January X, 2020

Andrew Petter cc Martin Pochurko

President and Vice-Chancellor Vice President Finance and Administration

8888 University Drive cc Jon Driver

Burnaby, British Columbia Vice President Academic and Provost

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Dear President Petter,

We are faculty members in the Philosophy department who are disappointed in and strongly object to the Administration's refusal to pay MSP premiums for TSSU members who are international students on study permits, for two reasons.

First, this is a clear violation of the university’s collective bargaining agreement with the TSSU. Under Article XXV.A.2, the University must pay the required premiums for MSP for TAs, TMs, and Sessional instructors and their dependents. While the University is describing the premium as a “health-care coverage fee,” it is clear that under BC law (Part 3.8 of the BC Medicare Protection Act, amended Sept. 1, 2019) this amount is a premium.

Second, this action directly threatens the health and well-being of our graduate students and their families. In the Philosophy department, 19 of 25 students of our graduate students are international students who rely on TSSU positions to support themselves. At the standard workload of 5.17 base units, a master’s student makes $6,165 a semester, or $18,495 a year. After paying tuition and mandatory fees ($6,806.31/year in a regular program), a student has only $11,688.69 to live off of. MSP premiums, at $75 a month or $900 a year per student, are a significant financial burden to our students. Students may be forced to make a choice between paying for food and paying for healthcare. This clearly threatens the health and well-being of our graduate students and thus further undermines their ability to perform in their capacities as students and employees of the University.

We would urge the Administration to immediately return to paying MSP premiums for international students and their dependents.