers to an anti-stigma approach that works towards decreasing harm in all ways; particularly in

safer sex and safer use of substances, by providing services, tools, and skills to individuals.

## **4.2 Sexualized Violence**

### **a. Preamble**

The Society recognizes that sexualized violence is anything that disrespects your sexual being. This can look like comments, leering, intimidation, coercion, expectations, discrimination, non-consensual touching, sexual assault, sexual harassment etc. We also recognize that we currently live in a “rape culture” that normalizes and glorifies sexualized violence, creating a sense of entitlement to other people’s physical, emotional, and sexual well beings without consent. As a Society we have a role in ensuring that post-secondary education is accessible for all students, but education is not accessible if students on this campus do not feel safe. Therefore, the Society must be committed to developing structures that centre the lived experiences of survivors while simultaneously creating educational and preventative programming and supports for those who have caused harm.

### **b. Framework**

The UVSS recognizes that:

- i. Rape culture and sexualized/gender-based violence are deeply rooted in the ongoing colonial legacies of these unsundered and unceded territories that we occupy. The Society recognizes that we must approach our advocacy with an anti-colonial framework and engage with communities who are disproportionately affected by this violence.
  - Furthermore, we recognize that sexualized and gender-based violence disproportionately targets indigenous folks, and therefore we must involve the voices and communities of those who are most affected by this violence. We therefore also support a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.
- ii. Sexualized and gender-based violence affect folks who hold vulnerable identities such as queer, trans or gender-variant folks, people of colour, people with disabilities, and people from a low socioeconomic background. We recognize that our advocacy must be intersectional and involve the voices and communities of those who are most affected by these violent structures.
- iii. As an organization the society has a role in pressuring governing bodies such as the university administration and the provincial government to dismantle harmful power structures which often recreate harm.

- iv. The Society supports that the university has a stand-alone policy that outlines how the administration handles sexual-assault cases, which supports and centres the experiences of survivors and which includes education, prevention and supports for those who have cause harm.

**c. Legislation**

The Society supports binding provincial legislation that ensures that all institutions in the province engage in a process of collaborative stand-alone sexual assault policy development.

Furthermore, we recognize that these issues do not happen in isolation. Therefore, we support the development of a robust and holistic approach to addressing sexualized violence in this province through the development of a sexualized-violence task force, and an Action Plan on Sexualized Violence in British Columbia.

**d. Education and Prevention Programs**

The UVSS supports the continuation of education and prevention programs, specifically in collaboration with the Anti.Violence.Project and the University through the Let's Get Consensual Campaign:

The UVSS will run a Let's Get Consensual campaign that will:

- Involve a collaborative and coordinated, university-wide approach in order to reach the greatest number of people with the most effective use of available resources and knowledge
- Collaborative decision-making that is reflective of each partner's mandate
- Apply a strengths and resource-based approach in which members will utilize their identified strengths and resources to leverage their expertise and engage in collaborative work
- This work will be based on current research and practices, and sex positive (open, communicative, and accepting of individuals' differences related to sexuality and sexual interests) approaches, inclusive of all genders and sexualities
- Messaging, activities, and events developed for campus communities as part of the Let's Get Consensual campaign will be positive, respectful and non-shaming
- This work will reflect an understanding that some communities are disproportionately affected by sexualized violence. Initiatives will be engaged in to reach populations that current research demonstrates are disproportionately affected by sexualized violence and gender-based and those that are disproportionately responsible for perpetuating sexualized and gender-based violence.

- The goal of this work is to engage the university community in proactive and preventative conversations and actions about sexualized and gender-based violence focusing on education and awareness building. Initiatives will be engaged in with the goal that awareness and education about consent and sexualized violence be integrated within the campus culture.
- This campaign will strive to:
  - Promote positive messaging around consent that encourages and informs students on how to engage in consensual conversations in all aspects of their campus lives, particularly in interpersonal relationships, and addresses behaviours within the greater context of societal rape culture.
  - Create awareness around issues of masculinity (e.g., privilege, patriarchy, entitlement) on campus and provide representations of positive expressions of masculinity. Encouraging men to be leaders, and to speak out and take an active role in addressing these issues with other men.
  - Recognize and address the different ways in which violence manifests itself within all communities in pursuit of supporting and promoting respect and accountability across campus, where ‘seeking help’ is normalized.

## **PART 5: CANNABIS HEMP**

5.1 The Society supports the decriminalisation of cannabis hemp.

**Adopted Referendum 1993/10/14**

## **PART 6: ELECTIONS**

6.1 **Civic Engagement** – the Society will actively encourage students to vote in all elections and referenda. The Society will seek to educate students in a non-partisan and impartial fashion on any and all post-secondary education and related student issues relevant to a given election.

## **PART 7: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

### **7.1 Preamble**

The Society recognises that the earth is not being cared for in a sustainable manner, and that we play a role in environmental degradation. We recognise that we must conduct our affairs in an environmentally, socially, and ethically responsible fashion. We are committed to the implementation of sustainable operating practices, and will instil an understanding of the values of sustainability practices to our members through research, education and our own operations.

## 7.2 Definitions

There are many ways to define the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development. There is no single, perfect definition of sustainability, rather it should be defined in its use. Sustainability takes into account three interdependent elements: the environment, the economy and the social system. It involves recognising and taking responsibility for our current and future impacts on human activity and the environment, on local and global scales. It means meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The definitions below are all incorporated into the concept of sustainability.

**Alternative/sustainable transportation:** Considers all of the competing demands of using any common form of transportation in the context of lessening the impacts of transportation habits on the local and global environments. Some examples are the interrelationships between: parking lot fees, contribution of exhaust to degradation of biosphere and decreased public health, public transit access and use, number of enclosed bike racks, pedestrian safety, etc.

**Beyond Climate Neutral:** A state in which the positive impact a person or institution has on the global climate system outweighs its negative impact.

**Ecological footprint:** The ecological footprint measures human impact on nature. It shows how much productive land and water we occupy to produce all the resources we consume and to take in all the waste we make.

**Environmental Health:** Refers to the optimal state of well-being of the animate and inanimate elements that exist around us. It recognises the fact that humans, like all matter of life, are connected directly to the environment in which they exist. To harm our environment is to harm ourselves and it is therefore in our best interest to protect the environment in which we live, ranging from a small office space we occupy to the whole earth we live on. Environmental health emphasises the common ground between achieving health and sustainable development. It focuses on the economic and environmental determinants of health, and on the means by which economic investment should be guided towards producing the best population health outcomes, greater equity in health, and sustainable use of resources.

**Interdisciplinary:** Involving two or more academic disciplines. An example of this would be a political science class dealing with environmental issues.

**Lifecycle cost:** An economic, environmental and social evaluation technique that accounts for the cradle-to-grave environmental

consequences/impacts of a product, process, or service.

**Adopted SAGM 2001/02/15**

**7.3 Policy**

- a. The Society shall lobby municipal and provincial governments to improve conditions on the road for cyclists through cyclist/driver education, and designated cycling lanes on roadways.

**Adopted AGM 1990/02/25**

- b. The Society supports and encourages the use of alternative forms of transportation. This includes, but is not limited to:

- i. User-friendly and accessible public transit.
- iii. Ridesharing
- iv. Universal access to public transportation

- c. The Society supports the phase-out of old growth logging and the complete preservation of Clayoquot Sound and the Carmanah, Walbran, and Stein Valleys.

**d. Climate Change**

- i. The Society supports the stabilization of atmospheric concentrations of anthropogenic greenhouse gases at levels that would prevent dangerous interference with the global climate system, and it supports environmentally sound initiatives that serve to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- ii. The Society supports the transition of the University of Victoria beyond climate neutral.

**e. Society Efforts**

The Society's efforts toward environmental sustainability shall include:

**i. Transportation**

Encouraging and facilitating students' use of sustainable modes of transportation.

**Adopted SAGM 2001/02/15**

**ii. University Relations**

- Working with the University of Victoria to develop and deliver interdisciplinary courses to teach students in all faculties about sustainability issues in their study area of choice.
- Encouraging the University to employ resource conservation and efficiency measures in their activities.



- Working with the University to develop and implement a model waste management system.
- Encouraging the University to adopt an environmental health policy.
- Working with the university to develop a sustainable investment policy.
- Encouraging the University to encourage and facilitate the use of sustainable transportation methods by students, staff, faculty and campus visitors.
- Encouraging the university to manage the campus lands in such a way to ensure healthy, diverse, and spacious natural and green spaces for enjoyment and use by future UVic students.
- Working with the entire university community to ensure that the floral and faunal biodiversity of the campus is protected through the appropriate management of the natural areas of the UVic campus.

**Adopted SAGM 2001/02/15**

## **PART 8: HOUSING**

### **8.1 On-campus housing**

The Society supports:

- I. I. High quality, affordable on-campus student housing for all that need it.
- II. II. Residence buildings that are fully accessible for students with disabilities.
- III. III. The development of legislation that outlines the rights of on campus residents to prevent unnecessary fee increases and early eviction.
- IV. IV. Publicly owned and operated student residences.
- V. V. Pegging maximum annual rent increases to CPI regardless of individual student tenant turnover.
- VI. VI. Residences that cater to the needs of student parents.

The Society opposes:

- I. I. Increases to residence rental fees that go beyond the standard allowable rent increase in BC.
- II. II. Privatization of student housing, including administration and management, and public-private partnerships.
- III. III. Profit-generation from campus student housing of any kind, including international students' residences.

### **8.2 Off-campus housing**

The Society supports:

- I. I. High quality, affordable housing for all that need it.
- II. II. Campaigns to inform students of their rights as tenants.
- III. III. Pegging the standard allowable rent increase in BC to CPI.

- IV. IV. Municipal by-laws that allow secondary suite rental units.
- V. V. Government support for public and not-for profit affordable housing.
- VI. VI. Student participation in neighbourhood, community, and tenants' groups.
- VII. VII. The creation of a national housing act.

The Society opposes:

- I. I. Increases to the standard allowable rent increase that are above CPI.
- II. II. Landlords using students' (and international students in particular) lower knowledge of, or confidence with, tenants' rights to sidestep the Residential Tenancy Act or otherwise intimidate student tenants.

## **PART 9: POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

### **9.1 Preamble**

The Society is committed to universal access to post-secondary education. The Society supports the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - signed and ratified by the Canadian Government in 1976 - which recognizes education at all levels as a basic human right and that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education."

### **9.2 Indigenous Right to Education**

All levels of government have a role to play in reconciliation and we call on the Province of British Columbia to play an active role in this process. It is Indigenous Peoples' Treaty and Aboriginal right to attend all educational institutions built on unceded and unsurrendered Indigenous territories. However, Indigenous students currently pay increasingly high tuition costs in BC and the funding available from the federal government through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) has lagged behind tuition fee increases and growing numbers of Indigenous youth for years.

Therefore, the Society calls on the Provincial Government and Universities to recognize the Aboriginal Right of First Nations (status and non-status), Metis, and Inuit to Education guaranteed by the Treaties and the Royal Proclamation. The Society calls on the Provincial Government to take a leadership role in reconciliation by immediately waiving tuition fees for all Indigenous Peoples attending post-secondary institutions in the province of British Columbia.

The Society asks that the provincial government:

- 1. Recognize the role of provincial governments in reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.
- 2. Issue a mandate to Post-secondary institutions to honour First Nations

Treaty and Aboriginal rights to education by immediately waiving tuition and fees for Indigenous students.

### 9.3 Academic Materials

#### Preamble

The true cost of post-secondary education is composed of many factors besides tuition, including academic materials. Over the past decade the cost of academic materials has continued to rise beyond the rate of inflation. Book publishers have engaged in practices which increase textbook costs such as issuing a new addition of a book with only cosmetic changes.

Many instructors provide course packs of required readings, but the creation of affordable course packs depends successful navigation of Canadian copyright legislation, which protects copying for individual use but not for teaching purposes. Many universities have facilitated production of course packs in paper and digital form through agreements with Access Copyright, a licensing agency which offers advance permission to copy a variety of works for academic purposes for a one-time fee.

An increasing amount of materials used by teachers are not covered under Access Copyright, and the organization's fees have also risen substantially over the years. As a result, a number of Canadian universities, including the University of Victoria, have decided to discontinue use of Access Copyright. Under current copyright legislation, this may result in delays in producing course packs, increased costs and unavailability of some materials.

Access to alternate format materials is also a concern. Unless students with disabilities request their texts in alternate format several weeks in advance this results in a delay in receiving the texts which disadvantages these students compared to the general student population.

#### Policy

- a. Course Packs – the Society encourages instructors to utilize affordable course packs and to make course packs available to students online. Instructors are responsible for ensuring that materials in their course packs are not already freely available to students.
- b. Textbook Editions – the Society encourages instructors to allow students to use an older version of a textbook where the information it contains does not differ significantly from the latest edition, and to notify students that such an option is available. The Society opposes the issuing of new editions of textbooks with only cosmetic changes.
- c. Online Components – the Society opposes the use of mandatory online components in textbooks where the online component uses

- a one-time subscription forcing students to purchase a new textbook for the course.
- d. Copyright Reform – the Society supports the expansion of fair dealing rights in Canadian copyright law to include teaching and research as well as personal use.
  - e. Textbook Taxation – the Society supports elimination of sales tax on textbooks.
  - f. Book Importation Regulations – the Society supports amendment of the Canadian Book Importation Regulations to eliminate price premiums on imported textbooks.
  - g. Textbook Rentals – the Society supports expansion of the university’s textbook rental program with rental prices of no more than 50% of the cost of the new book.
  - h. Alternate Format Texts – the Society supports provision by the University of alternate format texts and course materials in a timely manner to students who require them. The Society believes that publishers should offer their complete line of textbooks in alternate as well as conventional formats to promote accessibility.
  - i. Selection of Course Material – the Society believes that it is the responsibility of instructors and the university to consider the best interests of students in the selection of course material, balancing concerns of quality, affordability of materials and appropriateness.
  - j. University and Instructor Accountability – the Society supports University policies which hold professors accountable for the affordability and quality of the materials in their classes. The Society believes that, except in cases where research is limited to professors’ work, the assignment of course materials through which the professor can directly financially gain is a conflict of interest and should be sanctioned. The Society strongly opposes either the University or individual professors receiving personal benefits from textbook publishers against the interests of students, and supports sanctions against professors who are found to collude with textbook publishers.
  - k. Intellectual Property – the Society opposes attempts at monopolization and price gouging for use of protected work in the academic environment, and will lobby the university and both levels of government for more regulation of the textbook and academic journals industry.
  - l. Open-Source Textbooks – The Society supports the adoption of open-source textbooks on campus. Within this goal is also an expression of continued support for BC Campus.

#### **9.4 Curricula**

- a. The Society supports the development and implementation of a mandatory course or part of the curriculum focusing on issues around racism, sexism, homophobia and classism.

#### **9.5 Funding**

##### **a. Federal**

- i. Transfer Payments – the Society supports the negotiation of a dedicated transfer payment for post-secondary education between the provincial and federal governments, particularly if the terms of that transfer payment include standards and evaluation practices to ensure fair access, affordability and quality nationwide.
- ii. Research and Capital Funding – the Society believes the federal government has the primary responsibility for providing research and capital funding. The Society supports programs to fund undergraduate and graduate research opportunities.
- iii. Grants – the Society believes that the best tool to promote accessibility to post-secondary education is a needs-based grants program. The Society supports the needs-based grants program of the federal government and will lobby for further shifting of funding from tax credits, loan reduction and other sources towards a larger up-front grants program federally.
- iv. Indigenous Students – the Society opposes any cap on student support for Indigenous students (First Nations, Inuit, Metis and non-status students) that fails to meet the needs of all students who would not otherwise be able to attend. The Society will lobby for the elimination of 2% cap on the Post-Secondary Student Support Program.

##### **b. Provincial**

- i. Operating Funding – the Society supports the funding of post-secondary education above the national average for total Full Time Equivalent (FTE) grants. The Society strongly opposes any attempt to reduce per-student FTE. The Society believes that funding levels must, at a bare minimum, keep pace with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- ii. Capital Funding – the Society believes the provincial government is responsible for ensuring that any demands put on the university system for physical growth are supported, in partnership with the federal government. The Society supports reinstating the maintenance capital funding formerly provided by the provincial government.

#### **9.6 Governance**

- a. The Society supports significant student representation on all levels of

university governance.

- b. The Society supports the democratization of all positions on the Board of Governors, with at least one-third of the voting members being student representatives and a majority of voting members being student, staff and faculty combined.

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## **9.7 International Students**

- a. The Society supports the elimination of differential fees for visa students.

## **9.8 Quality**

### **Preamble**

Instructional quality is one of the most decisive factors in the quality of undergraduate education. Outstanding undergraduate instruction reflects positively on every aspect of the university, and requires effective communication and interaction between and among students and instructors as well as funding, attention and innovation on the university's part.

In Canada, educational quality standards are set at the provincial level. BC is the only province in with a provincial seal of quality for post-secondary education, with standards set by the Ministry of Advanced Education. Greater collaboration between provincial governments would encourage national data gathering and consistency in educational quality across Canada while respecting regional differences. To be effective, quality assessment must serve the diverse needs of students, institutions and the public, must foster a process of continual improvement and must reflect the perspectives of all stakeholders. This includes meaningful participation of students in the setting of standards and inclusion of a broad range of indicators that measure all dimensions of a student's educational experience.

### **Policy**

#### **a. University Responsibilities**

- i. Teaching Quality – the Society will actively support and facilitate programs that seek to improve pedagogical technique for professors and instructional quality for undergraduates. The Society supports a mandatory course on teaching for all first-time instructors of undergraduate courses.
- ii. Evaluation of Teaching – the Society encourages the development of effective student teaching evaluation mechanisms.

- iii. Lab and Tutorial Quality – the Society believes that labs and tutorials should be of optimal size for students’ interaction and learning. The Society believes that lab equipment should be up to date and sufficient for students’ needs.
- iv. Data Collection – the Society believes that universities should work with the provincial government to ensure that data collection on post-secondary education yields high quality results while remaining efficient and cost-effective.

**b. Government Responsibilities**

- i. Pan-Canadian Accord – the Society believes that the federal and provincial governments should be coordinating their efforts to ensure high-quality, accessible, and affordable education in Canada. The Society supports the negotiation of an agreement between the provincial and federal governments to create a dedicated transfer payment, and a system of standards, goals and a federal evaluation body.
- ii. Accreditation – the Society supports the establishment of outcome measurements for all post-secondary programs to allow for a baseline measurement of quality nationwide, including in non-professional programs.
- iii. Evaluation Body – the Society believes that spending on post-secondary education should be carefully accounted for, and clear benchmarks should be put in place by which the quality of universities can be audited. The Society supports the creation of an inter-governmental body to coordinate educational policy, benchmarks and collection of data.
- iv. Benchmarks – the Society supports the adoption of international benchmarks for the evaluation of post-secondary education such as those in use by the OECD.
- v. Recognition of Teaching Excellence – the Society believes the federal and provincial governments should facilitate the improvement of educational quality at universities. The Society supports the creation of a Canada Teaching Chair program focused on excellence in teaching and paralleling the Canada Research Chairs.

**9.9 Student Awards and Financial Aid**

- a. Needs Based Awards – the Society supports increasing the number and value of needs-based awards offered by the University of Victoria. The Society supports inclusion of a financial need component in all awards funded directly by the University (as opposed to endowed awards contributed by donors.)
- b. Equity – the Society supports increasing the number of awards targeted to populations who have traditionally faced barriers to university education,

including but not limited to indigenous students, visible minorities, students with disabilities and students who are single parents.

- c. Funding – the Society supports the University increasing total and per student funding of student financial aid. The Society opposes any decrease of funding for student financial aid as a result of operating budget cuts.

## **9.10 Student Loans**

- a. Governance – the Society supports the consolidation of federal and provincial efforts to deliver student loan programs in all provinces. The Society supports student participation in the formal governance and evaluation of the student loan program.
- b. Eligibility – the Society believes that all students with financial need should be able to access student loans. The Society supports the reform of income requirements including the elimination of parental and spousal contributions, non-liquid and necessary assets and institutional needs-based awards from student loan eligibility calculations.
- c. Loan Disbursement – the Society believes that maximum disbursements for loans should be based on accurate, regularly updated data on educational expenses and the cost of living. When maximum disbursements fall below these expenses, the Society will lobby for increases to disbursements.
- d. Internships and Part Time Students – the Society supports expansion of the student loan program to accommodate the diversifying needs of students and allow for internships and part-time status without considering the student to have left school.
- e. Repayment Structure – the Society supports extending the grace period in which students do not have to commence repaying their loans until twelve [12] months after graduation. The Society supports restructuring of payment with interest forgiveness for students who are unable to find gainful employment after that time.
- f. Interest Rates – the Society believes that the poorest students, the ones who take on student loans, should not be made by the government to pay additional costs for their education above and beyond those students who had access to personal or parental savings. The Society supports the complete elimination of interest rates on student loans as a measure to increase affordability. The Society supports extending the interest free grace period on student loans to twelve [12] months after graduation.
- g. Loan Reduction – the Society supports measures to forgive student loan debts for students who lack the means to pay for them. The Society also supports reducing the statute of limitations on student loan debt.
- h. Income Contingent Loans – the Society opposes the creation of Income Contingent Loan Repayment programs.

## **9.11 Trade**

### **Preamble**



Beginning with the 1988 Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, which was expanded as the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, Canada has pursued, and continues to negotiate, trade liberalization deals with a variety of countries. Unfortunately, international trade liberalization agreements have the potential to threaten the integrity of our public post-secondary education system. Universal obligations such as most-favoured nation treatment and specific obligations such as market access and national treatment may lead to restriction of government funding and regulation and ultimately privatization of the education sector. Exemptions should be made within trade agreements to protect Canada's public post-secondary education system.

## **Policy**

Trade Agreements – the Society believes post-secondary education should be excluded from any proposed international trade agreements. The Society advocates that the federal government negotiate strenuously to strengthen and clarify the exemption clause in proposed trade agreements relating to services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority to protect post-secondary education.

### **9.12 Tuition**

#### **Preamble**

Tuition rates in British Columbia have risen significantly over time. During the 1990s tuition levels were frozen by the provincial government. When the government deregulated tuition in 2002, post-secondary institutions across BC saw massive tuition increases, including a 25% hike in one year at the University of Victoria. By the time tuition regulation was re-imposed in 2005, rates had doubled at many institutions. Under the BC Tuition Limit Policy established in September 2005, increases to tuition levels are now capped at the rate of inflation. This cap also applies to mandatory non-instructional fees such as building fees and technology fees. In 2010 the University of Victoria attempted to exempt an increase to athletic fees from this policy for the purpose of constructing a new athletic facility, but the BC Ministry of Advanced Education denied approval.

Clearly, history has demonstrated that tuition fees must be regulated in order to prevent drastic increases with short-term notice which may seriously impact prospective and current students. Universities must balance their desire to offer new programs and facilities with their mandate to provide accessible public education. The provincial government must prioritize and adequately fund post-secondary education

#### **Policy**

- a. Fair Tuition Policy** – the Society supports a provincial fair tuition policy which:

- i. Provides long-term, sustained base operating funding for our universities that will be protected from negative changes in the government’s financial situation;
  - ii. Protects tuition from increasing due to fluctuations in funding grants to the university from the government;
  - iii. Ensures tuition levels are predictable;
  - iv. Has as its primary indicator of affordability the ability of students to pay without having to resort to loans;
  - v. Recognizes that tuition is only one of the costs of pursuing a post-secondary education; and
  - vi. Ensures that no student will ever be denied the opportunity to pursue post-secondary education because of their inability to pay.
- b. Deregulation** – the Society opposes any attempt to deregulate tuition in BC, including mandatory non-instructional fees.
- c. Tuition Limit Exemptions** – the Society opposes the granting of exemptions from the Tuition Limit Policy to universities, including exemptions of mandatory non-instructional fees.
- d. Tuition Tax Credits** – the Society advocates that the provincial and federal governments eliminate undergraduate tuition tax credits and direct the funding toward up-front, needs-based grants for post-secondary students or to student loan forgiveness.
- e. Tuition Fee Elimination** - The Society supports a freeze of tuition fees and supports the total elimination of tuition fees.

## **PART 10: SOCIO-ECONOMIC BARRIERS**

### **10.1 Preamble**

Post-secondary education is increasingly a necessity for participation in the labour market. The defining difference between those who have a post-secondary education and those who are forced into low-paying, low-skilled work is financial resources. Upfront financial barriers, namely tuition fees, reinforce a profound participation disparity among Canadian families. Statistics Canada calculates that students from families with incomes in the lowest quartile are half as likely to participate in university as students from families with top quartile earnings, thereby creating an accessibility gap among individuals from different socio-economic background particularly women, Indigenous folks, queer folks, trans folks, people with disabilities and people of colour who are disproportionately affected by this barrier.

### **10.2 Policy**

- a. The Society acknowledges that the accessibility gap in Canada’s

- universities and colleges is driven by the high cost of a post-secondary education, particularly for low-income families.
- b. The Society supports an accessible system of post-secondary education where any interested individual, regardless of socio-economic status, is able to participate in the post-secondary education of their choice without incurring debt.
  - c. The Society is opposed to the reduction of funding to social programs in Canada.

## **PART 11: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

### **11.1 Preamble**

The Society recognizes the inextricable relationship between the planning of transportation systems and issues of sustainability, public safety and affordability. The Society is committed to working closely with transportation stakeholders and decision-makers to ensure that students have full access to affordable and sustainable modes of transportation that serve their needs. This view encompasses not only the campus itself, but students' access to affordable housing.

The Society recognizes that public transportation is funded on different levels, including but not limited to a public cost basis (such as a transit authority, which is funded through a mix of user fees and taxes), a cooperative basis (such as a car share or car pool), and a private basis (such as a taxicab service). The Society's primary concern is for public funding of the regional Victoria mass transit system through a variety of measures, including the U-Pass program operated in concert between the Society, the University of Victoria and BC Transit. However, the Society also supports a wide range of other transportation measures laid out in this policy on the basis that a good transportation system, both in the region and between regions, provides flexibility and choice for students.

### **11.2 Definitions**

**Inter-regional Transportation:** Transportation systems which convey people between regions that encompass long distance buses, trains, airlines and ferries.

**Mass Transit:** A public transportation system that aims to move large numbers of people, encompassing bus transit, bus rapid transit and light rail transit.

**Public Transportation:** A shared transportation system, which conveys people as an open service.

**Regional Transportation:** Transportation systems that convey people within a defined region (in this case, Greater Victoria) that encompass mass transit, carpooling, car sharing, taxicabs, bicycle infrastructure and bike sharing systems.

**Smart growth:** An urban planning and transportation theory that concentrates growth in compact walkable urban centers to avoid sprawl and advocates

compact, transit-oriented, walkable, bicycle-friendly land use, including neighborhood schools, complete streets, and mixed-use development with a range of housing choices.

**U-PASS (or Universal Bus Pass):** A semesterly bus pass issued to all UVic students based on an agreement between BC Transit, the University of Victoria Students' Society and the University of Victoria. Through this contract, the Society recognizes its responsibility as a major funder of regional mass transit to work closely with its partners for the maintenance of the system.

### 11.3 Mandate

This policy sets the Society's position on the issue of public transportation. The Society is committed to:

- a. **Affordability** – the Society believes students should have no financial barriers to public transportation and will take steps that increase the affordability of transportation options regionally and inter-regionally.
- b. **Accessibility** – the Society believes that public transportation systems should be accessible to all students, and will regularly consult with students with disabilities on campus to incorporate their concerns into the Society's efforts to influence the regional and inter-regional transportation systems.

#### **Funding of Public Transportation**

- i. **Federal Responsibility** – the Society will lobby the Federal government to assist the regional and inter-regional transportation system used by students by helping fund capital-intensive programs that are necessary for affordability and sustainability, but would otherwise be difficult to fund.
- ii. **Provincial Responsibility** – the Society will lobby the Provincial government to provide public transportation capital and operating funding to regional transit in Victoria. The Society will encourage the Provincial Government to fund the operating costs of public transportation from government revenues derived from existing and future levies on carbon emissions, fossil fuels, and private vehicle ownership.
- iii. **Regional Responsibility** – the Society will lobby local and regional governments to fund public mass transit at a sustainable level, including appropriate funding amounts from gas taxes and property taxes. The Society recognizes the impact of property taxes on residents with fixed incomes, but also notes that such residents tend to have the greatest access to the transit system through the BC Bus Pass Program. For this reason, the Society's position is that transit systems should not be funded only by property taxes.
- iv. **University of Victoria Responsibility** – the Society believes that the University has a responsibility to ensure that transportation

infrastructure on campus is maintained in cooperation with local government and transportation authority. The Society will also continue to work closely with the University to facilitate alternative modes of transportation, particularly

- v. **U-PASS** – the Society supports the continuation of the U-PASS program under the existing funding formula.
- vi. **User fees** – the Society recognizes the importance of balancing taxpayer money and user fees in the funding of public transportation systems. However, the Society will lobby governments to recognize the limited financial ability of students, and ensure that funding formulas rely more heavily on public funding.

### c. Positions on Modes of Public Transportation

#### i. Mass Transit

- **Bus Rapid Transit** – the Society will lobby transit authorities and regional governments for the implementation of bus rapid transit systems that directly serve the university, including but not limited to, articulated or double-decker buses, dedicated bus lanes or high-occupancy vehicle lanes, bus priority intersections, express bus routes, and off-bus fare collection to decrease loading times.
- **Light Rail Transit** – the Society will lobby transit authorities and various levels of government for the implementation of light rail transit in the region, including both on-road and off-road systems, with a primary goal of integration with the campus.

ii. **Bicycling** – the Society will lobby the regional governments to better integrate the UVic campus into regional bicycle infrastructure planning, and dedicate more resources to providing bike lanes and bike trails on routes to the University.

iii. **Bicycle Sharing** – the Society supports both government and private-sector efforts to establish bike sharing programs, and integrate them with other campus services.

iv. **Car pool and car share** – the Society will work with the University and regional governments to provide incentives for car-pooling to and from the university and integrate them with other campus programs.

#### v. Inter-regional transportation

- **Discounts** – the Society will lobby public and private corporations that provide inter-regional transportation to extend discounted prices to post-secondary students.
- **Under-serviced areas** – the Society will lobby the Provincial government to promote more sustainable and affordable inter-regional transportation options, particularly to under-serviced communities on Vancouver Island and the Interior.

**d. Safety**

**i. Campus and Community** – the Society will continue to push for more and later late night bus service in order to increase the safety of students studying late on campus and working downtown.

**ii. Violence and Crime** – the Society will work with BC Transit and anti-violence organizations to ensure that buses are safe spaces for all riders. The Society will consult with Campus Security to keep abreast of any emerging safety and property security issues on the University campus.

**e. Sustainability and Smart Growth**

**i. Reducing Emissions** – the Society supports integration of climate change goals into the design of transportation systems. The Society supports the purchase of low emissions and emissions-free vehicles in the regional transportation systems.

**ii. Walking and Biking Communities** – the Society supports planning multiple town centres in each regional municipality with essential public and commercial services within walking or biking distance.

**iii. Density** –The Society will lobby local governments to use instruments such as regional growth policies and selective zoning in order to ensure high density areas with student housing can grow and will be properly integrated with adequate transportation to the University.

**iv. Developer responsibility** – the Society will lobby local governments to develop programs with residential and commercial developers to incorporate public transit and student housing into their projects. The Society supports development levies that take public transportation into account.