THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

3 December 2008

ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE
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To: Senate

From: Academic Policy Committee

RE: **Student Development – Orientation and Transition Activities (approval)**

The Committee has considered a request from the Student Development unit of the Vice-President, Students office for a modification to the academic year so as to allow a coordination of orientation and transition programs for many students on the first day of classes of the Winter session each year. The Committee agrees with the proposal (set out in the attached memorandum) and as such recommends the following to Senate:

> *"That on the Tuesday following Labour day of each Winter Session starting with 2009 Winter, all classes for students in – or offered by - the following programs be replaced by Imagine UBC, with the exception of those classes that start at or after 5:00 pm and meet only once per week:*
>
> *Faculty of Arts - All undergraduate programs except the Bachelor of Social Work*
> *Faculty of Commerce & Business Administration – Bachelor of Commerce*
> *Faculty of Dentistry – Bachelor of Dental Science in Dental Hygiene*
> *Faculty of Applied Science – Bachelor of Applied Science*
> *Faculty of Forestry – All undergraduate programs*
> *Faculty of Education – Bachelor of Human Kinetics*
> *Faculty of Land & Food Systems – All undergraduate programs*
> *Faculty of Science – All undergraduate programs"*

This change would have the effect of causing undergraduate service courses used by programs not listed above – but offered by the faculties of Arts and Science– to not occur on the first day of class. For example, CHEM233/235 and STAT203 used by the Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy, or GEOG102/103, ENGL110/112 and PHYS100 used by the Bachelor of Environmental Design program.

Some classes offered by the programs above are cross-listed or offered concurrently with classes for programs not listed; in these cases, the cross-listed version of the course would still be held, but students enrolled via an above-listed program may not be academically penalized for participating in Imagine UBC in lieu of attending class. For example, LAW316 would still be held, but students enrolled in that course under its POLI376 title would be excused. The same would be true for MECH489 and 582. Most of these cases are 400-level undergraduate classes that are offered concurrently with 500-level graduate classes.

MEMORANDUM

To: Senate Academic Policy Committee

From: Student Development

Re: Request for the replacement of the first day of Term 1 undergraduate classes with orientation and transition programming

Request
Orientation and transition programming and support are a foundational aspect of Strategic Enrolment Management. At UBC Vancouver we do not have an institutional commitment to orientation and transition and we have gone about as far as we can with the current programming. Replacing the first day of Term 1 undergraduate classes with orientation and transition programming would help to build on the current programming to offer specific transition and academic services that are important for our new to UBC students as well as addressing the needs of continuing UBC undergraduate students. As such, the Associate Deans, Students and Student Development recommend to Senate that on the Tuesday after Labour Day, undergraduate classes in specified programs in Arts, Commerce & Business Administration, Dental Hygiene, Engineering, Forestry, Human Kinetics, Land and Food Systems, and Science are replaced with Imagine UBC, with the single exception of those classes that start at or after 5:00 pm and meet only once per week.

Background
Since 1997, the Imagine UBC Orientation program has replaced all 100-level classes until 5:00 pm on the first day of Term 1, typically the Tuesday following Labour Day. Through small faculty-based groups (MUG – My Undergraduate Group), students who share a common class are led by a senior student (MUG Leader) through a program that addresses many of their pressing transition questions and facilitates connections with peers, faculty, and staff. Through these connections new first-year students learn about the resources and services available to support a successful academic and social transition to university life (see Appendix 1). The hope is that at the end of their first day at UBC, each student leaves knowing that our community wants them to be successful and believing that they have made the right institutional choice. They begin to belong to their faculty and have a set of peer introductions that will serve them over the next transitional weeks.

The success of Imagine UBC demonstrates what is possible when a campus community works together and serves as an example of the importance of making time for all students during regular class time in Term 1 to deliver effective orientation and transition events. The current parameters placed on Imagine UBC create constraints by dividing the commitments of over 750 volunteers who are both participating in Imagine UBC and required to be in class on that day. Imagine UBC does not have access to the classroom space it requires to facilitate thoughtful and engaging interactions between students, faculty and staff and this significantly constrains the impact of the orientation program. Additionally, students have the experience of being led from one end of campus to the other to utilize whatever space is available. With so little available classroom space there is no rain plan; leaving MUG Leaders little choice but to meet in hallways and open space that they may or may not need to vacate if a class is scheduled to begin. Despite all the work that has been done, it quickly becomes apparent to new students that faculty, staff and the campus community are focused not on orientation and welcoming new students to the UBC community but on the priorities of their first day of classes. One of the most important changes as a result of starting classes one day later would be to enable more faculty members to become involved with orientation and for the many faculty members currently engaged in Imagine UBC, to deepen their role and engagement with students that day.

Planning and Institutional Research (PAIR) analyzed the data collected from the 2004 Student Voice Orientation Benchmarking Survey to assess the degree to which orientation and transition programming at UBC is effective. Their analysis found that it contributes positively to all students' academic transition and commuter student's social transition to university. If we stopped doing Imagine UBC this would negatively impact our student's experience

Beyond the First Year Experience
Many transitions occur throughout a student's university experience, such as choosing a major and becoming part of one or more academic departments or preparing for graduation. Freeing up the first day of term would allow academic departments to deliver specific programming to welcome new students to their academic community and provide them a

scholarly orientation to the academic department. In doing so, undergraduate students would continue to build connections with faculty members and peers, and learn about the educational opportunities, resources, and services that are available to support them. UBC has a large commuter population and it is important to facilitate the process for students to find their place in a smaller community, academic departments being the most critical. Beyond building smaller communities, this model would allow programming to be directed toward specific student populations. For example, students preparing for their graduating year may benefit from transition topics such as applying to graduate school, preparing for the career search, and accessing volunteer and internship opportunities.

A significant number of transfer students make the choice to attend UBC each year and are another student population that would benefit greatly from specific orientation and transition programming on the first day of Term 1. Though they have experience in post secondary institutions, they are new to the UBC campus and express similar concerns to first-year students entering from high school, including finding their way around campus, making connections with peers and faculty, and succeeding academically.

Traditionally, the types of programs that have been outlined above have been taking place to varying degrees in the evenings and on weekends but there is much more that could be accomplished. Offering programming at these times limits access to many groups who need it most. Furthermore, students are already experiencing a high level of stress given multiple and competing priorities. UBC has one of the longest average commutes by students of any university in North America. Survey data show that those who commute to campus are more likely than students who live in residence to be the first generation in their family to attend university and they are more likely to have work and family responsibilities that compete for their time. Building orientation and transition programming into the regular term schedule would remove some of the barriers that currently exist for commuter students. The aforementioned examples clearly demonstrate the possibilities for improving the student experience. It is incumbent upon us to provide time and the institutional commitment to these kinds of academic transitions in order to enhance a student's experience.

Plan for Implementation

An Orientation Committee will be created with representation from Student Development, Faculties, Undergraduate Societies, and the AMS. In the first year, the committee will be charged with two priorities. First they will review current first-year orientation programming and recommend changes to content and structure. Second, they will work with the campus community on the design, coordination, and implementation of programs and services that will provide an orientation experience for transfer students and for students entering an academic department or program. As part of this process the committee will look at building a program around existing elements of the Imagine UBC day, like the Main Event Carnival that is open to the entire campus community. Not all academic programs will be able to take advantage of the new opportunity to the same extent in the first year but pilot programs of varying design will help us all learn how to make positive changes.

To successfully implement changes of this magnitude requires time and institutional support. Even though it may take a number of years to fully implement a comprehensive program, there is no question that it is not just first-year students who will benefit from replacing the first day of classes with orientation and transition programming. This kind of change will focus our priority on transition and academic services in order to help create a supportive campus environment and a truly great university experience for both new and returning students.

Consultation Process

Over the years the Alma Mater Society has brought the idea embodied in this proposal forward to Student Development on many occasions and continues to advocate for a more comprehensive orientation and transition program. The idea was raised for discussion at the Committee of Associate Deans, Students and received full support. The Associate Deans support the delay of the first day of classes for undergraduates in Arts, Commerce & Business Administration, Dental Hygiene, Engineering, Forestry, Human Kinetics, Land and Food Systems, and Science to allow Faculties and the Vice President, Students portfolio to develop a comprehensive orientation and transition program for undergraduates in these Faculties. Subsequently, a discussion paper was created and brought to the Senate Academic Policy Committee for consideration and they recommended that it be considered by all undergraduate and professional programs with the exception of those programs that already have orientation and transition programs built into the curriculum. On advice received from the Senate Academic Policy Committee the discussion paper was presented to the Committee of Deans and received strong support. The Deans recommended working with the Associate Deans, Students on consultation in each of the faculties. In addition it was recommended that AMS and the Undergraduate Societies be consulted on the process. A summary of the consultation process can be found at the end of the proposal (see Appendix 2).

Throughout the consultation process the response has been very positive with an overwhelming majority of respondents supporting the proposed change. AMS Council passed a motion, with 23 out of 30 votes in support the proposed change. The questions and concerns raised during the consultations are consistent across faculty, staff, and students and centre around the logistics of the implementation, student attendance on the day, and the impact of losing an instruction day for upper-year courses particularly those that meet only once per week on Tuesday. Alternatives have been recommended, such as starting the semester before the Labour Day weekend to accommodate orientation or compressing the December exam schedule to make up for the loss of an instructional day.

Addressing Concerns and Alternatives Raised During Consultation Process

We will need to address in a systematic and coordinated the manner the logistics of implementing campus-wide programming so that we limit the competing priorities for students on the first day of term. The current Imagine Day serves as an example of what is possible when the entire campus community works together and this approach is essential in the creation of a coherent and varied program that appeals to students. Experience shows that students will attend if they see value in programs and services and they must be involved in providing feedback on program design.

Replacing classes for undergraduate students on the traditional first day of classes would still allow for sixty-one instructional days through 2016 and would not affect Monday, Wednesday, Friday classes that are normally impacted by statutory holidays. In addition, the Academic Course Scheduling Guidelines restrict the scheduling of classes that meet once a week for three hours to outside peak class scheduling times. This results in the majority of these classes being scheduled in the evening when they will not be impacted by the proposed change.

Traditionally Labour Day weekend marks the end of the summer work period and the beginning of University for students. Starting the semester before the Labour Day weekend to accommodate orientation would create a ripple effect felt across the campus and beyond.

Our Canadian peer institutions, the University of Toronto and Queen's University, both make orientation and transition programming a priority over the entire first week of September and begin classes the following week. The University of Toronto has a semester of the same length as UBC and makes up the difference by having an exam period that is a week shorter than UBC's. Queen's semester has a week less of instructional days and a shorter exam period.

UBC Okanagan currently replaces the first day of classes for all students. The first instructional day has been moved to day 2 of the term to facilitate orientation and transition programming. The programs run on the first day have been well attended and received by students.

APPENDIX 1
Imagine UBC - First Year Orientation Schedule

	Science A (SONE, CPSC, CSP)	Science B	Arts A (AONE & CAP)	Arts B	Music	Sauder	HKIN	LFS	Engineering	Forestry
7:00 AM						SL/SM Check-in				
7:15 AM							SL/SM Check-in	SL/SM Check-in		SL/SM Check-in
7:30 AM	SL/SM Check-in	SL/SM Check-in	SL/SM Check-in	SL/SM Check-in	SL/SM Check-In	ML Check-in				
7:45 AM							ML Check-in	ML Check-in	SL/SM Check-in	ML Check-in
8:00 AM	ML Check-in	ML Check-in	ML Check-in	ML Check-in	ML Check-In					
8:15 AM						Morning Meetings			ML Check-in	
8:30 AM							Morning Meetings	Morning Meetings		Morning Meetings
8:45 AM	Morning Meetings	Morning Meetings	Morning Meetings	Morning Meetings	Morning Meetings	MTD				
9:00 AM							MTD	Faculty Breakfast	Morning Meetings	Faculty Breakfast
9:15 AM	MTD	Campus Tour & UBC Rec & Lahda Centre	*Load WMGM*	*Load WMGM*	*Load WMGM*					
9:30 AM			MTD	MTD	MTD				MTD	
9:45 AM						Campus Tour & UBC Rec				
10:00 AM							HKIN Tour	MTD		Campus Tour
10:15 AM	*Unload Chan*									
10:30 AM	Campus Tour & UBC Rec & Lahda Centre	*Load Chan*					HKIN Cheer		Campus Tour & SSW	
10:45 AM		MTD	*Unload WMGM*	Campus Tour	*Unload WMGM*					
11:00 AM			SSW		SSW	SSW	SSW	SSW		MTD
11:15 AM										
11:30 AM										
11:45 AM	Lunch	Lunch								
12:00 PM			Lunch	SSW		*Travel Time*	Lunch	Lunch		Lunch
12:15 PM						Lunch				
12:30 PM	SSW	SSW			Lunch					SSW
12:45 PM			Campus Tour				Campus Tour	Campus Tour		
1:00 PM				Lunch	Campus Tour	Sauder Carnival			Lunch	
1:15 PM										
1:30 PM	*Travel Time*	*Travel Time*		*Travel Time*						
1:45 PM										
2:00 PM	Pep Rally									
2:15 PM										
2:30 PM										
2:45 PM										
3:00 PM										
3:15 PM	Main Event Carnival									
3:30 PM										
3:45 PM										
4:00 PM										
4:15 PM										
4:30 PM										
4:45 PM										
5:00 PM										

Morning Meetings
First thing in the morning and before any activities, time is spent on introductions and questions in MUG.

Student Success Workshop (SSW)
The workshop is facilitated by a faculty member and senior students and provides strategies on how to make a successful academic transition to university.

Meet the Dean/Director (MTD)
The Meet the Dean/Director session is the chance to meet and hear from the Dean/Director, as well as the student leaders who are involved in the undergraduate society. The session provides the opportunity to learn more about the faculty or program and some of the opportunities and resources available to students.

Lunch
Lunch is provided by the faculty and provides the opportunity for MUG members to get to know each other better and to interact with faculty and staff present.

Campus Tours
MUG Leader provides a tour of the relevant buildings and services, sharing personal perspective on the student experience.

Pep Rally
The entire first-year class assembles in War Memorial Gymnasium for a high energy welcome to UBC. There is an academic procession much like the one at convocation and speeches from the UBC and AMS Presidents. This is the only time the entire class will be assembled at once.

Main Event Carnival
The purpose of the Main Event Carnival is to showcase UBC student life by presenting a wide range of services, clubs, and activities, over two hundred interactive booths. All students are invited to explore the social and academic atmosphere of the university, while enjoying entertainment.

APPENDIX 2
Consultation Process

Groups	Date	Consultation Summary
Committee of Deans	September 10, 2008	• Unanimously supported by the Deans • Program needs to meet the unique needs of each faculty, cannot be standardized for the entire campus • Important to be intentional in planning and not create competing priorities for students • Work with the Associate Deans on consultation within each of the Faculties
Student Senate Caucus	October 15, 2008	• Unanimously supported by the Senators present at the meeting • Orientation leaders are forced to choose between class and Imagine • Other student leaders have responsibilities on that day and are required to make a difficult choice • Transfer students need to receive the same type of welcome as first-year students so that they feel part of the campus community • Concern raised about upper-year students coming on the first day if there is no class
Undergraduate Society Presidents	October 15, 2008	• Unanimously supported by the Presidents • Opportunity for undergrad societies to get more involved in orientation • Raised question if Term 1 could begin on the Friday before Labour Day and what do other universities do
AMS Executive	October 16, 2008	• AMS Exec split on their support for the proposal • All were supportive of 1st-year and transfer students participating in orientation events on the first day • Concern raised around cancelling classes for upper-year students, particularly seminar classes that meet once per week on Tuesday's • Current Imagine program does not work for all students • Raised question if Term 1 could begin on the Friday before Labour Day and what do other universities do • Raised the issue of financial impact on TA's, Faculty Members, and cost savings to the university

AMS Council	October 22, 2008	• AMS generally supportive of the proposal • Raised questions about why this hadn't been done already, have graduate students been considered, will upper-year students attend, could the term start before the Labour Day • Opportunity for increased orientation for transfer students • Opportunity to hold departmental events • AMS Council passed a motion (23 of 30 in favour) to endorse change on November 5, 2008
Faculties	Ongoing	• Response from students and faculty members has been mostly positive with some opposition to the change • Opportunity to hold departmental events • Opportunity to provide a more comprehensive orientation to transfer students • Concern raised about student attendance • Concern raised about value of orientation • Concern raised about impact on number of instructional days • Alternatives – start the semester earlier or compress the exam period • Feedback submitted by faculty members