**Report for Forming a student-run organization helping UBC students find housing off-campus**

for

Marium Hamid

President of UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS)

Vancouver, British Columbia

by

Justin Man

English 301-99A Student

November 26, 2018

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ABSTRACT…………………………………………………………………………P3

1. INTRODUCTION …………………………………………………………………P4
2. Background of Student Housing at UBC…………………………………………….P4
3. Purpose of Report………………………………………………………………… P5
4. Scope of Inquiry……………………………………………………………. P5
5. Methods of Research………………………………………………………… P5
6. Proposed Solution………………………………………………………….... P6
7. DATA SECTION ……………………………………………………………P6
8. The Growing Housing Crisis in Vancouver………………………………….P6
9. Findings………….……………………………………………………………P7
10. CONCLUSION………………………………………………………………P10
11. Summary and Interpretation of Findings ………………………………….….P10
12. Recommendations …………………………………………………………….P11
13. REFERENCES…………………………………………………………………P13

**Figures and Tables**

Figure 1 – Student survey results on student commute times………………………………P7

Figure 2 – Student survey results on monthly living expenses……………………………….P8

Figure 3— Student survey results on roommate tenancy……………………………………..P9

Opinions regarding the formation of a student-run collective………………………………… P13

**ABSTRACT**

Although UBC’s housing program is the largest all across Canada, many students are not offered housing at UBC Vancouver. The selection process behind residential offers to student enforced by UBC Housing provide fair and equal opportunities for every student to obtain housing, regardless of location (non-local and local students have the same probability of obtaining UBC campus residence). As a result, a large number of students who went to secondary-school in Vancouver are receiving UBC housing offers. With residential spots being occupied by students who grew up in the local vicinity, many students moving from outside the greater Vancouver area are left trying to find a home outside of UBC campus. In other words, students who grew up in neighborhoods relatively far from UBC: Burnaby, Delta, Surrey, Tsawassen, and New Westminster are obligated to devote 2-5 hours of travel time a day just to get to class. Also, students from downtown Vancouver, Kitsilano, Kerrisdale, Oakridge, Marpole, Dunbar, etc. are occupying residential spaces that seem more beneficial for non-local students. In addition, international and out-of-province students who are not offered campus housing are forced to find a living situation outside of campus making the search for a home another worry in the transition process of studying a new country.

1. **Introduction**
2. **Background of Student Housing at UBC**

The University of British Columbia is a prestigious university with a rich history of higher education and learning opportunities. In the Vancouver campus alone, UBC is the educational institution for almost fifty-five thousand undergraduates and graduate students. UBC Canada’s largest university in-terms of on-campus housing with over 9,400 residential spaces available for undergraduate and graduate students studying on campus in Vancouver. Although the University of British Columbia holds the most residential spaces in all of Canada, students at UBC face the challenge of finding housing convenient enough for a reasonable commute.

1. **Purpose of Report**

This investigation is meant to display the general landscape of student living at UBC. The investigation is also intended to find different potential solutions to the issue

1. **Scope of Inquiry**

To help aid the exploration of this topic, the following questions need to be addressed:

1. How many students applied for UBC Housing?
2. How are students selected for housing at UBC today?
3. What is the average commute time for a students living inside the Greater Vancouver area?
4. What is the average commute time for a students living outside the Greater Vancouver area (Burnaby, Surrey, Delta, Tsawassen, New Westminster, etc.)?
5. Can a subgroup or branch of UBCISA or AMS be established to help this specific issue?
6. **Methods of Research**

Discussions with David Le, a former Residential Advisor at UBC who was also part of the selection process for UBC Housing will help me understand and analyze the selection process of residence at UBC. I will also provide information from interviews and surveys with commuters at UBC, both domestic and international, to understand their experiences with off-campus living. Along with my primary sources, I will be conducting statistical research regarding the demographics of the residents on the UBC Vancouver campus as well as literary research of university campus life through academic journals.

I hope to provide valuable evidence supporting the formation of a student collective. A student-driven operation that helps other students find a basic necessity for their life seems more than essential, especially at a university as multicultural, socially diverse, and financially various as UBC.

1. **Proposed Solution**

Exposing this issue to student bodies such as UBC’s International Student Association and Alma Mater Society can spark a potential policy change from UBC housing. Proposing the formation of a student collective to assist students whom were not offered residence in finding a home is a realistic solution that will benefit commuting UBC students. Group pages on Facebook have already created a community of commuters and have helped a countless amount of people find housing across Vancouver. Creating a student collective within either one of the student unions mentioned above will provide a more hands-on resource for students facing this struggle. A resource with the purpose not only to help students find properties to live in, but also roommates and co-signers interesting in sharing a home and reducing living expenses. A resource like such can be beneficial for students who are currently struggling to find housing off-campus and future students to connect and plan past their scheduled leases on-campus.

1. **Data Section**
2. **The Growing Housing Crisis in Vancouver**

In determining the logistics contributing to the stress of finding housing off UBC campus, there are critical elements that must be considered. The creation of a student run collective will be best suited once we recognize a problem bigger than off campus student housing. The city of Vancouver over the last 15 years has gone through a resurgence in the real estate market. Vancouver has become the epicenter for luxurious properties with landlords being as multicultural as the world can offer. Real-estate prices in the city have followed an upward trend. In the past decade, that trend has increased exponentially, with the price of detached houses rising by 86% between 2005 and 2014, then jumping a further 40% from 2014 to 2016. The same goes with condominium prices as they have followed a similar pattern to a lesser extent (Devlin 2017).

The ongoing housing crisis in Vancouver has influenced many students at UBC to apply for on-campus residency in-order to obtain affordable housing without commuting for long periods of time. With a large student body of over fifty thousand undergraduates and less than nine thousand residency units on UBC campus, a majority of students are forced to find housing off-campus. However, the low likelihood of a student obtaining on-campus housing compounded with the housing crisis in Vancouver makes affordable living slim in a field of expensive options.

1. **Findings**

To better understand the severity and magnitude of the Vancouver housing crisis through the student perspective, survey questions were conducted to ask about UBC students’ current living conditions. Figure 1 demonstrates the commute times from home to their first class from 50 UBC students.

Figure 1: Survey result of the question: “How long is your commute to your first class at UBC?”

The results show that the students surveyed commute relatively long distances with a majority of the respondents saying they commute over an hour to get to their first class. The second most frequent response was a commute of less than 30 minutes, however these student who has a commute time of less than 30 minutes were on-campus residents. Within the sample surveyed, 24% of the respondents commute to UBC for over an hour and a half, and 56% of the respondents commute over an hour to UBC. To put things into perspective, over 56% of the sample surveyed spend at least 2 hours a day solely for traveling to school and back to home.

Housing in Vancouver is far from cheap. But to think that housing in Vancouver is not affordable is hard to believe. Figure 2 demonstrates the surveyed samples’ monthly expenses to cover living cost in their home. The results consist of both on campus and off campus residents. The results from figure 2 show that a majority of students pay upwards of $750 per month on living expenses with the second most frequent response being a monthly estimate of over $1000. Not only are students paying large amounts just to pay for housing, but a majority of these students don’t have a private living space for themselves. Figure 3 demonstrates whether or not a student lives with a roommate or co-tenant. Out of the 50 surveyed students, only 17 students live by theirselves without any co-tenants or roommates to share their living space.

Figure 2: Survey result of the question: “How much do you solely pay monthly on living cost?” (Rent, utilities, supplies, etc)

Figure 3: Survey result of the question: “Do you live with any roommates?”

1. **Conclusion**
2. **Summary and Interpretation of Findings**

This report has found that students at the University of British Columbia struggle to find affordable housing with convenient commute times and ideal living situations in Vancouver. Living situations in areas close to UBC are available but come at a steep price with the Vancouver housing crisis being the prime reason. Although UBC cannot direct reserve housing complexes, apartments, and condominiums exclusively to students outside of UBC campus, but there are many ways around this issue. AMS and UBCIA have the resources to create a collective to make the process of finding off-campus housing less stressful and more accessible for commuting students.

1. **Recommendations**

* Form a non-profit, volunteer, student-operated collective where students can help retrieve affordable housing off-campus without having the need to reserve long travel times to and from UBC campus. AMS and UBCIA can endorse this collective in partnership to help students find affordable nearby housing off UBC campus.

We need to increase the amount of attention towards student and their commute times to class. It is absolutely essential to offer more resources to student when it pertains to housing. UBC has made efforts to deflate the issue by expanding the Vancouver campus with high-rise skyscrapers reserved for student housing, but a cheaper more affordable approach would be to create a student-operated collective to assist student struggling to find affordable, nearby housing outside of UBC campus.

1. **References**

Devlin, J. (2017). Vancouver's housing crisis. Land Journal, , 26.