



July 20, 2023

Standing Committee on Science and Research  
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6  
[SRSR@parl.gc.ca](mailto:SRSR@parl.gc.ca)

Re: Government of Canada's Graduate Scholarship and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programs

Dear Members of the Committee,

Vancouver Island University (VIU) appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the growth and necessary changes needed to the Government of Canada's Graduate Scholarship and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programs.

VIU is a regional comprehensive university located on Coast Salish and Tla'amin lands on Canada's west coast. We have approximately 1000 graduate students representing eight percent of our total student body. Our graduate programming is comprised of a mix of degrees, diplomas and certificates including six masters degrees where students engage in a variety of applied, professional, and community projects. The majority of our graduate students are located in our Faculties of Education and Management where these practiced leaders engage with specific issues current in their professional worlds.

Data and metrics referenced in numerous letters submitted to this committee including your own research plainly outlines the financial realities of modern graduate and post-doctoral students, and the abysmal level of funding our preeminent national awards offer to meet these realities. We must increase base support and ensure annual increases to reflect inflation.

For the upcoming 2023-24 academic year VIU graduate students will include three Canada Graduate Scholarship and two Indigenous Scholars Award recipients highlighting that 0.5% of our graduate students are currently funded by Canadian Graduate Scholarship funding. This figure is in line with other BC members of the Alliance of Canadian Comprehensive Research Universities (ACCRU) and is significantly lower than the larger institutions in our province and across Canada. For this reason we fully support ACCRU's position and reasoning regarding the need to revisit the formula for distribution of scholarships.

VIU's mandate as a regional institution coupled with our physical location has resulted in much of our domestic student population originating from rural and remote regions and we witness the financial challenge this has on our students. We also fully endorse and support ACCRU's position and reasoning to recognize [and account for] the costs borne by graduate students from rural and remote regions.

**International students** have limited access to federal graduate scholarships, particularly at the masters level. *Canada's International Education Strategy: 2019-2024* outlines an intention to attract a diverse global population to communities across Canada, and that increased scholarship funding will be used to attract top talent<sup>1</sup>. However, our federal International Scholarships Program lacks geographic diversity,

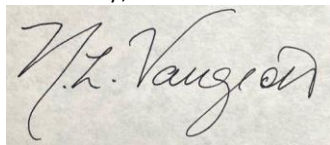
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<sup>1</sup> [Building on Success: International Education Strategy \(2019-2024\)](#)

fosters inequity among Canadian Post-secondary Institutions, and struggles in attracting top-level talent to Canada due to a paucity of strategic, consistent branding and messaging from all GOC programs<sup>2</sup>. Ensuring we attract and care for international graduate students makes strategic sense as a higher percentage of international students graduate from masters level degrees than domestic students, and graduate studies are associated with higher cumulative transition rates to permanent residence than other credential types<sup>3</sup>. VIU supports building on Canada's International Education Strategy by increasing international graduate scholarship programming and improving cohesion between GOC international scholarship programs to better serve institutions, students and Canada's research and development priorities. This will advantage Canada's capacity to attract top talent from a broader range of countries, and increase our skilled-worker population as those students engaged in graduate level research are more likely to stay in Canada and are considered highly-qualified personnel with both innovative, discipline specific skillsets as well as transferable skillsets in areas such as leadership and communication.

Overall VIU stands in solidarity with the Canadian post-secondary community in the recognition of the major changes required to our Graduate Scholarship and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Programs. In particular as a medium-sized institution, we support ACCRUs recommendations including an increase in base support, greater equity in institutional distribution, and allowances for rural and remote regions of origins. In addition, we highlight the necessity to better support international masters students if Canada wants to actualize its need to recruit the best global leaders not only to drive its research and development agenda, but also to target a portion of population growth with highly skilled and qualified people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored, textured background. The signature reads "N.L. Vaugeois" in a cursive script.

Nicole L. Vaugeois, PhD  
Associate Vice-President, Research and Graduate Studies

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<sup>2</sup> [International Education Strategy Renewal: International Scholarships](#)

<sup>3</sup> [International Education Strategy Renewal: Universities Sector of Canada](#)