



## International Student Relations

21 January 2021

### **Re: International Student Tuition Increase 2021**

To the Chair and Members of UVic's Board of Governors,

I am writing to you on behalf of more than 2,000 international undergraduate students who have chosen to enrol at UVic. The realities of COVID-19 (lost jobs, reduced hours and cut wages) have put immense strain on the economy both globally and at home.

We ask that you (1) freeze international tuition for the upcoming year, and (2) limit the annual tuition increase to 2% for international students for at least the next two years.

Freezing tuition this year will send a message to students that our voices have not been ignored. It will reinforce the familial bond of the UVic community while providing much needed relief for students. The reduced increases thereafter is compatible with the economic recovery rate projected by leading global organizations, enabling students to better afford their education in future years.

Over the last 10 years, international tuition at UVic has increased by 151%<sup>1</sup>. This is much higher than the rate of inflation and coping with another tuition increase this year is simply not possible for many.

International students are not always wealthy and this perception is harmful. An example of this is how international students continue to be much more likely to use the UVSS' Food Bank and Free Store than domestic students. This has only been exaggerated by the pandemic and exposed the economic strain felt by the community.

Included are testimonials from students who have written about their struggles. They describe how difficult it will be for them to continue their education at UVic due to financial insecurity. The Board of Governors is invested in the stewardship of UVic. We have invested our faith in you and it is based on that trust that we urge you to consider the asks highlighted in front of you today.

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<sup>1</sup> "Tuition Fee Estimate - Undergrad - University of Victoria." UVic.ca. Accessed January 22, 2021.  
<https://www.uvic.ca/undergraduate/finances/tuition-costs/tuition-fee-estimate.php?residency=I&level=UG&program=36>.

Sincerely,

**Dipayan Nag**

Director of International Student Relations | University of Victoria Students' Society  
Unceded, unsundered territories of the Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples  
*UVSS - Run by students, for students.*

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“As an international student, the high tuition fees have put a great financial strain on me and my family. Outside of tuition fees, international students also have to spend a large sum on settling in a completely new environment, making the high tuition much more difficult to manage. High tuition is also more punishing for struggling students. If an international student fails a course, the financial penalty on them is severe and can damage their well-being. I hope the UVic Board of Directors would consider stopping increasing fees for international students.”

- **Victor Vu, Economics**

“2020 has been really tough on me and my family. My dad, the sole bread earner of the family is immunocompromised and had to start working from home in a limited capacity. Most of his income was through commissions and there is only so much you can sell at home. It got a lot worse when he tested positive for covid and due to his compromised immune system, he had to be admitted to a hospital and was kept in isolation. We knew international tuition was high when we decided to come to Uvic but we also expected business as usual. With businesses down, we are struggling to pay this semester’s tuition. My father’s health is strongly related to his stress levels and right now, it’s at an all time high. My sister and I are both working 3 jobs with full course loads to make our ends meet, send some back home to our parents and pay our tuition bit by bit. Any reduction made to the tuition will be helpful and a huge relief.”

- **Priyancy Raichada, Psychology**

“My dad and siblings have reduced hours/pay right now; thus an increase in tuition isn't ideal. Additionally, if tuition is increased, I will have to stop living in Canada and go back home. Last but not least, some of the courses I have taken used old prerecorded recordings from past semesters, so we would literally be paying for old material. This is not necessarily bad, but it's not worth the increase in tuition. Also, some courses are using other universities' recorded material”

- **Nabil Nazri, Computer Science**

“Hello. I am Dhruvi Raichada and I am from India. I’m currently in my second year of the business program. Paying international student fees has been super stressful on my family and I. I am currently working various jobs (keeping in mind that I can only work for 20hrs off campus) along with my full course load. My father is a jeweller and due to the current situation in India, his business isn’t working well. He recently had gotten sick

due to Covid along with my mother. This caused him to stay home more. A reduction in fee would be a great help (even if it's for a temporary period of time)."

- **Dhruvi Raichada, Economics & Business**

"Hello! My name is Shilpa Parveen and I'm from Saudi Arabia. I'm currently in my second year doing bsc psychology. Being an international student myself, it's understandable as to why we pay way more than the domestic students. Whatsoever, what I think is really unfair is to increase the tuition fee during a pandemic. Most of our families back home struggle to earn. Unfortunately, due to Covid the job situation is extremely unstable in Saudi Arabia. My mom runs a salon to pay for my education, but due to the current situation, it's hard to keep it going. Currently, I have three part time jobs just so I could afford my housing & other expenses. I cannot fathom the struggle international students might go through due to Covid. Therefore, on behalf of every international student, I humbly request you to consider not increasing the tuition fee this year."

- **Shilpa Parveen, Psychology**

"My name is Daniel Lee and I am an international (Korean) student completing my bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Business. My main financial supporters are my parents who are both Christian missionaries stationed in Egypt. My parents are having financial difficulty in funding both me and my brother's (who is also a UVIC student) education as Egyptian financial infrastructure and services are still closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak as well as support donations have significantly decreased. My parents have forfeited their savings to fund my education and be the first in my family to receive a North American degree. I wish to alleviate their financial stress by requesting that international student fees not be increased this year. We pray you and your families are healthy and safe during these times."

- **Daniel Lee, Psychology**

"One of the biggest reasons for reducing international students' tuition fees is to help our sponsors and ourselves make ends meet. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unequal impact on different countries around the world. It is often the case that the countries with less effective governments have the less effective measures to protect the lives of their population and also their incomes from the side effects of the pandemic. Quarantine measures, although very necessary, have put out of work not only workers that make their living out of their jobs, but also plenty of business owners. Small businesses have been specially affected in developing countries, as they often do not count with the very useful stimulus packages that other countries do. Having to manage a small business in this economic climate is certainly hard, but having to do so while paying international tuition 2-3 times per year, plus life expenses for students at UVic makes it all so much more difficult to do. In addition, the pandemic has had real effect in Canada too, many international students who had part-time jobs to help their sponsors make ends meet have found themselves out of employment. No stimulus package can make for the loss of a steady job, what we want is support from the University we have been supporting for all of our higher education. As one of the major sources for income of the University of Victoria, it would be an extremely human and sensible decision to reduce the international students' tuition fees. We are here because

we want to study and become a better version of ourselves, please help us achieve that commitment.”

- **Mario Acosta Valdez, Student**

“Having studied at UVic for just under 4 years as an international student, I have faced an array of challenges in all walks of life. I can attest that it is a great place to learn and grow, however, not all challenges are surmountable and the one in particular I faced here is a financial crisis. Being a second child, my parents have to pay off several educational loans to put us through university. With the steady hike in international students tuition fee, it is becoming harder for them to financially support us. And the ongoing pandemic does a lot more harm to us that we realize, as we have been furloughed from our jobs and my parents have faced grave financial difficulties. I am sure that I speak for not just myself but a large majority of the international student community, some of whom may have been affected far worse than we care to imagine. Hence, a reduction in international student tuition fee, regardless of the amount, would be very helpful for us and provide us with some much needed respite.”

- **Vineet Vaz, Psychology**

“As an international student it is a dream to pursue an education in Canada however, it isn't feasible financially during a pandemic. If the university chooses to not have a tuition hike, then I'd save about \$320-\$500 per term equivalent to at least Rs.20,000. That money can be used towards medical expenses that my family is facing right now. Safe to say, I won't have to work 30hrs and stress about academics or give up sleep.”

- **Siddharth Pathak, Computer Science**