

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Martha Piper
President and Vice-Chancellor
Dr. Lorne Whitehead
Vice-President Academic and Provost

The University of British Columbia
6328 Memorial Road
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

Dear Drs. Piper and Whitehead,

I need your help. UBC is about to increase my salary, and I want the money to go to graduate students instead.

Not long ago, I received an attractive external offer and considered leaving UBC. The position was of the “big fish in a small pond” variety (an endowed full Professorship at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte), but I seriously considered it. Colleagues, mentors, friends, and students at UBC responded quickly, and I am especially grateful to Michael J. Bovis, Head of Geography, and Dean Nancy Gallini for their leadership and support. They worked hard to craft an offer that would help me strengthen my contributions to the important missions of Geography and the interdisciplinary Urban Studies Program at UBC. Ultimately, I decided to stay and to devote all of my professional energies to this fine institution.

But one part of the UBC offer remains problematic. I was offered an increase of \$10,000 in my annual base salary. I responded with a simple question: can we take that money and create a budget line so that I can give it to graduate students instead? Personal financial gain is the least of my concerns in deciding whether to stay at UBC, and having a separate budget line will give me some small insulation against the failures of equity, integrity, and consistency in funding decisions by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

I am told that this cannot be done. Dean Gallini and Associate Dean Darrin Lehman have worked hard to find a way, but apparently their hands are tied. I am told that the money comes

from a special allocation of retention funds from the Collective Agreement, and that it cannot be redirected to students. I am told that my only option is to apply annually for permission for a salary-as-research grant, with no guarantee of approval, and which would require that I establish tax accounting and remittance procedures for graduate student payment of the kind required by a business employer.

That's why I'm writing to you. This should be simple. I respectfully ask that you a) leave my base salary as it is, and b) create a separate budget line of \$10,000 annually, indexed to inflation, with spending authority vested in the Chair of the Urban Studies Program. This may be a complicated institution, with many budget pressures associated with competing priorities, but I hope you will agree that this request is simple and reasonable: don't give *me* more money; give it to students instead.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elvin K. Wyly, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

cc: Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts