

Senate 2023

Prepared by: The Student Senate Caucus

In consultation with: The Provost's Office, Graduate Student Society, Alma Mater Society, Equity and Inclusion Office of UBC, Indigenous Committee, Climate Hub, Colour Connected, and the Black Student Union.

Overview

Senate 2023 represents a student-centered vision for the academic priorities of the UBC-Vancouver Senate throughout the next triennium. Essentially, this document before you represents our collective priorities that we've narrowed upon after consulting with various offices and student groups across campus. It is an attempt to capture and articulate what we believe we can improve on as an institution and what are potential steps we can take in order to create that positive impact and progress within our community as a leading university across the country and globe.

We have identified six chief areas, Equity and Accessibility, Student Learning, Support for Graduate Students, Strategic Initiatives, Policy work, and Systemic Improvements, that we believe the Senate should continue to prioritize throughout the triennium. These chief areas have been broken down into specific academic objectives, advocacies, and recommendations along with suggestions as to which committee would be best equipped to consider these suggestions.

As the year 2020 has proven to us, situations and circumstances are rapidly transforming in today's world and naturally, with evolving circumstances, come evolving priorities. Our hope is that this document will exist as a living document where it can be modified and transformed over the next triennium as new student and university priorities arise and previous objectives are refined, redefined, and/or realized. The contents of this document are certainly not absolute or set in stone, rather, through this document, we aim to frame the first of many discussions within the Senate as to how we can improve the academic governance of our institution over the next triennium.

Sincerely,

Eshana Bhangu, Co-Chair, Senator-at-Large

Dante Agosti-Moro, Co-Chair, Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration Senator

Julia Burnham, Senator-at-Large

Max Holmes, Senator-at-Large

Chris Hakim, Senator-at-Large

Cole Evans, Senator-at-Large

Justin Zheng, Faculty of Arts Senator

Alex Gonzalez, Faculty of Applied Sciences Senator

Morgan Lorenz, Faculty of Education Senator

Chalaya Moonias, Faculty of Forestry Senator

Anisha Sandhu, Faculty of Land and Food Systems Senator

Tarique Benbow, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Senator

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1. Equity and Accessibility

1.1: Creation of a Senate Standing Committee on Academic Diversity and Inclusion

Background

The Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Diversity and Inclusion (SACADI) was struck in 2018 in order to:

- *“examine and report back to the UBC Vancouver Senate on the current academic environment and its impact on student and faculty diversity and inclusion;*
- *develop a framework for incorporating considerations of diversity and inclusion into academic decision making;*
- *and where appropriate provide recommendations to changes in Senate policies to better support students and faculty in fulfilling their full academic, professional and personal potential.”*

The final report, which was approved by the Senate in July 2020, had three recommendations:

1. That the Senate adopt the frameworks within the Inclusion Action Plan as they apply to the operations of the Senate.
2. That the Senate create a structure or committee to address academic diversity and inclusion, and continue the work of SACADI.
3. That the Senate and Board of Governors establish a joint committee to consider a statement on UBC’s values of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

This specific proposal for the creation of a standing committee on academic diversity and inclusion was drafted by Julia Burnham and Alex Gonzalez, former Chair and Vice-Chair of SACADI. It was formally circulated to the Nominating Committee in October 2020 for consideration.

Motivation & Potential Action Items

The motivation for this committee comes from the second recommendation of SACADI’s final report: That the Senate create a structure or committee to address academic diversity and inclusion, and continue the work of SACADI.

With regard to how said future structure should take place, it was clear that the 2-year term given to the previous ad hoc committee was too short to fulfill the duties set out in its terms of reference. Limiting a new structure to three years does not guarantee that the problems that the ad hoc committee was struck to address will be adequately or fully amended.

As an institution, UBC is committed to the overarching themes of inclusive excellence, reconciliation and wellbeing. However, the lack of a commitment to these themes at the

highest academic body of the university may call into question UBC's actual priorities. Therefore, we recommend the creation of a standing committee to address the longstanding prevalence of exclusion and non-diverse spaces at UBC.

The future committee should be able to:

1. Provide Senate leadership in building a diverse and inclusive academic environment
2. Assist with the development of policies to uphold the diverse and inclusive environment that we strive for at UBC
3. Provide feedback during unit reviews regarding improvements for fostering diverse and inclusive academic environments
4. Recommend EDI-related training for Senators to attend, such as anti-racism, building inclusive environments, procedural fairness, and others
5. Engage and consult with the EDI focused strategic plans of the University, such as the Inclusion Action Plan and Indigenous Strategic Plan, to ensure the action items related to the Senate are followed through on.

Potential short-term items for the committee to consider include:

- Recommend actionable implementation measures for the sections of the Inclusion Action Plan & Indigenous Strategic Plan as they apply to the Senate
- Recommend tangible ways for the Senate to become a more inclusive body for all members
- Facilitate follow-up on the President's June commitments to anti-racism as they relate to the scope of the Senate

Terms of Reference

Composition

Ten members of the Senate, including 3 student members and at least 2 convocation members, appointed by the Senate upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee.

Quorum: 5 voting members

Terms of reference

- To review the diversity of Senate members and the inclusive nature of the Senate's operations and recommend changes, as needed, in order to foster a Senate that has a high caliber of inclusive excellence;
- To consult thoroughly with committees pursuing all policy and procedure creation and/or improvement in order to provide input on ways to incorporate justice, equity, and inclusion of marginalized groups within said creations and/or improvements;
- To assess the ability of other Senate committees to incorporate inclusive practices in to their operation through regular consultation, as mentioned in the prior point;
- To recommend ways of incorporating inclusive excellence into the functioning of units in the University;

- To recommend alterations to standing committee Terms of References in order to create better frameworks for incorporating justice, equity, and inclusive practices into the functioning of the committees; and
- To liaise with relevant internal and external committees and stakeholders at UBC who are concerned with issues of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion;

Ex Officio Representatives

- Equity and Inclusion Office
- First Nations House of Learning
- Centre for Accessibility
- Enrolment Services

Centre for Teaching, Learning & Technology

1.2: Institutional Racism Audit

Suggested Committee(s): Proposed Senate Standing Committee on Academic Diversity and Inclusion (see proposal 1.1.)

The University has recently made many efforts to spread awareness and create change within the university through anti-racism work such as a broader commitment across campuses to hire more Black, Indigenous, and people of Colour faculty, the creation of positions like Senior Advisor to the President on Race and Inclusive Excellence, the external review of Campus Security and tenor of other organizations such as the RCMP, and more. We believe that in line with these efforts, it's important to take strides in anti-racism work within the Senate as well. We believe that the Senate should conduct an "Equity Audit," a review of all Senate policies from an equity and inclusion lens. There are multiple ways an audit like this could be conducted. An external organization could conduct this review and make recommendations. Or, we believe that this could very well be done through the creation of a permanent standing committee that could review Senate policies in concert with the relevant committees to each policy (perhaps with assistance from the Equity and Inclusion Office) and make recommendations on steps we need to take in order to effectively address issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. As part an institution committed to anti-racism work, we believe it's important that the Senate makes maximum efforts in ameliorating our position as a leading, inclusive, diverse, and actively anti-racist instution recognized across the globe.

1.2 A: Indigenous Self-Identification Process

Within this audit, we would like to make recommendations in regards to retention of and increased support for Indigenous students. During consultation with the Indigenous Committee, we realized that a growing concern amongst Indigenous students is non-Indigenous students misusing the self-identification as verification feature in the admissions procedures. We recognize that this concern arises chiefly from hearing several accounts of non-Indigenous students who've benefited from the support our university aims to provide to Indigenous students and it could be a slight overreaction to get rid of the self-verification process entirely, but we recommend that during this audit, this issue is looked into and more research is done to identify cases

of misuse and based on the results of the review and investigations, consider introducing a new the process that prevents misuse.

1.3: Increased Retention of Indigenous Students

Suggested Committee(s): Admissions

In order to increase the retention of Indigenous students at UBC, the Student Senate Caucus recommends the creation of tangible admissions targets for the recruitment of Indigenous students. It would then be important to communicate with the university that in order to match, if not exceed, our admissions targets, we must make efforts such as increasing awareness around the Langara-UBC transfer program, make better transition efforts to support Indigenous students going from High School to University, with a special focus on rural Indigenous communities. With the university's efforts around reconciliation, we believe it's important to strive for greater representation of students from Indigenous communities across campus and setting a numerical target and coupling that with efforts to help transition these students would be a meaningful step in attaining that goal.

1.4: Inclusive Awards Criteria

Suggested Committee(s): Awards

Inclusive wording of awards:

Certain numbers of awards are gender specific, which does not suggest an inclusive language. In many current wordings, there is ambiguity around whether trans and non-binary students are included in these eligibilities. We also note that clarity in inclusive wording is not a catch-all solution to this problem, as non-binary students are not recognizable in the current student information systems. We recognize that the root of this issue is in the binary registration system of UBC, and that work to undo this, which we strongly support, falls outside of our purview and has been taken up by the appropriate offices. In conjunction with solutions to the binary coding of gender in student information systems, the Student Senate Caucus would also like to encourage that all future awards received for approval avoid gender restrictions, or appeal broadly to people experiencing marginalization from their gender.

Encourage the inclusion of leadership qualities in awards criteria of academic excellence:

Alongside academic excellence, the Student Senate Caucus believes that leadership qualities should be emphasized in the criteria for student awards. Leadership skills and development is a core student value across the University, and scholarship criterias should also encourage and recognize the significance of these skills and contributions in adjudications for awards. The leadership contributions of UBC students is a core tenet of a student's academic experience at the University, and we believe that awards criterias should recognize this in their understanding of academic excellence.

1.5: Building Accessibility

Suggested Committee(s): Academic Building Needs

According to the UBC Wayfinding interface, 49 buildings of 189 buildings across UBC Vancouver campus are deemed inaccessible, with 50 other buildings not described further. This is severely out of line with what we as an institution pride ourselves on: equity and accessibility. While accessibility was not a principle leading the curation of the Vancouver Campus plan, it is nonetheless important to adopt this lens and manifest the sustainable, inclusive and people-forward design philosophy as the standard across the UBC Vancouver campus. It would be inequitable for students to be placed at a disadvantage due to the poor design of buildings and learning spaces, and as such, we are steadfast in our calls for the University to take the necessary steps to ensure spaces across campus are accessible to all faculty, staff, and students.

By constructing a physical space that is more inclusive, this is a move towards combating social stigma and the multidimensional barriers which inhibit UBC community members who identify with a disability from seeking the support they need to succeed and have the best campus experience possible. According to the World Health Organization, the population of individuals with disabilities is projected to continue to rise over the next many years, due to an increase in chronic diseases, climate change, and demographic trends.¹ The external review must revolve from a campus landscape ascribing towards a sustainability lens that also includes accessibility within this definition, holistically moving spaces towards being considered with diverse needs.

We recommend:

1. The external review works with the Centre for Accessibility and Campus and Community Planning on normalizing annual accessibility audits across the UBC Vancouver campus, mandating within principle discipline.
2. That the external review recognizes the need for continued collaboration with Centre for Accessibility and their recommended stakeholders in ensuring building accessibility progression across UBC Vancouver campus.
3. That the external review proposes a stronger collaboration between the Teaching and Learning committee and the Academic Building Needs committee, working together towards a more equitable platform for academic success.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health>

2. Student Learning

2.1: Experiential Learning

Suggested Committee(s): Teaching and Learning, Academic Policy

Based on the AMS 2020 Academic Experience Survey, job-seeking continues to be the most common post-graduation plan amongst both undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, in order to financially support themselves through university, students generally rely on taking on jobs as part of their studies. Thus, it is essential that we prioritize experiential education to prepare our students for success after graduation. The Student Senate Caucus would like to ask for a campus-wide comprehensive review of its co-op programs seeing that the last one conducted at UBC was in 2005. It is essential that we advocate for this review to ensure that faculties are connecting students to meaningful job opportunities to enhance their development. Alongside a specific review of the co-op program, we recognize the importance of prioritizing experiential education as a broader issue. For this, we'd like to refer to a report by Kari Gran and Gillian Gerhard.

In 2018, the CCEL, CSI&C, and CLTL launched a two year project to explore ways that UBCV can enhance experiential education. The findings of this project were captured in “Experiential Education at UBC-Vancouver: Summary of Research and Recommendations”² by Kari Grain and Gillian Gerhard (2020) and the report points to several challenges and recommendations to overcome barriers to experiential education on our campus. Briefly, some of the challenges and recommendations mentioned in the report were (note: these challenges and recommendations are directly from Grain and Gerhard’s report and were made after extensive consultation with students, staff, and faculty.

1. The lack of an institutional vision and shared understanding of Experiential Education at UBCV
 - a. EE is understood and practised in diverse ways across campus with multiple units that hold different forms of experiential education as their primary focus. The report found that there is a need for a shared and clear vision and understanding of our goals as an institution when it comes to experiential learning. For this, a recommendation is to collaboratively develop common principles on experiential and work-integrated education.
2. Struggles with communication and connection
 - a. The breadth of EE and various faculties seems to have resulted in dissatisfaction with the disconnected nature of UBCV’s EE support and resources. There is a lack of clarity about where students, faculty, staff, etc. can find in depth information about experiential learning opportunities and resources. Although there are valuable resources available in a host of diverse offices, there is a lack of a gateway for information around experiential learning in general and in a broad sense. For this, it’s important we focus on

² <http://blogs.ubc.ca/experiential/files/2020/03/EE-Report-and-Recommendations-FINAL-Jan23.pdf>

(amongst other things mentioned in their report) communication and take approaches like exposing students to the opportunities and value of EE early on in their degrees (first year).

3. Ambiguous evaluation and assessment of EE
 - a. Since there is a lack of a shared vision and language on EE, naturally there are difficulties around capturing its impact across campus. The report finds that long-term impacts cannot be captured in short-term assessments. Moreover, another concern for faculty is that integrating EE in their teaching can result in students giving unfavourable teaching evaluations simply because of the complexities and “messiness” that surround EE. It would be valuable to develop a clear framework and vision on what will be evaluated and why. What are the desired outcomes and what are the ways to achieve them?
4. Inequity and exclusion
 - a. EE opportunities can exclude students based on identity markers like socioeconomic status, nationality, visa status, race, religion, physical ability, etc. For faculty, the report found that the labour of experiential education is often gendered, such that women (and often racialized and indigenous scholars) often take on the additional workload of EE. need based funds for students would be helpful in breaking down barriers alongside inviting more workplace partners to be involved in the development of EE at our institution and collect more data on equity in EE.
5. Undervaluing of labour
 - a. Experiential education takes more time than lecture-based pedagogies for everyone involved. For example, the high levels of time and effort that faculty members spend on EE can detract from their ability to achieve promotion and tenure because the labour of EE is not currently recognized in UBCV policies and practices on tenure and promotion. As well, students involved in this project voiced the perception that their additional labour in EE courses and programs rarely gets credited on an official transcript. We recommend that the Senate creates a policy to ensure that EE work is recognized and that the learning is credited on student transcripts. Apart from that, in order to support faculty, they recommend that we reward and incentivize EE through recognition and awards for faculty and provide support like additional TAs to offset the additional workload for faculties.
6. Teaching and learning challenges.
 - a. Participants expressed concerns that students are not adequately prepared for engaging ethically with the community – a problem which can have consequences for host organizations, and UBCV’s reputation. As well, not all faculty feel prepared to teach and evaluate EE-related skills such as professional communication, teamwork, navigating ambiguity, and social justice in contexts where these skills are not part of the traditional course content. For this challenge, Grain and Gerhard recommend we develop supportive measures for faculty such as course development guidelines and clear evaluation rubrics. Developing university wide required courses or

modules that all students must complete (similar to the COVID safety module) if they will be partaking in experiential education courses to learn about ethics and professionalism, teamwork, etc. would be helpful as well.

This is only a brief summation of high level components of the report. The student senate caucus would like to push for this report to be kept in mind during discussions and that the challenges and recommendations from this report are prioritized in improving the experiential learning programs at UBC and while conducting an extensive co-op review.

2.2: Online Learning

Suggested Committee(s): Teaching and Learning

Background

In December 2019, a discussion was brought to the Teaching & Learning committee regarding the status of online learning in our institution. This topic was brought by a member of the Academic Building Needs committee, who felt that an increase in courses or course sections offered online would result in greater student enrollment in courses that typically have large waitlists. This increase would allow students with lower GPAs or those who are minoring in the course subject in question to enroll themselves without jeopardizing their degree length at the hands of a waitlist. There were productive discussions at both, January and February, meetings of the Teaching and Learning Committee, and Dr. Claudia Krebs proposed to strike a working group for this. Unfortunately, due to the rapid move to a virtual setting in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the working group was postponed. We'd like to advocate that this issue remain a priority during and after the pandemic as well.

Part 1 - Continuous Improvement

Prior to September 2020, a team of Faculty and staff, including members of the provost's portfolio and CTLT, created a set of best practices for online learning. After nearly a year of virtual courses being the primary mode of teaching at UBC, nearly all professors will have taught at least one course online. Thus, the upcoming session of Summer 2021 would be the ideal time to receive feedback from both Faculty & students on what has worked best for online learning and what hasn't while taking into account, the course type (lecture, discussion, lab, etc), year level, class size, and other pertinent factors. As long as we continue web-oriented learning due to public health restrictions and keeping safety of students, staff, and faculty of utmost importance, it is pivotal that the Senate (through the Teaching and Learning Committee) remains directly involved in the work to improve practices related to online learning during this period, not only after. This could include (but is not limited to):

- Strong guidelines on exam conditions, especially invigilation
 - Evaluating the softwares and practises that are used for invigilation considering the degree of their invasiveness and inequities they cause between students.
 - Guidelines and policy on camera use requirements

- Providing accessible support and resources for faculty and students across the globe (with clear communications around the accessibility of these resources)
- Guidelines and policy to keep flexibility and compassion as a priority in this mode of teaching

Part 2 - The Future of Online Learning

Before we are in a post-pandemic situation in which the majority of operations of our institution can resume to be carried out in-person, the Teaching and Learning Committee should strike a working group on online learning. We recommend that this working group assess the tremendous amount of experience and data we have access to (in regards to student and faculty experiences) to inform the best practices for future online courses and consider increasing the amount of distance education courses we had been offering prior to the pandemic, the way they are carried out, etc. We also recommend that this working group consider and define poor practices for online teaching (in terms of student and faculty experience), and make recommendations on what modes of courses we should refrain from conducting online again.

Apart from offering more distance education than we did pre-pandemic, we believe it would be worthwhile considering what practises we'd like to continue even after in-person operations resume. A recommendation would be to evaluate methods we could conduct classes in person with an online option per week. For example, classes that meet thrice a week could hold one lecture online with the other two lectures in person. Likewise for courses that meet twice per week; one lecture could be conducted online with the other one held in-person. This could relieve several students who perhaps commute for hours to campus for simply one lecture in a day. Allowing this flexibility for students to tailor their timetables could relieve our institution of a lot of space pressures we face with scheduling, especially with large lecture spaces. With all faculty members essentially having had a crash course in conducting online classes, and after wider consultation with the broader UBC community, we believe that this is a worthwhile idea to pursue.

Lastly, the Student Senate Caucus would like to reiterate the importance of the members of this working group to approach this with an equity lens and recognize the multifaceted barriers in an online environment that have revealed themselves during this pandemic. This would be an essential step in revising and creating a new vision of academic accessibility that could very well reimagine the future of online courses and set new standards for teaching and learning.

2.3: Student Evaluation of Teaching

Suggested Committee(s): Teaching and Learning

The Senate Policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching was approved on May 16th, 2007. With almost 14 years having passed and acknowledging the existing work currently being conducted on Student Evaluations of Teaching, the Student Senate Caucus believes that the policy would greatly improve from a review.

Review of the Policy

This policy has four major goals:

1. To provide data that will be used to continuously improve the student's learning experience.
2. To provide students, departments, faculties and the University with a source of data about the overall quality of teaching.
3. To provide teachers with information on their teaching performance and to assist with the further development of their teaching.
4. To provide the University with data on the quality of teaching to be used for operational purposes, including but not limited to assessment of faculty for merit and/or performance adjustment salary awards, promotion, tenure and institutional recognition.

Certainly, there is no doubt on the value of feedback and information on teaching performance and the rest of the goals of the policy. However, we believe that in addition to this policy already covered, we should amend it to not just focus on summative data for tenure and promotion for faculty, rather introduce some formative measures that can help answer the question: how can we support our faculty to get better at teaching? We'd like to push to reduce reliance on one component and enhance the process perhaps by including more informal opportunities such as self-assessments, peer reviews from fellow faculty members, and mid-course feedback.

2.3 A: Mid-Course Feedback (MCF)

Although the benefits of Mid-Course Feedback (MCF) has been well-documented in the past, its implementation across all faculties has been relatively poor. Currently, only the Sauder School of Business requires its instructors fill out their version of the Mid-Course Feedback, yet in doing so, instructors do not always follow-up on students' concerns. This section will discuss how the University must improve going forward, especially in light of new and unfamiliar learning environments.

Between COVID-19 and regular learning environments, there are many aspects of pedagogy that can be improved. Whether it is shifting weekly quiz deadlines from Wednesday to Friday or asking instructors to turn up the volume on their microphone, these small changes could have major impacts on both instructor and student satisfaction. However, current opportunities for students to voice these recommendations do not occur until the Student Experience of Teaching, which presents three issues: (1) students were forced to endure a full term of correctable challenges; (2) there is little incentive for students to provide feedback as they have already completed the course; and (3) instructors' evaluations could be negatively affected by small issues that marginally reflect their overall quality of teaching. By utilizing Mid-Course Feedback across all courses in good faith, students are incentivized to provide input early in the term as they would likely be able to experience the changes they requested, all of which come *at no real cost to the*

instructor due to the informal nature of the feedback. Therefore, we believe the University should be mandating that all faculty implement Mid-Course Feedback in good faith as a tool for meaningful dialogue.

Data collected as part of a previous UBC-AMS pilot project supports the ideas described above. The 2014-2015 *Survey Results: Impacts of Mid-Course Feedback on Course Experience at UBC* written by the AMS held key insights that were positively in favour of the program. It suggested that MCF “can impact many students’ interest in and engagement with a course” as well as “reduce some students’ course-related stress and anxiety,” both being the case “when instructors use feedback to make immediate improvements to their courses, or to start a dialogue with students which helps them better understand the rationale behind a course’s structure and delivery.”³

The rationale behind University-wide implementation of Mid-Course Feedback is clear, logical, and presents far more advantages than disadvantages. With the previous pilot project having demonstrated strong evidence in support of MCF and the rationale, we hope to see the University taking steps to further the project across all faculties, with the eventual goal of mandating it for all course instructors.

Overall, there are many methods to tackle this issue. The end goal is that our university ends up with a more holistic approach to evaluations of teaching that will make meaningful contributions to ameliorating the quality of teaching and learning with faculty and students supporting each other through the process, and with the committed faculty, staff, and student body we have, we believe there are a lot of potential great approaches to work on the issue.

³ Munro, Daniel, “Survey Results: Impacts of Mid-Course Feedback on Course Experience at UBC.” <http://teaching-eval.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2015/07/Mid-Course-Feedback-2014-Survey-Results.pdf>

3. Support For Graduate Students

3.1: Graduate Certificate Programs

Suggested Committee(s): Curriculum

The University has seen the creation of a number of certificate programs in previous years, with distinct aims and uniquely tailored to the philosophy of the particular Faculty that hosts them. The Student Senate Caucus would like to push for the expansion of educational programs from the University in many forms, particularly those that allow learners who are unable, or unwilling, to enroll in a full-time program, to pursue programs that enhance their skills, or simply satisfies their curiosity or academic interests. These certificate programs have organically developed at the Faculty level in different ways. We believe that it is worthwhile to explore an overarching regulatory framework that clarifies universal goals and requirements for these programs. Furthermore, a number of these programs have the unique opportunity to promote access to Masters level graduate education by articulating the content and educational outcomes of the certificate program with the requirements of the full-time graduate program. Hence, it is also worthwhile to explore housing this particular subset of graduate certificate programs, at least partially, under the jurisdiction of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. This has the potential to make the transition from the certificate level to the masters level as seamless and reduce barriers as to be as low as possible for students.

3.2: Accessibility in Graduate School

Suggested Committee(s): Academic Policy, Research and Scholarship

Accessibility to graduate school is a critical issue with much room for the University to improve upon. The UBC Inclusion Action Plan lists 'Accessibility' as one of the actions under Goal 2, and calls to 'Enhance the accessibility of physical and virtual spaces on UBC campuses for students, staff, and faculty.' We recognize that a significant amount of work has been put into improving accessibility in the context of the classroom experience, and systems have been put in place through the Centre for Accessibility to ensure the needs of students are addressed, while also respecting their privacy. The engagement of graduate students with the University goes far beyond the traditional classroom experience. Particularly, graduate students in the research stream engage in significant amounts of work in a research, laboratory or clinical setting, require travel for field work, and perform many other activities that are necessary for a fulfilling experience as a UBC graduate student. Therefore, it is pivotal to look beyond the classroom to make graduate studies a fully inclusive space for any student or prospective student with additional challenges as a result of disabilities. We recommend that we review the accessibility measures currently offered and expand them to include the unique needs and scope of disabled graduate student researchers, such as understandings and timelines of research productivity and funding while working with a disability. These measures would also be encouraging to prospective students wishing to apply for UBC's graduate programs who identify with a disability. It falls on us to not only

provide these accommodations, but also to communicate them clearly to the wider community.

3.3: Micro-Certificates

Suggested Committee(s): Curriculum

In an era marked by rapid transformations (at times disruptive as we've seen with the pandemic), economies being impacted by changing technology, the current workforce (usually those who have obtained post secondary qualifications already) is being driven to acquire new skills to broaden their career prospects.⁴ In fact, with the increasingly competitive employment opportunities, current learners may also want to acquire extra credentials to complement their existing degrees to be ready to enter into competitive careers upon graduation. And with the digital transformations taking place in leaps and bounds, credentials obtained immediately after secondary school would not be sufficient for career-long work that demands continuous reskilling and learning.⁵

There are substantial barriers for adult learners, but specifically for career learners. Issues like time commitments, inflexible course timings, tuition costs coupled with the cost of reducing time at work, and geographical constraints act as blockades to career learners. For these barriers, full-time certificate programs are not ideal. Thus, apart from advocating for accredited certificate programs for graduate students, we'd like to bring attention to ongoing discussions on introducing offerings that would be short, flexible, accommodating of physical barriers, and have value in the labour market.

Some key features of these offerings would be:

- Modularity: shorter learning activities which could be taken independently and stack coherently into a recognized award, if desired.
- Flexible, convenient, and accessible: preference for online, in-person intensive, or cohort online with realistic pacing that doesn't require learners to "pause" other commitments like work, study, life.
- Competency-based: advancement/awards should be achieved by tangible demonstration/achievement of specific skills to an appropriate level
- Tailored to specific learner goals: whenever possible, learners should be given the opportunity to contextualize their own learning. The opportunity to customize learning to tailor to their specific needs would be valuable and could present in various forms such as assignments/projects that are applicable in the learner's professional/personal contexts.
- Cohort model: UBC should offer this concept designed to foster an engaging peer-learning experience that facilitates sharing unique perspectives and encourages

⁴<https://www.forbes.com/sites/heathermcgowan/2019/09/10/the-workforce-is-calling-higher-education-will-you-answer/>

⁵ Northeastern University's Centre for the Future of Higher Education and Talent Strategy conducted a survey in 2018 and found that "the majority – 64% – of executives felt that the need for continuous lifelong learning will demand more credential attainment from job seekers and higher levels of education in the future." (Source: https://www.northeastern.edu/cfhets/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Educational_Credentials_Come_of_Age_2018.pdf)

networking and connectivity. This can be achieved in-person, online, or in blended formats.

After having explored these themes through internal documents and correspondence with the Provost's office, we support the emergent discussions around a non-certificate policy at UBC-V and believe it's worthwhile to consider offering a new class of non-credit awards that builds on long-established activities in this area across central units like Extended Learning and aligns with the goals of career and professional education activities within these units and the institution more broadly. This could be a start to adopting micro credentialing at a broader level at UBC.⁶ Microcredentials are generally short, non-credit recognition of a coherent sequence of learning activities but are smaller than the 150 hours hours of learning required for a senate approved non-credit certificate and could consist of smaller building blocks than traditional courses.

We'd like to support the Provost's Office in their vision of non-credit "micro-certificates" that would require approximately 75 hours of learning activities, and would comprise elements that could be taken sequentially, independently, or in modularized learning segments. As prospective learners would possess varying degrees of skills/knowledge/experience, criteria for the award of the micro-certificate would be based on demonstration of achievement of clearly defined competencies to a predetermined standard, rather than solely on hours of learning activity. Competencies for the award of the micro-certificate will align with individual module competencies, which may encompass a range of different levels or standards, capability and mastery.

The following guiding principles should apply as we continue these discussions:

- A focus on academic quality, access to UBC excellence, and faculty leadership in governance.
- Informed by data on market need, with attention to potential partnership opportunities.
- Flexible and innovative offerings that are stackable into a micro credential that offers labour market value to learners.

With the provincial government also investing in microcredentials and the growing need for continuous learning and reskilling, there is no doubt that these micro-certificates would add value to our students' development and career prospects. **However, as they are non-credit certificates, we would like to emphasize the importance of making these courses accessible to UBC students in a way that does not raise financial stress for them.**

⁶ We draw a distinction here between microcredentials and 'digital badges' for the purpose of this discussion, though the two are often used interchangeably in the sector. Our working assumption here is that badges exist at a more granular level than our proposed micro-credential. Badges often represent demonstrated achievement of individual skills or competencies, or completion of activities. A microcredential may be 'badged', or have badges associated with elements but we focus on the former here, so as not to get diverted into conversations around badge taxonomies, technology, platforms, interoperability and the like. A microcredential requires a larger scope of coherence between the content and activities that comprise its curriculum; a badge may represent achievement of a smaller component.

3.4: Excellent Graduate Supervision

Suggested Committee(s): Teaching and Learning, Academic Policy

Supervision plays a pivotal role in the quality of education, mental health and success of students within the research stream and has significant influence on and consequences for students' opportunities and success in the long run. Considering the extensive role of graduate students in conducting the research at our university and in light of the fact that the UBC strategic plan aims for research and learning excellence, equity and inclusion, innovation, and collaboration, we believe that Excellent Graduate Supervision needs to remain a priority going forward. At the November 2018 meeting of the Senate, The Principles of Excellent Graduate Supervision, after being reviewed by the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, were brought forward as a Topic of Broad Academic Interest. These principles were then endorsed by the Senate at the January 2019 meeting. Acknowledging the work that's already been and is being done to improve Graduate Supervision, the Student Senate Caucus would like to push that the Senate makes efforts in developing those principles into policies and follow that by focussing on smooth implementation of said policies in order to continue to work on improving Graduate Supervision at our institution.

4. Strategic Initiatives

4.1: Climate Action

Suggested Committee(s): Curriculum, Research and Scholarship

There is no doubt about the importance of climate justice in today's world as President Ono emphasized the importance of taking action through his Declaration on the Climate Emergency, we believe it's important to match efforts within the senate through our academic programs and policies as well. Considering that President Ono became the President of the University Climate Change Coalition, it's worthwhile noting that our efforts at UBC can translate into an impact on institutions across the country and globe. Going forward, we recommend finding new ways to integrate climate justice into our teaching. We recommend reviewing the "[Guide to Curriculum Submissions for UBC Vancouver](#)" (last updated in October 2019) and amending it to encourage departments and faculties to integrate climate awareness into their proposals and curriculum. Seeing that the discourse of climate change is an evolving and vastly interdisciplinary one, we also feel that there is great need for centralized, dedicated, and coordinated support for research in this area at UBC. For this, we recommend the establishment of an academic space dedicated specifically to climate research and that this be coupled with/preceded by increased support for graduate students and faculty who are dedicating their time to conducting research in this field for our university. As a university recognized and acclaimed for innovation and progress, we think that taking substantial measures to support climate action and research is essential for our institution and these measures would be meaningful steps in the right direction.

4.2: Indigenous Strategic Plan

Suggested Committee(s): All

This year, the Indigenous Strategic Plan was published revealing 8 goals and 43 calls to action that UBC is committed to upholding in endorsement of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Indigenous Strategic Plan aims to reconcile with our institution's past failings and aims to make amends to create a strong relationship going forward. This plan exemplifies the continuous, inclusive, and respectful work we strive for. There is no doubt about the significance of the ISP in our institution's efforts and thus, the Student Senate Caucus would like the Senate to endorse all aspects of the plan and following an endorsement, ensure that we dedicate resources and support to ensure a smooth implementation of the plan, which will also be critically important work for the Senate to see through.

5. Policy

5.1: Review of Course Withdrawal and Add/Drop

Suggested Committee(s): Academic Policy

The Student Senate Caucus supports a review of the course withdrawal and add/drop policies of the University. The course withdrawal deadline has already been extended three times due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Term 2 Academic Year 2019/20 and Term 1 and Term 2 Academic Year 2020/21). The Academic Policy Committee previously extended the deadline for course withdrawals for all future years, too, during the academic year scheduling changes. However, the Student Senate Caucus believes the Academic Policy Committee should further review whether we should extend our course withdrawal deadline later into the term and perhaps to the last day of classes. We believe this would be prudent due to the number of Universities that have their withdrawal date on the last days of classes and because the UBC Okanagan Senate will be reviewing their deadlines too. We believe that both the Senates should strive to have similar course withdrawal and add/drop deadlines and this is something that should be kept in mind when reviewing these policies.

Additionally, during this review, we believe the Academic Policy Committee should also consider how other Universities have addressed financial inequities around course withdrawal deadlines. Due to our current course withdrawal refund system, students who have the financial means to absorb the cost of receiving no money back after withdrawing from a course later in the term receive an advantage over those who cannot afford such a decision. Finally, some Universities have implemented a system whereby students are allowed a limited amount of “free drops” where they can drop a course after the add/drop deadline and not have it indicated on their transcript as a withdrawal. We’d also be interested in the Academic Policy Committee exploring a similar idea for UBC and, if possible, allowing students to receive a full refund for these “free drops” and discovering ways to set up a more equitable refund system for all course withdrawals.

5.2: The Cost of Learning and Assessment Materials

Suggested Committee(s): Teaching and Learning, Academic Policy

The pandemic has drastically increased usage of digital learning materials in courses taught at our University, and with many students under a financial strain already, we support the immediate adoption of a policy that builds off the [Okanagan Senate Policy 131 on Digital Assessment Tools](#). We firmly believe that any tools used to assess students in a classroom should be considered part of tuition. And we would argue that the current practice of making students buy assessment materials, digital and non-digital, on top of paying for tuition violates the intentions of the BC law that limits domestic tuition increases to two percent annually. Additionally, UBC has increased its usage of Digital Assessment Tools bundled with textbooks that can add high additional costs to their degree during COVID-19. These Tools may add some pedagogical benefits to courses. Still, it is essential to note that these benefits come at a financial cost that often makes them inaccessible to all students and adds to stress faced by students that are already struggling financially. We ought to be trying to

make education more affordable and accessible to all, and the current practice of unregulated Assessment Tools acts counter to those principles.

If the Vancouver Senate were to adopt its own Digital Assessment Tools Policy, we believe the policy should include the following:

- Any course using a paid Digital Assessment Tool has to offer a free and easily accessible alternative to all students.
- A limit on the cost of Digital Assessment Tools with a total of no more than \$20 per credit (\$60 limit for a three-credit course).
- Digital Assessment Tools may not be used for more than 15% of students final academic standing in a course.
- Digital Assessment Tools must always be available unbundled from textbooks so students may be allowed to buy them separately.
- Digital Assessment Tools may not circumvent any of these restrictions by being used as an extra-credit offering in a course.

While this is the immediate step we recommend, the Student Senate Caucus would also like to push for creating **a policy around the accessibility of all learning materials and educational resources** as a part of the University's progression towards adopting more Open Educational Resources. We would like to emphasize the importance and need for a broad policy that doesn't just address Digital Assessment Tools but also addresses the cost of other learning materials. This policy would ensure that efforts are made for Textbooks to be available online and at a significantly lower, if not no, cost and that Students are supported with accessible educational resources such as recorded lectures, open learning modules, low/no-cost learning materials, and other ancillary resources. Textbooks and other learning materials make up a significant portion of student expenses, and the cost of these materials should be restricted. The Senate has endorsed the principles on the cost of digital learning materials previously, we believe it is now time to take action. Suppose we fail to take action on this policy. In that case, multiple student groups have already been advocating for the Provincial Government to legislate on this issue due to Universities' inaction to address these affordability and accessibility problems. Our caucus believes that UBC, an institution with several faculty members committed to increasing accessibility to educational resources, has the opportunity to lead on this issue and set a new standard for institutions across the province and country and the Student Senate Caucus would like our university to be the leading force on this issue.

5.3: Academic Policy Outlining Guidelines for Children in the Classroom

Suggested Committee(s): Academic Policy

Childcare and caregiving responsibilities remain a significant barrier to participation and success within academia. While many professors have already opted to include declarations in their syllabi in support of students who have no option but to bring their young children with them to class, we believe that UBC should follow suit with other institutions (University

of Colorado Boulder⁷, McGill University⁸) and create a clear policy that expressly outlines its academic support to students with dependents. Certain aspects of pregnancy or caregiving conflicts would naturally fall under the existing Academic Concessions Policy, but it does not cover instances where a young child may be brought to class alongside their parent. A policy statement that recognizes that while these situations are not ideal for neither the child nor the parent, this is an acceptable course of action that clearly supports students with emergency caregiving needs and removes any potential discrimination or hardship enforced at an individual level by a faculty member. This policy can also identify necessary and reasonable exceptions to this, like unsafe lab environments or field training.

5.4: In-Term Examination Hardships

Suggested Committee(s): Academic Policy

While Hardships for *Formal Examinations* are covered under Senate policy J-102: *Examination Hardships and Clashes*, which provides an enforceable option for students to seek accommodations, these accommodations are restricted to examinations scheduled by Enrolment Services only. Currently, there are no Senate policies that cover the topic of examination hardships with respect to in-term examinations (defined as any major examination held during class-time or scheduled outside of class-time, during the Summer or Winter Sessions). As the scheduling of in-term examinations and the options for alternatives (eg. redistributing weight, make-up exam, etc.) are left to the discretion of the course instructor, students are left with limited options for avoiding multiple exams within a 24-hour period. Aside from communicating difficulties directly to the instructor in hopes of academic leniency, at this time, it is unclear to students whether alternative methods exist to mitigate/troubleshoot this issue. Furthermore, it is important to note that many courses are structured such that there are only two or three assessments used to determine a student's final grade. For instance, instructors may choose to weigh students' grades at a 50/50 or 40/60 midterm-to-final examination ratio. In such cases, there is marginal distinction between mid-term and final assessments, given that the value of the exam results possess equal or similar impacts on a student's final grade. In other cases, instructors may opt for a more distributed weighting system, placing only 20% or 30% of a student's final grade on the final exam. In this situation, we see that a final exam may be weighted less than a mid-term exam in another course.

Thus, the Student Senate Caucus would like to propose that either policy J-102 is revised or a new policy is introduced in order to mitigate *Examination Hardships*⁹ for in-term examinations that are scheduled outside of the *Formal Examination Periods* and to bring our examination policies closer to Goal 9 of the *UBC Strategic Plan*: "Achieve agility in academic support and administration through thoughtful systemic change and simplification."

⁷ <https://www.colorado.edu/policies/guidelines-children-workplace-or-classroom>

⁸ https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/files/students.srr/guidelines_for_the_academic_accommodation_of_pregnant_students_and_students_caring_for_dependants.pdf

⁹ *Examination Hardships* is defined by Policy J-102 as "the occurrence of an *examination candidate* being faced with three (3) or more *formal examinations* being scheduled within a 24 hour period"

6. Systemic Improvements

6.1: Term Limits for Senators

Suggested Committee(s): Nominating

During the last triennial review, the Senate adopted 6-year term limits for committee chairs. While there are currently no term limits for the rest of the Senate, the Student Senate Caucus believes it is an important topic that needs further review. There are positive aspects of having Senator continuity as it ensures there are members with valuable institutional knowledge, but it also dramatically reduces the possibility of fresh perspectives. Additionally, there is a tendency in the Senate to keep running for reelection and hold seats for decades, which may act to prevent new candidates from running for the Senate. Therefore, the introduction of term limits, like the Board of Governors, could create a needed balance within the Senate. We'd ask that the Senate's External Review explore the possibility of term limits for all senators and answer whether or not this would benefit UBC academic governance.

6.2: Senate Transparency and Accountability

Suggested Committee(s): Nominating

The Senate has significant room for improvement regarding transparency and accountability to the larger UBC academic community. For example, during the last Triennial Review, all the Nominating Committee's discussions and deliberations were held in-camera despite protests from student members. We received assurances that the Nominating Committee would respond with reasons why the committee denied half of our recommendations during the Triennial Review, but we have still not received any reasons or response. This is just one example where if someone is not a member of a specific committee, it is challenging to engage with that committee's work or understand their decisions. The best way to address these issues is to create more transparency in the Senate.

To start, we can begin to open up most of our committee meetings to the public and other senators. Piloting the idea of opening up our committee meetings to the public would be much more comfortable in an online environment, too, since Zoom doesn't limit the number of people in a room for a committee meeting. Additionally, committees keeping minutes that capture decision making and detail the deliberations of committees would improve transparency. For example, there is no apparent reason why our committee minutes are far less detailed than the minutes we keep for the full Senate meetings. Finally, as was called for during the Triennial Review, we must prioritize creating clear and limited criteria for what items should be discussed and deliberated on in camera during committee and full senate meetings.

To improve accountability in the Senate, we ought to exercise more of our oversight role within the University. The Senate has failed to set meaningful metrics and annual goals for the University Strategic Plan. During the Strategic Plan's annual implementation presentation, the Senate exercises no formal oversight mechanism beyond questions and comments to the Provost and President. It is not the Provost or President's role to create these oversight

mechanisms but rather the Senate, which has so far failed to develop any meaningful oversight process. This lack of organized oversight mechanisms for the Senate should be a priority during the Senate's External Review, but that doesn't mean we should wait to address this issue.

6.3: Complaint Process for Students in Health Programs

Suggested Committee(s): Academic Policy, Student Appeals on Academic Discipline, Appeals on Academic Standing

Students in health programs may face a range of concerns they'd like to raise, from racism and fairness to academic complaints. There have been accounts of students witnessing racist remarks from instructors or power abuse during practicums. While anti-harrassment and discrimination protocols exist within these programs, there is often an unspoken reliance on students to debate the importance of their concerns during the reporting process. Historically, the focus surrounds how a student may have provoked a situation, and that the difficulty of recruiting instructors with industry expertise excuses inaction.

Without comprehensive protocols as to how student complaints will be handled, students expressing more complex concerns are often left without answers. In the past, students have been referred to external bodies i.e OMBUDS, but are ultimately referred back to their faculty for the issue to be dealt with internally by either student services or program coordinators. Internally, it is difficult for these complaints to be dealt with in an impartial manner as these positions still report to faculty. Oftentimes, the existing power dynamic between students and the faculty can be discouraging for students when they want to freely voice their concerns. Moreover, bringing up concerns can be intimidating as students interact with instructors and faculty long after graduation at industry events and fear that reporting an incident may compromise their employment prospects in the future. Despite the efforts to ensure confidentiality, the tight knit nature of some programs present challenges in truly protecting students during conflicts with their instructors/faculty members. These issues are amplified by an arbitrary grading metric of student professionalism. A failing professionalism grade is grounds for failing the academic year.

At present, the Faculty of Medicine (FoM) has taken steps to minimize conflicts of interests in the reporting process with a separate Professionalism Office responsible for dealing with reports and record keeping. It would be a step in the right direction to mandate the extension of this model to other health programs such as Dentistry and Pharmacy. Furthermore, we recommend the development of comprehensive and mandatory guidelines for faculties in order to protect and offer the best possible support for students during the reporting process. It is not enough to state that retaliation against a student is unacceptable and subject to disciplinary action. What students need is the development of processes that increase the oversight of the management of student complaints, and guarantee protection from retaliation.

6.4: Appeals Reform

Suggested Committee(s): Student Appeals on Academic Discipline, Appeals on Academic Standing

Recommendation #1: Training for Committee Members

All committee members should complete proper training before adjudicating an appeal. Every committee member should receive the same baseline training in order to establish a consistent understanding of their adjudicative responsibilities. It is difficult to speak up on a matter when you do not feel like you understand the environment and language being used; this can result in less student member participation when there is not proper training.

A. General Training

While more comprehensive training may be offered at the beginning of a triennium when there is a change to general committee membership, students on the committee, or those who join part way through a triennium receive very little to no training for appeals committee work. The orientation is limited to an explanation of the appeals process, as well as the grounds of appeal and standards of review. This depth of training is not sufficient or appropriate for the seriousness of the appeals coming through the Senate committees.

We recommend:

1. The establishment of a comprehensive training module, to be determined by the Committee, in consultation with the Senate secretariat, for all individuals who sit on the appeals committees which includes not only an overview of the appeals processes, but also helps Senators understand their adjudicative responsibilities. A variety of topics should be covered, including but not limited to:
 - (a) When should a conflict of interest be declared?
 - (b) What types of questions are appropriate to ask?
 - (c) What is the obligation of confidentiality?
 - (d) How does deliberation occur?

B. Procedural Fairness and Anti-Bias Training

Fairness in appeals should concern two fundamental concepts: (1) procedural fairness; (2) equity and inclusion. In addition to more general training, any senators who are adjudicating appeals should receive procedural fairness and anti-bias training before they are eligible to hear an appeal.

We recommend:

1. The establishment of a comprehensive and mandatory education module on procedural fairness and bias in decision-making that has substantive content consistent with UBC's commitments to diversity and inclusion, privacy, trauma-informed approaches and inter-cultural understanding to be completed by every new member of the appeals committees.

C. Discipline Committee - Sexual Assault Subject Matter Awareness Training

The Academic Discipline Appeals Committees handles not only appeals of academic discipline, but also discipline imposed under UBC's sexual misconduct policy (Policy SC17). There is currently no specific training for appeals that arise out of Policy SC17, despite the fact that the appeals arising out of that policy are quite different from normal academic discipline and have the potential to have long-lasting mental effects on not only those hearing appeals, but also the appellants, respondents, and survivors themselves.

We recommend:

1. The establishment of a specific training module from a provider experienced in the delivery of training regarding sexual assault subject matter awareness that is to be completed by every new member of the appeals committees that intend to sit on Policy SC17 appeals.

Recommendation #2: Support for Committee Members

Since the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee began handling appeals of Policy SC17 (formerly Policy 131) decisions, there has been a lack of support and processes in place for committee members who sit on these appeals.

We recommend

1. That processes be put in place to make it clear members of the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee should not feel obligated to attend Policy SC17 hearings if they are uncomfortable with the subject matter
2. That support structures be put in place for committee members if they need to receive support following attending a Policy SC17 hearing.

Recommendation #3: Scheduling

The appeals committees have consistently struggled with scheduling appeals in a timely fashion. With so many committee members, all with varying schedules, the task of scheduling is no doubt difficult; however, this issue of scheduling could be remedied with the use of a hold time for hearings.

We recommend:

1. That each appeals committee (not including Admissions Committee which already has designed meetings times) sets a "hold time" on a regular basis (at whatever interval the Chairs feel necessary) to be used when appeals need to be scheduled.

Recommendation #4: Annual Committee Meetings

Currently both the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee and the Academic Standings Appeals Committee have no regularly scheduled meetings. This means that the only time committee members have the chance to meet is when an appeal is scheduled -- and even then only a portion of the committee will generally be present. This does not allow for

opportunities for committee members to discuss systemic and recurring issues, or to review procedures and make recommendations. While some committee chairs have taken it upon themselves to schedule meetings of the whole committee as needed to discuss these kinds of issues, regularly scheduled meetings would ensure that these opportunities to improve the committee's work are more frequent and predictable.

We recommend

1. That both appeals committees that do not already meet on a regularly scheduled basis establish annual meetings to discuss systemic issues and to review procedures and make recommendations as necessary.

Recommendation #5: Establishment of a Joint Working Group

To facilitate the work of the external review and the implementation of these recommendations, we recommend that a joint working group be established at the beginning of the Senate's new triennium. This group would consist of members of all the Senate committees that deal with appeals (Academic Discipline, Academic Standing, and Admissions) as well as, ideally, members of the UBC community that have relevant knowledge of the appeals process that the Working Group deem as beneficial. The committee would be tasked with developing the terms of reference regarding changes to the appeals committees for the external review, working with those conducting the external review to gather information relevant to the review process, and implementing the recommendations resulting from the external review.

We recommend

1. That a joint working group consisting of members of each of the appeals committees and other relevant members of the university community (at the working group's discretion) be formed at the beginning of the new triennium.

Recommendation #6: Accessibility

In both the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 Annual Report of the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee, the Chair noted instances where appellants expressed that they had difficulties presenting their cases, at the investigatory and PACSD stages, due to language issues. While the committee ultimately did not decide that the processes were rendered unfair, nor did there appear to be accessibility issues at the Senate level, Senate should be taking proactive steps to ensure that no appellant is unable to fully present their case because of language accessibility issues.

The Senate has, in the past, committed to accessibility within its committees. The 2014 report from the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Student Mental Health and Wellbeing specifically states, that "accessibility is achieved through ensuring that information is equally easy to find for all interested parties." We believe that it is vitally important that the Senate appeals committees adhere to the considerations outlined in this report, and strive for greater accessibility throughout all parts of the appeals process.

We recommend:

1. That the external review explores how the Senate can develop internal protocols to ensure that language accessibility concerns can be proactively addressed. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - a) Asking the appellant in the first available point of contact if they would like an interpreter for another spoken language or ASL
 - b) Asking the appellant in the first available point of contact if they would like an interpreter for written documents (e.g. someone to transpose documents to their second language)
 - c) Providing a link on the Senate website to resources for language accessibility which is given to the appellant when they are notified of the decision of the President and their right to appeal.

In addition to language accessibility issues, care should also be taken to ensure accessibility as it relates to parties with disabilities and accessibility concerns more generally.

We recommend:

1. That the external review explores how the Senate can develop internal protocols, working with the Centre for Accessibility and the Equity and Inclusion Office when necessary, to ensure that any parties with accessibility concerns can receive appropriate accommodations.
2. That the external review recommends to hold an informative, educative session for all members of the Senate to discuss accessibility, ableism, and its persistent presence within the university setting. It is important to provide all members of the Senate with such discussion to generate a foundational collaboration that encourages a push towards inclusion and equity for all UBC community members.

Recommendation #7: Timeliness of the Appeals Process

Timeliness is one of the cornerstones of procedural fairness, and all appellants have the right to have their appeals heard and decided upon in a timely manner. It is important to note that while the lengthiness of the appeals process has minimal impact on the university, there is a great impact to appellants in many aspects, the greatest of which is the appellant's right to prompt closure. Furthermore, this impact is particularly evident in cases of Academic Standing, where rulings may have great effect on registration or graduation, or in cases of Academic Discipline, where delayed decisions bar an appellant from pursuing external appeals.

A. Pre-hearing time limits and policies surrounding deadlines

The procedures of all the appeals committees are laid out in detail, with specific time limits that all parties must follow in different stages of the appeals process prior to the hearing. This is in-line with the principle of procedural fairness, however, the procedures of the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee do stipulate that "time limits may be varied at the discretion of the Registrar." This is problematic, mainly due to the fact that the Registrar (an officer of the university) has the unilateral ability to delay the appeals process, in which the university is a

party, for an indefinite amount of time. The 2019/2020 Annual Report of the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee detailed a case in which a “hearing date was not set in accordance with Disciplinary Appeal Procedure[s]”, which the appellant argued rendered the process unfair. It was not noted that the appellant was given notice that the procedures were being revised for the scheduling of the hearing. While the committee did not come to the conclusion that the changes to the timeline rendered the appeal process unfair, it does point to a large gap in the procedural fairness of the committee’s procedures.

In the Academic Standing Discipline Committee policy, the Registrar is also given the power to extend the pre-hearing time limits “at the request of the appellant or the Faculty” or of their own volition. The Committee only gets involved as it relates to time limits if the Registrar refuses a request from one of the parties, and that party appeals the Registrar’s decision to the Committee.

We recommend:

1. That the external review explore giving the power to change the time limits in the procedures for an appeal be given to the committee, with the advice of the Governance Officer responsible for the matter, rather than the Registrar. This can be approved by a simple majority vote of the committee, either in person or through electronic means approved by the Chair
2. Additionally, that the external review explores the idea that a provision is included in the rule stipulating that both the appellant and the respondent be notified in writing immediately that the time limits have been varied for their appeal.
3. Additionally, that the external review explore whether the existing timelines for appeals procedures are appropriate or whether they need to be varied

B. Delivery of Decision and Reasons:

Currently, there are limited regulations setting deadlines for the chairs of the appeals committees to deliver to the appellant the decision and written reasons for the decision of the appeal. The Academic Discipline Appeals Committee is required to “give written reasons for its decision, normally within 14 days of the decision.” The Academic Standing Appeals Committee is required to “communicate in writing [the decision] to the appellant and to the Dean of the Faculty within 10 days of the final hearing of the appeal” and “give reasons for its decision; and in the case of a minority vote, the minority may if it wishes give reasons for its dissent”, though a specific timeline for delivery of reasons is not provided for. While in practice, the decision of an appeal is usually communicated to the appellant within 10 days of the hearing, in most cases the written reasons are not delivered for many weeks, due to the lack of formal deadlines in the procedures of both committees.

There has been one case highlighted by the Office of the Ombudsperson where the reasons for the decision were not delivered until over six months after the date of the hearing. The lengthy delay in providing an appellant with the reasons for a decision of an appeal may

prevent them from pursuing further appeals opportunities, or at the very least receive closure of their case. The denial of further appeals is both unfair and inequitable.

We recommend:

1. That the external review explores the committees' procedures regarding a time limit for the Chair to deliver to the appellant the written reasons for the committee's decision. We suggest a timeline of no more than 60 days would be appropriate.

Recommendation #8: Committee Membership

Diversity:

It is an evident and clear principle that diverse bodies make better decisions. The Senate appeals committees are faced with many cases each year, each one presenting a different set of circumstances with appellants from diverse backgrounds facing varied situations. For each appeals committee to properly carry out its mandate, it would follow that each committee should have an equally diverse membership that reflects the diversity of the University. The member composition of the appeals committees are determined by the Senate Nominating Committee.

We recommend:

1. That the external review explores how best to ensure diverse voices on the panels that hear appeals. This includes, but is not limited to considerations of: age diversity, gender diversity, race and ethnic diversity, native language diversity, and faculty diversity.

Recommendation #9: Resources for Appellants

In both the 2018/2019 and 2016/2017 Annual Report of the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee, the Chair noted that several appellants were under the mistaken impression that the Senate hearing was an outlet for their case to be heard anew. The 2016/2017 Annual Report of the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee further notes that some appellants expressed confusion about the grounds of appeal and the applicable standards of review. This speaks to the extent to which students are confused by the appeals processes.

We recommend:

1. That the external review explores how the Senate can provide clear guidelines for appellants on grounds of appeal, appeal process, legal services available, mental health and well-being services are made easily available.

Recommendation #10: Secretariat Resourcing

In the 2018/2019 Annual Report of the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee, the Chair noted that the Academic Discipline Appeals Committee had experienced a "significant increase in its workload", especially with the additional complexity of Policy SC17 appeals. In addition, the 2016/2017 Annual Report of the Admissions Committee notes a large increase in the number of admissions appeals from 49 in 2013/2014 to 160 in 2016/2017. The Nominating Committee noted that concerns over Senate Secretariat staff levels were received during the triennial review process, but that recommendations about staffing in the

Secretariat were beyond the scope of the triennial review. We hope that this letter provides another example of the importance of reviewing and adjusting staff levels as needed in the Senate Secretariat so that this might be addressed as part of the external review.