

Assessing Contexts of International Students

The Tuition Protection Panel held last month, co-organized by the GSS and CUPE 2278, highlights the issue of the higher vulnerability of international students to any increase in tuition fees. The additional financial costs of being an international student and the exceptionally high costs of living in Vancouver contribute to international student concern at UBC. Since 27% of graduate students are international students and they make up a significant percentage of the TA population on campus, TA salaries are depended upon by many international students to afford basic living expenses. This statistic also identifies the important labour and integrity they lend to the UBC system.

The University of Toronto, comparable to UBC as a world class university, has taken necessary precautions to bridge this gap between International and Domestic Students. By giving the Union an annual fund to assist international students in recognition of the additional financial challenges faced by this group, the University of Toronto is taking a strong stance for its workers by acknowledging their working conditions and contexts. This University of Toronto fund, just one of the many strong aspects of their collective contract, helps offset out-of-pocket health expenses for international Students and their families. UBC currently has no such fund to assist International Students.

CUPE 2278 was recently in contact with the International Student Association who shared their comments over the tuition increase: "The International Students Association applauds the decision to implement a 2% tuition cap until 2014/2015. We believe it will provide many international students with financial security throughout their degree. However, we encourage that an agreement be made so that during the following years students will not experience a retroactive increase in tuition fees.

Keep your eye out for a health rebate cheque in your department mailboxes. The \$110 per year is intended to offset a fraction of the cost of health care coverage. U of Toronto TAs receive \$800 per year coverage for healthcare.

Ideally, this guarantee will be continued in upcoming years."

An article appearing in a January 26th *Globe and Mail* video stresses the critical role international students play on this campus. UBC president Stephen Toope explained that new approaches and thinking about the backgrounds and situations of this group, who are often also TAs at the grad level, is required. Considering the significant role they play in the workforce on campus, President Toope's message seems like a step in the right direction.

It is important to remember that all prospective and current International Students know that their "global" ties are imbued in "local" living conditions. International students depend on their TA salaries to afford these local conditions and support for the costs of working on campus requires strong support from the University.

www.cupe2278.ca

cupe2278@interchange.ubc.ca

Become a Facebook fan of CUPE 2278

Phone: 604-224-2118

#218 – 2150 Western Parkway

Vancouver, BC, V6T 1V6

