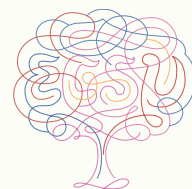


SUBMISSION TO THE BC FUNDING REVIEW

EMILY CARR STUDENTS' UNION
July 2022



EMILY CARR
STUDENTS' UNION
BC FEDERATION OF
STUDENTS LOCAL 10

'What are the problems around climate change, sustainability, inequality or gender parity that we want to solve? How do we get all sectors from transportation to construction to technology and natural resources to collaborate to solve the problems of our time?'

-Dr. Mazzucato, 2021

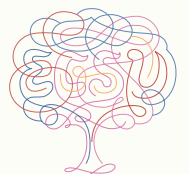
As the Students' Union, representing the approximately 2000 undergraduate and graduate students at the University, we appreciate the opportunity to engage in this Funding Review process. We have been calling for an adjustment to BC's funding rationale for decades to best support a post-secondary environment of potential and thrivance instead of one of scarcity.

Our experience is grounded in the daily student life and experience at Emily Carr University where the current funding formula has held the University back from meeting its full potential. Even under the current strain, our community continues to excel in unprecedented ways.

Emily Carr University plays a special role as the only public art and design university with a special mandate to serve the entire province. We hope this review helps to clarify the concepts of unity and distinction: that our province can have both a unified, equitable and comprehensive vision for our sector, while also clearly articulating the unique needs of some of the province's assets such as our institution.

With adequate investments, we can be the province's buzzing hub of cultural development, art scene, community engagement, decolonization, and design innovation. We are the training ground for future leaders and strategic thinkers in BC's growing creative economy. Yet those investments are lacking and instead students feel a sense of abandonment. We experience inadequate access to mental health and accessibility supports, University faculty and staff who are struggling under unmanageable workloads and don't have the time to fully support and invest in the learning environment.

The University lacks resources that can be meaningfully dedicated to justice, anti-racism and EDI work – yet we have the capacity to be leaders in this area. Students experience annual cycles of contentious, community-dividing tuition fee increases that disproportionately affect International students, who already face high barriers to post-secondary education in BC.



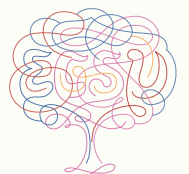
Our community is fractured and divided when domestic tuition fees are capped by 2% increases, while International tuition fees increases are unregulated. This year for example, International student tuition fees increased by 6%. A 6% increase might seem like a low amount for someone with a liveable wage – but for students who barely have time to work for minimum wage, it is a poverty sentence of spiraling food insecurity and housing precariousness. Unfortunately, this pulls students away from the focus and investment they are making into their art, design and media education.

In 2013, Bill Bennett launched a Creative Futures strategy that included an investment in the Emily Carr campus as a pillar of his vision, stating that “this is an investment in our future, given the link between creative thinking and successful economies” (BC Gov News, 2013). With the first phase executed – there is now an unfortunate and chronic gap in operational funding to fully realize this vision.

Emily Carr University is the province’s hub for the creative sector, for leadership in creative technology and media, entrepreneurship, and cultural development. Our institution is an incubator; a laboratory for creative thinking. For instance, through the month of June, students organized a practice based exhibition in the University’s main gallery centered around sustainability. During this time, students experimented with material practices, thinking through decolonization for engagement and consultation, while also connecting with Indigenous artists from around the world who had gathered for the nine day artists’ conference: Meymey’em.

The province has laid out a vision for growth in Stronger BC for Everyone that identifies the pillars of Inclusive Growth and Clean Growth (Government of British Columbia, 2022, p. 6). The operations of our University align with the province’s economic direction and provide the collaborative environment to generate this activity.

A strong economic development approach can identify when there is a potential such as Emily Carr University and nurture and optimize that potential through investment. However, environments that foster innovation are sensitive and the conditions can greatly influence and hinder the outcomes. Students are able to learn when they can focus on their projects. Instead, the campus environment is filled with eroding trust in their investment in post-secondary education with a feeling of despair and desperation about the continually mentioned budget problem.



The province identifies a skills and talent shortage (2022, p. 20) and goes on to outline, “through the StrongerBC Economic Plan, our government is fostering innovation across the economy by supporting talent development, tech adoption, scale-up of small businesses, and collaboration between the innovation ecosystem and other sectors of the economy” (p. 28). While still on a small scale, the creative thinkers that get started at the University are the future leaders of BC’s diversified economy who contribute to the social and cultural fabric of the province.

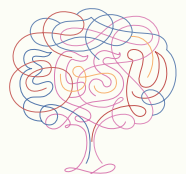
What’s Holding Us Back? - Beyond a Teaching University:

One of the key issues within the funding realities of Emily Carr University has been its inclusion in the Teaching University designation. The funding identified for this category of institutions has kept us within the “have-nots” of the post-secondary sector.

This chronic deficit has impacted the capacity of faculty to fully invest in the learning environment, maintain an active practice, and continue to develop external connections to the professional world and industry partners. Addressing the funding shortfall offers an exceptional opportunity to provide faculty with the extra time that they need to build connections and networks throughout the province. This is the untapped resource that speaks to adjustments within the system that can enhance the University’s contributions to the economic, social, and environmental health of BC.

Funding Core Services with Precarious Funding

We encourage your review to also look at how institutions are being asked to meet core services such as mental health supports with one time, non-recurring funding. Institutions cannot build critical student safety nets with such funding uncertainty. One-time funding opportunities need to be built into operating grants.



A Continued Commitment to Affordability

The additional benefit of the Emily Carr University education is that it has historically been one of the more affordable options within the Canadian context. This is a benefit that demands protection. Affordability at the front end of entering post-secondary ensures that the financial barriers which might exist to keep the most talented students from pursuing their potential are lessened. The development of talent to meet BC's shortage relies on attracting the brightest students – not the wealthiest.

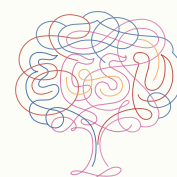
Global events have also proven that subsidizing a system through International students is high-risk and unstable. Many International students are future British Columbians. International students bring incredible value to our campus and our province. However, our system exploits them for revenue to balance the University's budget and from year to year, International students have no idea what percentage increase we will face for tuition fees. The post-secondary funding system needs a commitment to justice and equity to provide a dignified environment for which international students can begin their studies in BC.

Moving Forward

Now is an excellent time to revisit the vision of a comprehensive BC post-secondary system set out in the MacDonald report and re-tool the system to our contemporary environment. There is an opportunity to take advantage of the areas and institutions that can excel when provided with the adequate funding they need.

The future of our province needs to stay connected to its humanity. We can accomplish this through strengthening the foundations of the province's key public Art, Design, and Media institution to continue advancing the social and cultural realm, advancing climate justice, and enabling the application of a design mindset to continue to drive new ideas and solutions. This is what is required to contribute to the province's vision of: “[L]eading on Environmental and Social Responsibility: Helping develop, promote, and market environmentally and socially responsible goods and services (2022, p. 9).

Every year, thousands of British Columbians tour through the annual Graduation Exhibit and experience the excitement of new ideas, opportunity and hope for solving some of society's most pressing problems through creative thinking and collaboration.



The future of our province will be sustained by the collective strength of students' vision, design, entrepreneurship and talent. Meeting the structural budget deficit by re-investing in BC's creativity is an investment in many success stories to come.

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