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April 12, 2023

Peter Meiszner  
Senior Digital Strategist  
UBC Media Team  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Dear Mr. Meiszner,

The UBC Vancouver campus is a wonderful place with many students who study on the campus to enjoy the breathtaking views unique to UBC. However, there is a growing issue where popular study locations, particularly the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKB) and the AMS Nest building, are becoming overcrowded and negatively affecting UBC students.

This report, Reducing Overcrowding of Study Spaces at UBC: An Analysis of Irving K. Barber Learning Centre and the Nest, investigates student opinion on the crowding of Irving K. Barber Learning Centre in addition to the AMS Nest building and contains recommendations to potentially reduce the negative effects of overcrowding. I believe the information in this report will be of benefit to UBC students and I thank you for taking the time to read through this report.

Through preparing this report, I have learned a great deal about various study spaces and it is no surprise that IKB and the AMS Nest building are popular study locations among students, given their unique characteristics. It is interesting to note that recent studies have suggested overcrowding has contributed to negative health effects among students. Given the popularity of IKB and the AMS Nest building, this may pose an issue for students who study on campus.

I have greatly enjoyed my work on this report and would be more than happy to address any questions or concerns. Please contact me via email at [briannnw@student.ubc.ca](mailto:briannnw@student.ubc.ca) and I would love to talk more about this topic. Thank you for your time in reading this report.

Sincerely,



Brian Wong

2329 West Mall  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1 Z4

April 12, 2023

Mehak Bhourji  
Student Services Market and Administrative Coordinator  
Alma Mater Society  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Dear Mehak Bhourji,

The UBC Vancouver campus is a wonderful place with many students who study on the campus to enjoy the breathtaking views unique to UBC. However, there is a growing issue where popular study locations, particularly the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKB) and the AMS Nest building, are becoming overcrowded and negatively affecting UBC students.

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Sincerely,



Brian Wong

**REDUCING OVERCROWDING IN STUDY SPACES AT UBC**

**Reducing Overcrowding of Study Spaces at UBC: An Analysis of Irving K. Barber**

**Learning Centre and the Nest**

For

Peter Meiszner

Senior Digital Strategist

UBC Media Team

and

Mehak Bhourji

Student Services Market and Administrative Coordinator

Alma Mater Society (AMS)

By

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March 29, 2023

**REDUCING OVERCROWDING IN STUDY SPACES AT UBC**

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**I. ABSTRACT**

Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKB) and the Alma Mater Society (AMS) Nest building are very popular study locations for students of the UBC Vancouver campus. As a result of the high volume, these study locations become overcrowded and therefore much time is needed to find an available spot to study.

UBC students reported that factors such as location, building architecture, study environment, and quality of study space were reasons for studying at IKB and the AMS Nest building. However, students continued to report that they would be willing to study at other locations on par with IKB or the Nest, as long as the students were aware of them.

Studying at an overcrowded location leads to negative effects on students such as decreased ability to focus, increased prevalence of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, and increased prevalence of developing unhealthy coping habits such as binge eating and overuse of the internet.

To reduce overcrowding at IKB and the AMS Nest building, sharing alternative study locations through social media postings by the AMS and UBC media team would increase awareness of study locations among students and reduce crowding. An alternative option could be to limit the capacity of students in both buildings.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background on Overcrowdedness at Irving K. Barber Learning Centre and the Nest

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is a well-known university within Canada, consisting of the Vancouver campus and Okanagan campus. With over 70,000 students and an historical growth of 3.3% (*Overview and Facts*), UBC continues to grow and expand while trying to meet the demands of the growing student population. The focus of this report will be on the UBC Vancouver campus, with just over 58,000 students. With such a vast amount of students, many of them will want to study on campus. Currently, there are two study spaces that students tend to study at: the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKB) and the Nest. IKB, given its long daily operating hours and unique architecture, attracts many students to study within its walls. The Nest, given its prime location near public transportation hubs and easy access to restaurants and stores, also attracts many students. As a result of students being attracted to these study spaces, IKB and the Nest experience high volumes of students, resulting in overcrowding of these buildings.

### B. Definition of Overcrowdedness and Description of Issues Caused by Overcrowdedness

Overcrowding, often interchanged with “crowding”, refers to the

“presence of more people or things in a space than is comfortable, safe, or permissible” (*Overcrowding Definition*) and has detrimental effects on students when they are trying to study. In overcrowded spaces, students are unable to find a spot to study or focus on their work (Kouvelt). Recent studies show that students in crowded areas can develop “depression, anxiety, and unhealthy coping habits such as binge eating and overuse of the internet” (Getahun). As a result, students that tend to study in an overcrowded location may perform worse on examinations and therefore achieve a lower grade, reducing the overall grade of a student. Therefore, it may be in the university’s interest to take action and reduce crowding in high volume study spaces to increase student focus, decrease potential development of mental health issues, and improve student academic performance.

### **C. Purpose of Report and Intended Audience**

The purpose of this report is to increase awareness of study locations aside from IKB and the Nest to decrease overcrowding in those areas. In addition, suggestions for future action will be proposed to Peter Meiszner, Senior Media Analyst of the UBC Media Team and Mehak Bhourji, Student Services Market and Administrative Coordinator of the Alma Mater Society (AMS) in order to effectively advertise and promote awareness of the findings among UBC students. As the university continues to expand and more students attend, it is important for students to be aware of the resources available, such as study spaces. Decreasing overcrowding of study spaces will result in increased student efficiency, increased focus, and may potentially lead to increased academic



performance. Therefore, it will be of benefit for the AMS and UBC Media team to advertise the findings of this report to all UBC students in order to prevent the negative effects of overcrowding.

### **D. Data Sources and Methods of Inquiry**

The primary sources of data used are collected from an anonymous survey distributed to UBC students that aimed to assess student opinion on overcrowding of IKB and the Nest. The survey consisted of 12 questions in multiple choice and short answer format. 16 responses were recorded for the survey. Further information was collected from secondary sources such as UBC blog posts and the UBC subreddit from the social media platform, Reddit. The collected data was analyzed and used to support recommendations.

### **E. Scope of Inquiry**

There are five main points of inquiry:

1. How many students find that IKB or the Nest to be overcrowded?
2. How long does the average student take to find a study spot at IKB or the Nest?
3. Are students interested in going to new study spots? If not, what would their reasons be?
4. What other study spots are present at UBC and would suit as an acceptable alternative to IKB and the Nest?

5. What are the most effective methods to share this information with UBC students?

**III. DATA COLLECTED**

**A. Overcrowdedness**

**1. Irving K. Barber Learning Centre**

UBC student opinions on overcrowdedness at IKB were collected, as shown below:

Statement: I find IKB overcrowded.

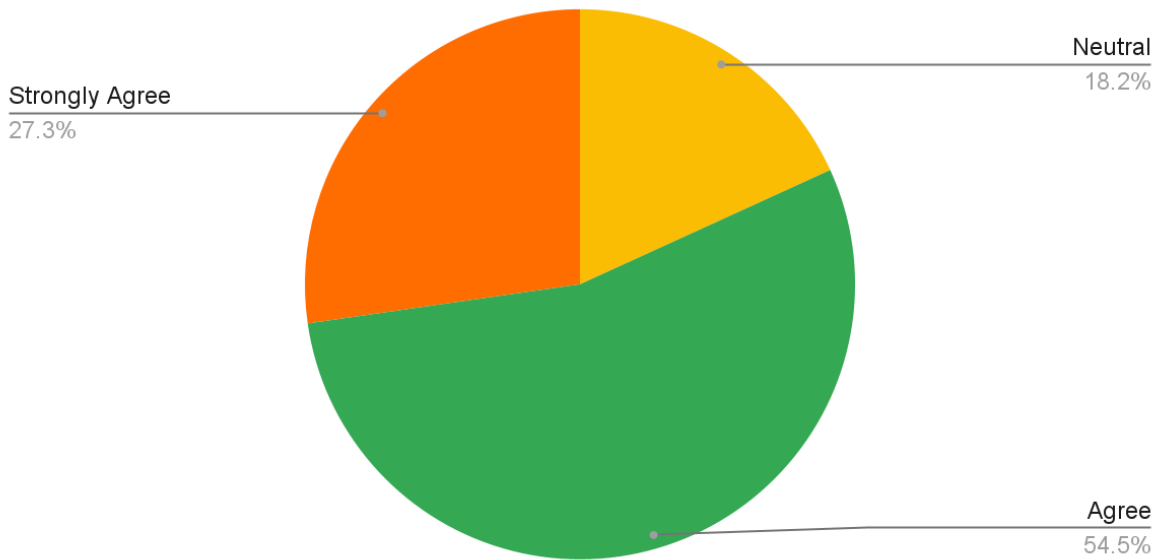


Figure 1. Student Opinion on Overcrowdedness at IKB

Statement: I can easily find an available spot to study at Irving K. Barber Learning

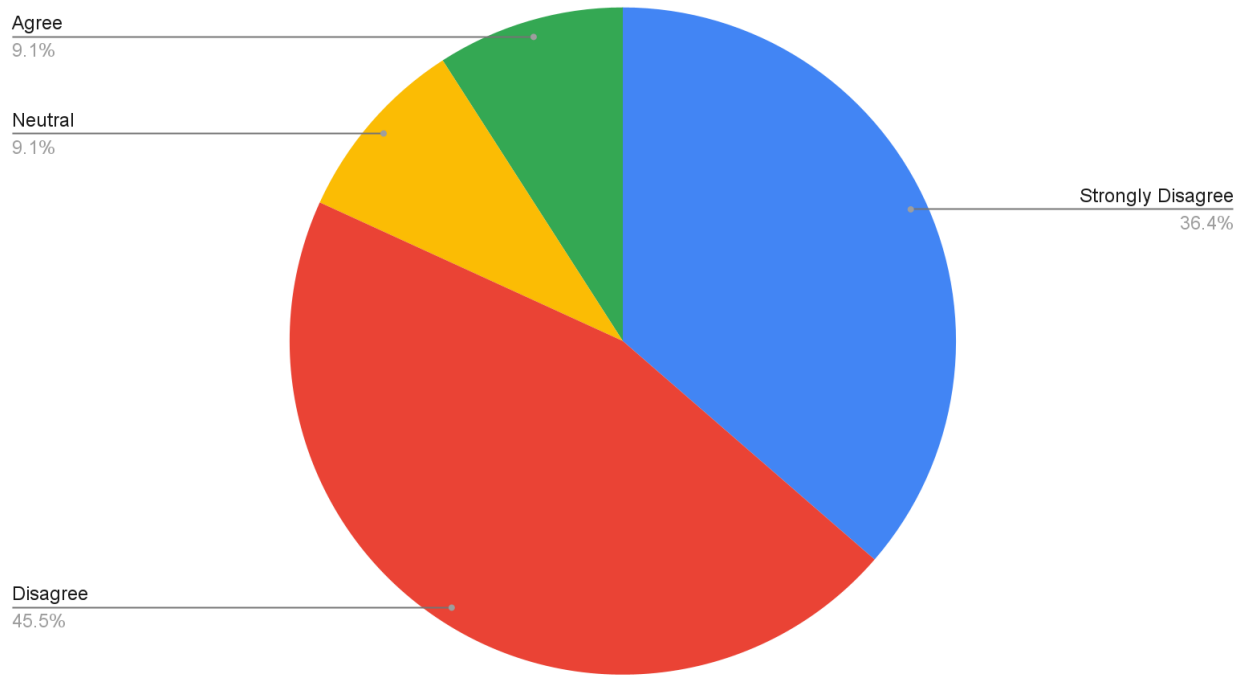


Figure 2: Student Opinion on Availability of Study Spots at IKB

### Time to Find a Study Spot at IKB

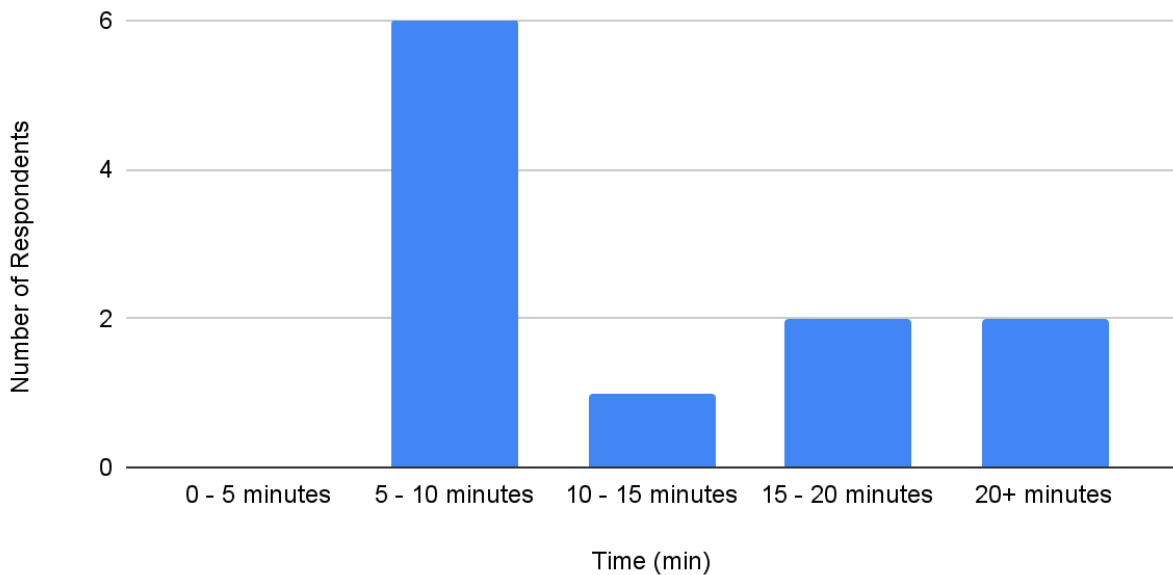


Figure 3: Student Opinion on Time Taken to Find Study Spot at IKB

Figures 1 and 2 depicts student opinion on overcrowdedness at Irving K. Barber Learning Centre. With the high volume of students studying at IKB, it is clear that many students find IKB overcrowded as 54.5% of survey respondents agree and 27.3% of respondents strongly agree, as shown in Figure 1. Interestingly, there are no respondents that disagreed with the survey statement in Figure 1.

Figure 2 further demonstrates the overcrowdedness at IKB as more than 81% of survey respondents believe finding a study spot at IKB is not easy. As such, it can be implied that finding a spot to study is difficult. Figure 3 quantifies the difficulty in finding a study spot as it takes 6 out of 11 respondents between 5 - 10 minutes to find a study spot, with some respondents taking over 20 minutes.

### **2. The Nest**

UBC student opinions on overcrowdedness at the Nest were collected, as shown below:

Statement: I find the Nest overcrowded.

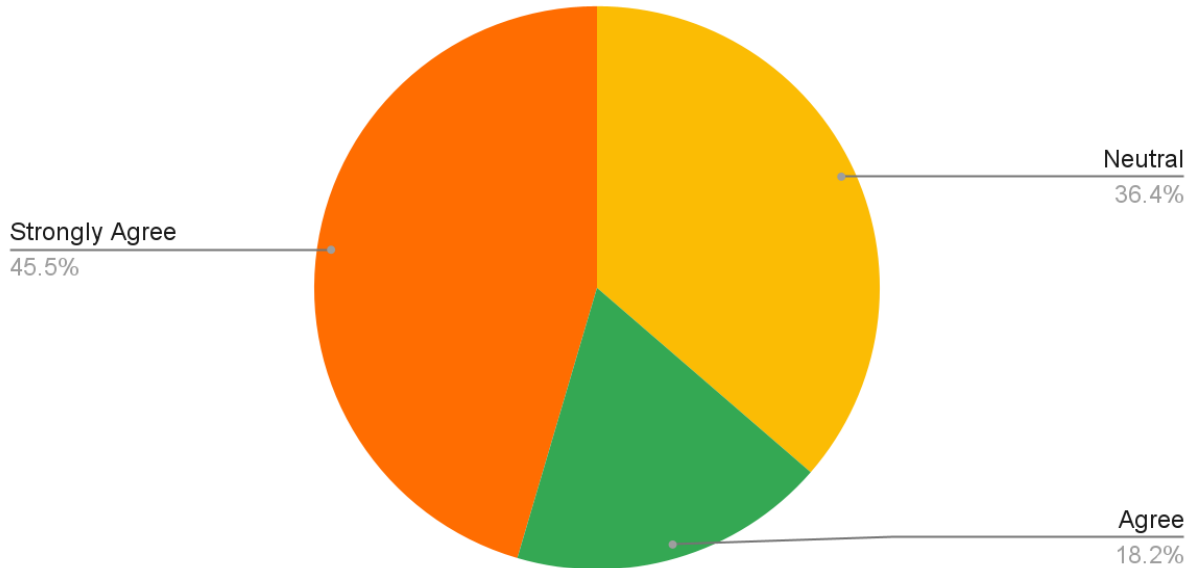


Figure 4: Student Opinion on Overcrowdedness at the Nest

Figure 4 depicts student opinion on overcrowdedness at the Nest, with over 63% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement that the Nest is overcrowded. Interestingly, 36.4% of respondents find that the Nest is not overcrowded. A potential reason for this statistic could be due to the access of private club rooms. Many students enrolled in clubs have access to private club rooms in the Nest that can be used as a study space. However, these rooms cannot be accessed by non-members and therefore is not of benefit to the general UBC student population.

Statement: I can easily find an available spot to study at the Nest.

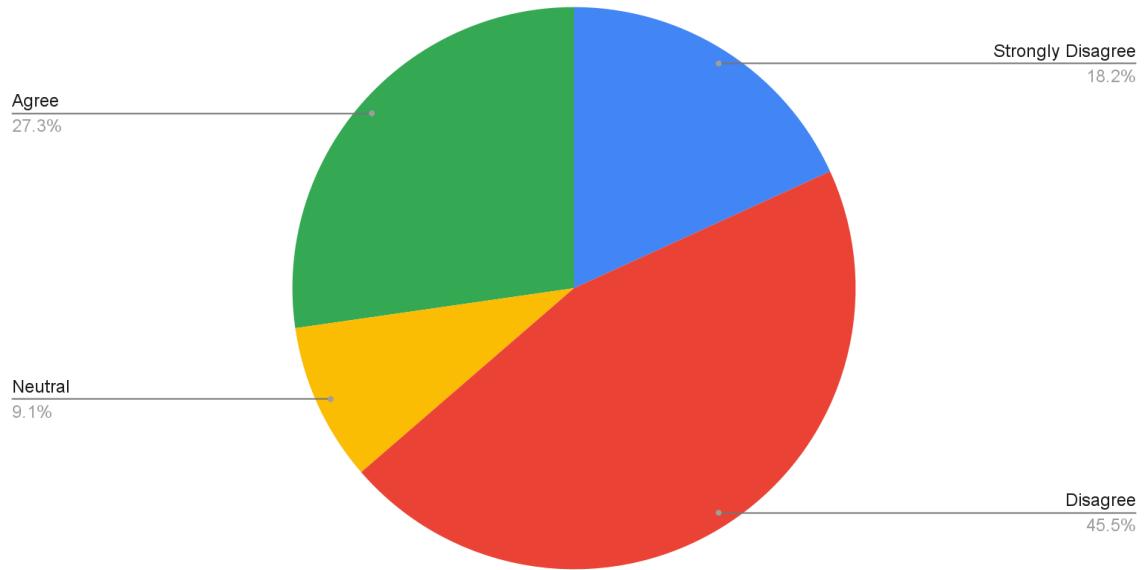


Figure 5: Student Opinion on Availability of Study Spots at the Nest

### Times to Find a Study Spot at the Nest

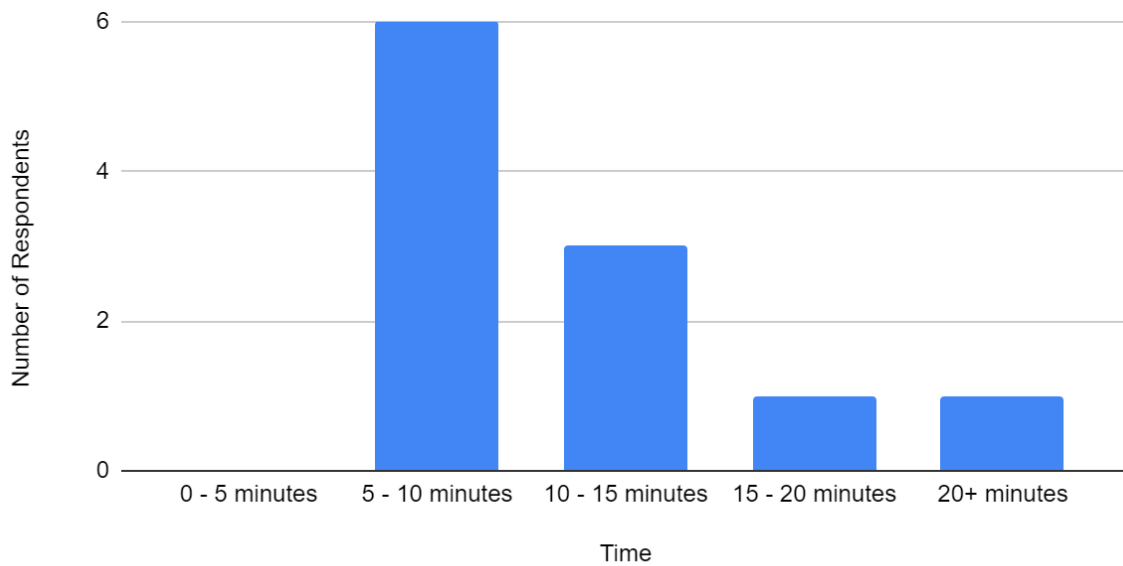


Figure 6: Student Opinion on Time Taken to Find Study Spot at the Nest

Figure 5 and 6 qualitatively and quantitatively determines the level of overcrowdedness at the Nest, respectively. In Figure 5, 45.5% of respondents disagree with the statement that finding a spot to study at the Nest is easy. 18.2% of respondents strongly disagree with the given statement. As such, it can be implied that over 63% of respondents believe that finding a study spot is difficult in the Nest. Figure 6 quantifies this difficulty and shows that 6 out of 11 respondents spend 5 - 10 minutes finding a study spot at the Nest. It should be noted that the remaining 5 respondents spend significantly greater time to find a study spot at the Nest, ranging from 10 -15 minutes, 15 - 20 minutes and greater than 20 minutes.

### **B. Influential Factors on Study Space Selection**

#### **1. Irving K. Barber Learning Centre**

With IKB seeing high volumes of students, it is clear that IKB is an attractive study location. Student opinion on reasons behind the popularity of IKB were collected, shown below:

Potential Reasons to Study at IKB

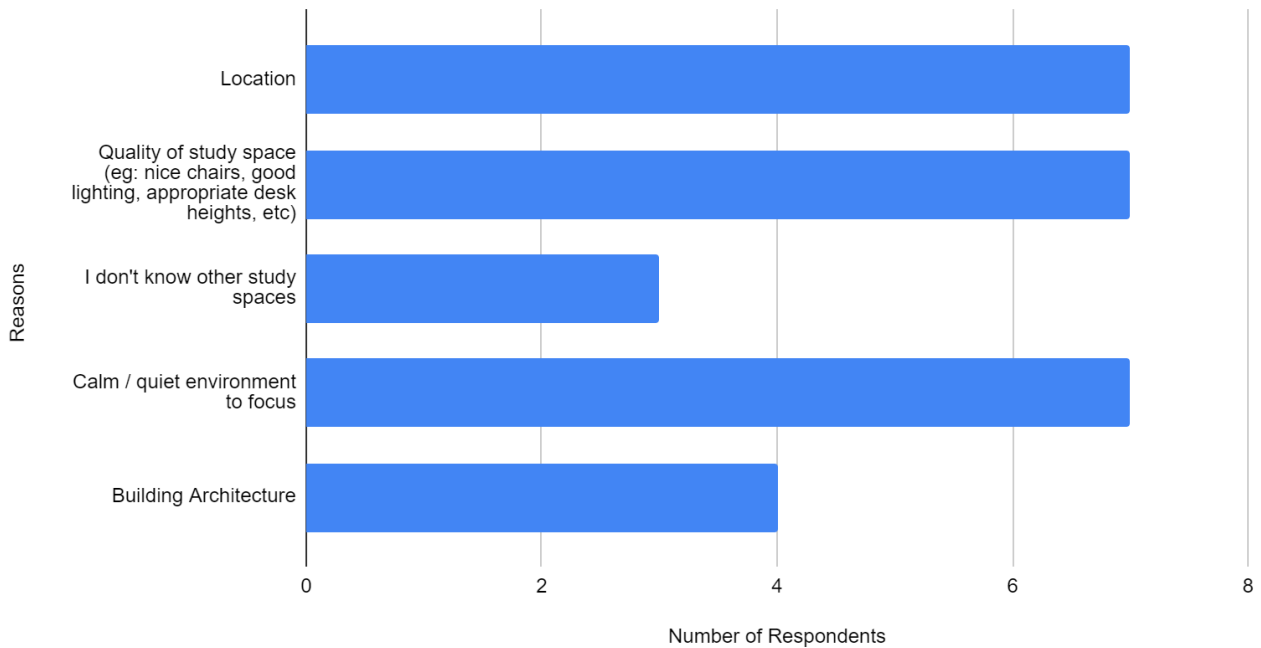


Figure 7: Potential Reasons to Study at IKB

Figure 7 depicts potential reasons why a UBC student may study at IKB. From the results, it is evident that the location, quality of study space, and environment are major determining factors behind the popularity of IKB with 7 votes each. Building architecture seems to be a considerable factor with 4 votes, while lack of information seems to be the least considerable factor in this survey with 3 votes.

**2. The Nest**

With the Nest seeing high volumes of students, it is clear that the Nest is another attractive study location. Student opinion on reasons behind the popularity of the Nest were collected, shown below:



Potential Reasons to Study at the Nest

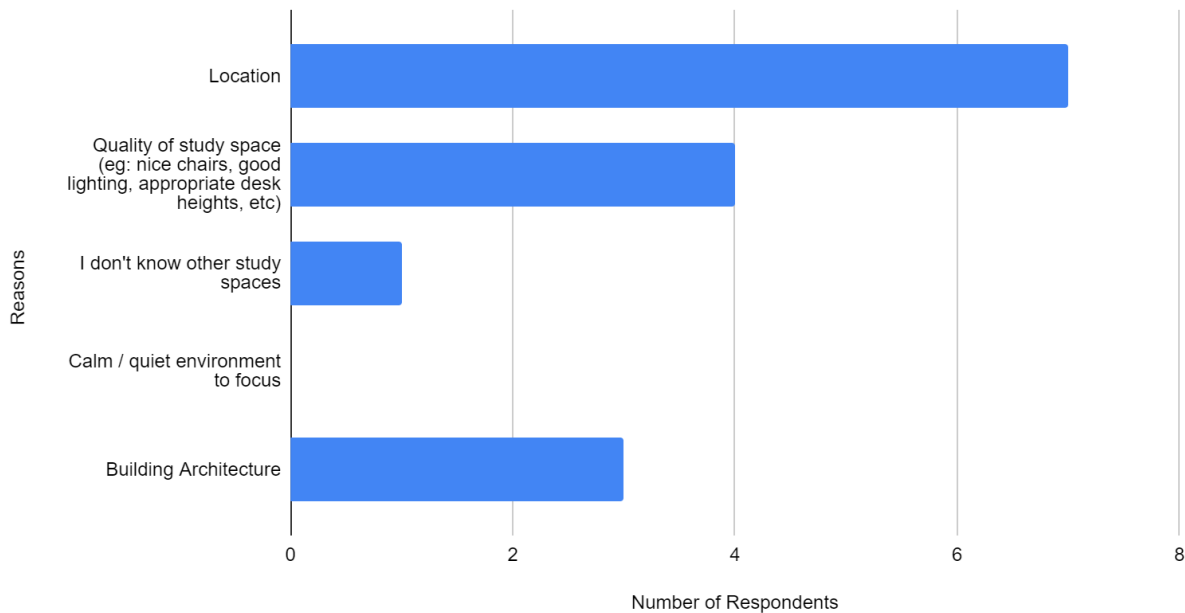


Figure 8: Potential Reasons to Study at the Nest

Figure 8 depicts potential reasons why a UBC student may study at the Nest. From the results, it is evident that the location is the major determining factor behind the popularity of the Nest, with 7 votes. Quality of study space appears to be a considerable factor with 4 votes, while study environment seems to be the least considerable factor in this survey with 0 votes.

Collectively, from figures 7 and 8, it appears that location is the single greatest determining factor for the popularity behind IKB and the Nest.

**C. Alternative Study Spaces**

Survey respondents were asked to share one study location aside from IKB

or the Nest. Collectively, along with information gathered from secondary sources, a list of alternative study spots were compiled and shown below:

<b><u>Study Spaces from Survey</u></b>
Arts Student Centre at Brock Commons
Asian Library
Bean around the world
Great Dame
Koerner Library
Life Building
Study Lounges in Resident Buildings
Forestry Building
<b><u>Study Spaces from Secondary Sources:</u></b>
Brock Hall
J.J. Bean
Education Library
Law Library
Music, Art and Architecture Library
Woodward Library
Xwi7xwa Library

Figure 9: Alternative Study Spaces to IKB and the Nest

**D. Student Willingness to Change Study Locations**

Student willingness to study at locations aside from IKB and the Nest was assessed via survey response.

How Likely Are You to Study at Locations On Par With IKB or the Nest If You Were Aware Of Them?

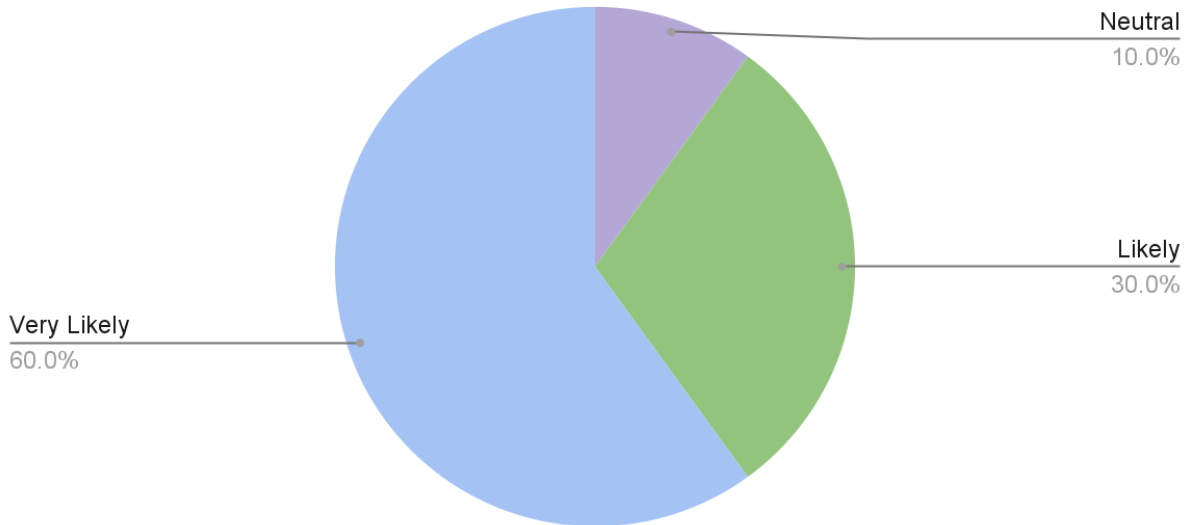


Figure 10: Student Opinion on Likelihood of Studying at Places Aside from IKB or the Nest

90% of respondents fall under the “likely” category, with 30% of respondents likely to study at locations aside from the IKB or the Nest while 60% of respondents are very likely to. It should be noted the question explicitly states that the alternative locations are on par with IKB or the Nest. Therefore, it is evident that if UBC students knew about alternative study spaces on par with IKB or the Nest, then many of them would study at the new locations, reducing the volume of students at IKB and the Nest and consequently reduce the level of overcrowding.

**E. Limitations**

Limitations in this report are present. Firstly, the sample size of the survey is

small. With a total of 16 respondents, the survey may not be an accurate representation of UBC students as a whole. Secondly, the survey was distributed via social media platforms to Facebook groups and Instagram followers. The majority of users in the Facebook group and Instagram followers were in their senior years of university. As a result, many of the survey respondents have many years of experience at UBC and therefore are aware of study locations aside from IKB or the Nest. Therefore, data from Figure 7 and Figure 8 may not be as accurate as intended. The limitations mentioned above could be addressed by increasing sample size and distributing surveys across multiple groups and platforms to ensure an accurate representation of the UBC student population.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

##### **A. Summary of Findings**

This report analyzed the crowding issue present at Irving K. Barber Learning Centre and the Nest. Over 60% of survey respondents believe IKB and the Nest are overcrowded and pose a difficulty in finding study spots. Reasons behind the popularity of IKB and the Nest were investigated and location seemed to be the greatest determining factor. However, over 90% of survey respondents would study at a location aside from IKB or the Nest as long as the new study space was of similar quality. Alternative study spaces were identified from survey responses and literature research. As the negative effects of overcrowding include development of depression, anxiety, and unhealthy coping habits in addition to reduced focus and potentially reduced academic

performance, it would be of great benefit to current UBC students to take action and reduce overcrowding.

### **B. Recommendations**

Considering the findings in this report, it is clear that IKB and the Nest face an overcrowding issue that may be reducing the academic performance of UBC students. Therefore, the following recommendations may be fruitful to reduce overcrowding at IKB and the Nest:

#### **1. Creation and Advertising of Content via Social Media**

The primary issue causing overcrowding is the high volume of students that study at IKB and the Nest. However, there are numerous other locations at UBC that have been identified to be on par with IKB and the Nest. Over 90% of survey respondents stated that they would study at other study locations aside from IKB or the Nest. Therefore, it would be beneficial to share the list of compiled study spaces aside from IKB and the Nest to all UBC students. If UBC students were aware of other study spaces, then according to the data from this report, many of them would study at new locations and therefore reduce overcrowding at IKB or the Nest. Creation of easily shareable media such as a YouTube video on the UBC official channel or a newsletter from the official UBC account addressed to all current students featuring the content of this report would be one suggestion of creating easily shareable content.

#### **2. Setting an Occupancy Limit**

Setting an occupancy limit at IKB or the Nest to the number of available study spots would ensure that every student that enters the building would be guaranteed a study space. As a result, overcrowding at IKB and the Nest would be reduced and other students can utilize figure 10 in this report to find alternative study spaces.

### V. APPENDICES

A. Link to survey questions :

[https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9YquGpNFM0qR6E6](https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9YquGpNFM0qR6E6)

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