

Strategic Plan Phase 2 Submissions: Law Students' Society

Submitted to FAC: February 22, 2016

Background:

The Allard Law Students' Society ("LSS"), as an identified stakeholder (namely, JD students) submitted initial feedback regarding the 2016 Strategic Plan in November 2015. Following the release of the first draft, the LSS proceeded with consultation with the JD student body at large. The LSS solicited comments on the first draft through:

- (1) sending an email to all JD students with a link to the first draft and a link to a short survey for students to provide open-ended, qualitative comments;
- (2) having Professors MacDougall and Nikos Harris (both members of the Faculty Advisory Committee, or "FAC") attend an executive meeting of the LSS, where LSS executive members directly gave comments on the first draft;
- (3) inviting all JD students to a Dean's town hall on January 28, 2016; and
- (4) having members of the ALSS Exec, namely members of the sub-committee (Matthew Tse – VP Academic, Kristy Faris - President, and Josh Abaki - Seantor) hold "office hours" during lunch hour on January 26 and 27 for students to ask questions about the strategic plan or for us to address comments.

In relation to the survey, we received 54 responses (10 1Ls, 21 2Ls, and 16 3Ls, and 7 "others").

Submission:

The LSS appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback and the FAC's receptiveness towards comments made by JD students.

The LSS is largely in support of the initiatives included in the first draft. However, as a result of the consultation process described above, the LSS makes submissions with respect to two specific items on the draft plan, along with some "soft" submissions.

Action A.3.f. – "market-appropriate" tuition

The LSS expresses reservation in particular about the following Action (A.3.f.):

A. Reaching Out and Welcoming In

Goal: Welcome and engage new students, alumni, the profession, visiting scholars, and civil society by providing them a home in our community and opportunities to contribute to and benefit from the law school's commitment to legal scholarship and public service. [formerly D]

3. Project: Partner with the university, government, donors and other groups to ensure student access to legal education, regardless of financial and other challenges. [formerly A2]

f. [Action] Work with the university and the province to ensure tuition is market-appropriate and sustainable. [formerly A2f]

The exact wording of Action F was put to students as part of the JD student wide survey. Many students expressed concerns that Action F indicates an ostensible strategic direction of the school to increase JD tuition to levels similar to schools in Ontario and the US. Many students also expressed concerns about that an increase of that size, without similar increases in student financial aid, especially need-based aid, would be detrimental to the diversity of student backgrounds at the law school and the general accessibility of legal education to students from certain economic or social backgrounds. Many students also noted that UBC's relatively lower tuition level was a major reason for selecting to attend UBC. The comments received are appended to this submission in Appendix A.

The LSS suggests that Action F should be rephrased to reflect Project 3's overarching goal of "ensur[ing] student access to legal education, regardless of financial and other challenges." The LSS also suggests that wording reflecting the need for student consultation in relation to tuition is appropriate. The LSS suggests the following (change underlined):

f. Action: Work with the university, the province, and students to ensure tuition is market-appropriate, sustainable, and affordable. [formerly A2f]

The LSS notes that there are diverse views regarding tuition, and that tuition is an important issue for many students. The LSS's submissions at any stage of this strategic planning process, including this submission, are NOT an endorsement of the Law School's plan to increase tuition, if any, without further and more extensive consultation with students in the future, with reference to University Policy 71 – Consultation with Students about Tuition and Mandatory Fees.

Action C.3.d. – Mental health and well-being

The LSS appreciates the FAC's inclusion of student mental health and well-being. The LSS noticed a large amount of student comment on how to address mental health and well-being in the school. Action C.3.d. currently states:

C. Teaching and Learning

Goal: Provide an exceptional and inspiring legal education that enables students to excel in professional practice, academic leadership and public service. [formerly A]

3. Project: Assist students to meet their academic and career goals, including non-traditional and academic career paths. [formerly A5]

d. [Action] Review existing policies, practices and procedures to enhance and implement strategies to support students' well-being and mental health. [formerly A5d]

Students were especially concerned about the “system”, and the need for more considerable changes to “policies, practices and procedures”. This is especially in light of feedback from other stakeholders who suggested the Action to focus on “reviewing existing policies” and to “enhance strategies”. Sample responses from students to whom the mental health and well-being action was put are contained in Appendix B.

The LSS suggests Action C.3.d. should include specific aspects of the “system” to “review”. The LSS suggests the following amendment (changes underlined):

d. [Action] Review existing policies, practices and procedures to enhance and implement strategies to support students' well-being and mental health, with a focus on sources of student stress such as examination policies and academic standards. [formerly A5d]

“Soft” submissions

The LSS recognizes that many more specific actions, such as the ones noted by Professors MacDougall and Nikos Harris from the LSS executive meeting (those notes are included as Appendix C), may not be suitable for specific expression in the Strategic Plan, given the Plan's more “high-level” orientation. However, the LSS re-articulates some of those specific items here, such that the function group (e.g., Curriculum Committee) that is tasked with the mandate of carrying out certain items of the strategic plan can note specific items the JD students suggest are pressing. These items are noted in Appendix C.

Appendix A

Students were posed the following question:

The Allard School of Law has been running a deficit. The Strategic Plan proposes to “work with the University and the Province to ensure tuition is market-appropriate and sustainable.”

In light of this proposal, what is your opinion on tuition at Allard School of Law?

Comments were redacted where they contained information that could personally identify members of the law school community (students, staff, etc.) or was considered to be in violation of the Respective Dialogue principles. No comments were redacted, in full or in part, for this question.

Comments received (all emphasis in original):

- Tuition was appropriate. I'm not sure how to answer this without knowing how the deficit has incurred.
- 1. It is beyond me that with the enormous gift by Mr. Allard, the school is running a deficit. !
2. Tuition at Allard school is already by far too high; for most students it is not or hardly sustainable, with or without being "market appropriate", so: bring it down !!
- The reason why I came to Allard was the tuition.
- General tuition is fine -- still some of the lowest in top North America law schools. I'd prefer a general tuition increase if necessary, but with financial aid packages for students in need and/or students pursuing lower-paid areas of law.
- Spend less on mental health and orientation programming so you can charge less tuition. Students will have better overall health if they can carry less debt.
- Please do not increase. There are extremely limited scholarship opportunities compared to other programs as is. If there must be an increase, please consider grandfathering the current tuition rates to current students who have already made extensive financial plans around the current rate. It would be a huge burden for the rates to increase suddenly.
- The cost of legal education in British Columbia is already outrageously high. It is a significant barrier for qualified students accessing legal education, but more than that, it poses an almost insurmountable barrier for debt-laden law graduates to use their legal education in the public interest. For many years, Allard Law has had a middling reputation among Canadian law schools as a factory for large corporate commercial law firms who do the bidding of rapacious natural resources companies. Dramatically increasing tuition fees essentially guarantees that things will remain as they are: except for students who are independently wealthy, graduates will face crippling debt and be forced into the most lucrative areas of practice. Moreover, it is likely to dramatically change the applicant pool, further skewing the law student population towards children of privilege, whose families (and their bankers) can subsidize a legal education. The law school has an obligation to the profession as well as itself, and the problem

of access to justice cannot be addressed without also addressing the problem of access to legal education.

- If 'market-appropriate' means UoT or TRU rates, I'm not on board. Law school is already prohibitively expensive for many and pecuniary support is all but entirely non-existent. Raising tuition will negatively impact the diversity at this institution and that would be a mighty shame; it will stop people from even applying! Furthermore, the current bursary program acts as an incentive for those from wealthy families to not work during the summers because it increases their bursary eligibility, while those of us who do not have familial support struggle to get by.
- Tuition at Allard Law is more reasonable than many other law schools in the country. It still is a significant amount of money if you don't have family support or other access to financial resources. I hope that in considering appropriate tuition, the school will find ways to make law school accessible to people of lower economic classes to ensure diversity in the profession.
- Tuition is at a good level currently. It could be higher but the real issue is what 'net tuition' is for a given student. When a student is admitted, they should be given an estimate of their tuition less needs-based financial aid so they have an accurate understanding of what they will actually pay. Telling people that tuition will cost more does no benefit to the school.
- Tuition was one of the big draws in my acceptance to UBC. Considering the cost of living in Vancouver, and as an out of province student, I probably wouldn't attend Allard if the tuition were to increase significantly (ie. to 15,000/year). I would anticipate this sort of a change, would make Uvic more desirable, since I don't actually think the law school or the quality of education at Allard is the major draw for most students here (except those intending to work in business law).
- The faculty should retain affordability; increasing tuition will decrease the diversity of the student body.
- If that is code for jacking up tuition, and I imagine it is, I am strongly opposed. Call it an access to justice issue, call it whatever you like, just don't raise tuition. The school just received 30 million for putting Mr. Allard's name on the building, what the hell are you doing with all the money? Maybe spend less on wood paneling instead of charging students even more.
- It's too low. I will be graduating with appx 80,000 in debt from law school alone but I do not think a tuition increase is unreasonable. Allard is currently a great school but the reality is it is competing with schools whose tuition is roughly 20,000 more per year.
- That sounds like a deceptive way of pursuing substantial tuition increases. Which may be realistically required, but appears disingenuous. Currently I think Allard is very accessible and that should be maintained. If the school can ensure that students that have to means to afford higher tuition are the ones bearing the cost I think that would be nice. Administratively difficult to do, though, and appears unfair.
- I think there is a danger in a drastic tuition rise. I think there obviously needs to be a more sustainable model for the future of Allard hall, but I would like to know where exactly the bulk of the budget is going
- Tuition is reasonable and ought not to be increased drastically.
- I feel that the years that I have been at the school have suffered due to lack of faculty, which in many appears to be due to the low tuition. I would have rather paid more and had more class

options with full-time faculty. Some of the classes that I took with adjuncts were not worth the cost of the course, and I was distinctly disappointed in those classes.

- be more carefully about whom to accept on the graduate level and avoid providing funding to less qualified people. i.e. carefully check the credentials of certain applicants to see if they are legitimate. I discovered that certain members pad their CVs and make themselves look more qualified than they really are (eg. publications in scam journals that have no standards at all). Stop providing support for graduate students who are in their 5-6 years of study unless they are able to show that they are making clear progress. I think the faculty has been too generous to people who end up wasting our funding by not being able to graduate and their signs of failure could be detected early on.
- It is high. Law School is prohibitively expensive. Raising tuition will continue to marginalize poor and create more problems with access to justice. A lack of access to legal education for the low and middle classes contributes to and aggravates the access to justice crisis so often spoken of at Allard Hall.
- Reduce tuition immediately. Law is already inaccessible to all those who cannot afford \$100K in loans, or who cannot access credit. Make full ride scholarships available, and have them based on need, not just "merit."
- The low tuition here is why I came to UBC—because law school in Canada is absurdly expensive and many of us have trouble affording it. Don't jack up prices as high as they are at U of T. Law is already dominated by those who grew up with privilege. Don't make that problem worse. And don't make tuition so high that graduates are too indebted to go into social justice related areas of law.
- I think it is fair as is.
- Tuition at the Allard School of Law, while lower than tuition at other Canadian law schools, is still unaffordable. If the tuition were any higher, I would not have seriously considered going to law school here. My student debt from the combination of my BA and my JD is my largest stressor in life. I can hardly imagine what it would have been like if my parents could not help me with finances or if I had any dependents. Increasing tuition will only increase inequities in the legal profession, and reinforce the idea that law school is for the rich. Further, it will de-incentivize law students from doing social justice work, as their debt load will be an encumbrance that significantly constrains their options in choosing career paths. This in turn will only add to the access to justice crisis that we currently face. I am therefore entirely opposed to any non-nominal increase in tuition at Allard.
- Tuition is reasonable, but the cap on BC student loans is horribly low.
- Tuition is currently perfect in my opinion. I don't think it should be lower or higher.
- Tuition at Allard is currently value for money as we get amazing facilities for a fraction of the price other students pay at other schools. Wouldn't have it any other way! Please don't increase tuition for the sake of being more market-appropriate. We get a great amount of diversity thanks to our lower tuition, IMO.
- I am curious if Dean Dauvergne is advocating for central University funds to keep tuition low. I am also concerned that the JD program isn't benefiting from the LLMCL tuition when JD student interests are adversely impacted like it was supposed to. I am concerned that if tuition increases, economic status will create even more divides within the student body.

- Deficit? What about that money from Allard himself? Law school tuition is still far more expensive than many other programs, putting substantial and stressful financial burden on students who must pay their own way. We are going to be debt slaves for years and years, unless we were lucky enough to be born into wealthy families. How are we ever going to diversify our student body beyond the predominantly white and wealthy students if we don't make tuition more reasonable?
- It's not as high as in some law schools and provinces but it's still pretty expensive and something many cannot reasonably afford. A lot of the smaller scholarships offered are way too narrow in the requirements/characteristics a person is supposed to exemplify and some of the writing contests are quite odd in that the level of expertise necessary to participate is unusual. Thus, some students may not be able to supplement their tuition payments with scholarships and bursaries as easily as they could in their undergraduate careers, for example. Students are offered a lot of volunteer opportunities and positions but very few options for paid work around the school. For example, ambassadorship positions should be paid, not voluntary (tour guides are paid positions in other universities). So while we strive to make tuition market-appropriate and sustainable externally, we should also see what we can do to help students alleviate student loan debts by giving them more options for paid work, internally. Perhaps LSLAP should be a mandatory component of a law degree, done in third year when one has accumulated expertise and confidence, that can be either taken for credit or for monetary compensation.
- Tuition is slightly high at its current level. A freeze for a few years followed by the annual 2% cap would be appropriate. Alternatively, tuition could be increased if more grant funding was available. Current conditions for receiving financial aid must be reviewed, however, because of discrepancies among provincial funding systems. For example, a BC student and an Alberta student with the same resources would qualify for different loan amounts from the provinces. Alberta provides twice as much funding, but it's all loans. This disqualifies an Alberta student from receiving UBC Law grants (because their need is 'met', but all in loans). The result is that a BC student has half the debt of an Alberta student despite starting out with the same resources.
- Compared to Ontario tuition prices, I believe it is reasonable.
- The 2% cap is there for a reason. I strongly believe that the point of having alumni donations (such as the highly advertised donation by Mr. Peter A. Allard, Q.C. to the now-eponymous law school) is at least in part to improve access to legal education. Scholarships are wonderful for the small percentage of the school population that receives them (myself included), but access to legal education should be improved for all, not only those who meet scholarship criteria.
- I do not think tuition should rise at all, but if it does I would be disappointed if it did not stay below that of the schools that are considered Allard's national 'competitors'. The overriding reason I decided to attend Allard rather than another school of similar quality is that its tuition is so low. Perhaps this isn't a major concern for all students, but it was important to me, as I am not very wealthy and would have had to have asked my parents for financial help to attend the other law schools I was considering. While arguably the school would be better off without me, I'm certainly glad I'm here, and I wouldn't be if the tuition was much higher. Do we want money to influence the kind of student that matriculates here? I certainly don't.
- It doesn't need to be higher.

- Tuition is already a huge burden for many students. There must be better ways to balance the budget than by raising tuition. I think that raising the tuition further would be acting contrary to the goal of fostering diversity in the law school.
- Honestly I feel that the education I'm receiving would be a bargain at twice the price. No student wants to pay more fees, of course, but I recognize that higher tuition is necessary to aid in financing the long-term goals of the School. As such, while my bank account might disagree, I believe a rise in tuition is appropriate if that is what is required to become a truly world-class institution.
- Not wildly unreasonable, but should not increase
- It's already extremely high, and the investment paying off at the end is becoming less certain. If tuition is raised further, it should be accompanied by increased financial aid so that anyone who gets in can afford to stay in without needing to end law school with six figure debt.
- If you increase tuition you absolutely must substantially increase need based financial aid. Use UoT's process which considers family income. Asking students about personal income without considering family resources actually rewards students coming from wealth and punishes students forced to work. This compounds with the decreased scholarship opportunities for those whose grades suffer due to work and family commitments. If you increase tuition without making the school more accessible to have-not students you are perpetuating privilege.
- I would have been willing to pay higher tuition if it meant greater access to experiential learning. Otherwise, the current tuition cost for domestic students should stay the same.
- Should certainly not be higher!!
- I came to Allard because it was one of the few law schools I could afford. Higher tuition will turn away students from low income backgrounds, will result in a profession of lawyers unable to sympathize with Canadians who make under \$200k a year, and will force people to take high-paying corporate jobs rather than public interest or access to justice jobs.
- The relatively low tuition at UBC Law is a large selling point and could potentially deter candidates from coming to the school if it goes up. But yes, currently, the tuition level is relatively low (only compared to other Canadian schools, and not affordable in a strict sense).
- Continue the deficit until 2018, after which time, feel free to raise tuition.

Appendix B

Students were posed the following question:

The Strategic Plan proposes to “enhance and implement strategies to support students’ well-being and mental health.”

What is your opinion on how to address student well-being and mental health at Allard School of Law?

Comments were redacted where they contained information that could personally identify members of the law school community (students, staff, etc.) or was considered to be in violation of the Respective Dialogue principles. One comment from this question was redacted in full, while one was redacted in part.

Comments received (all emphasis in original):

- Starting morning exams an hour later would be fantastic.
- I think the law school already does a good job with supporting students’ well-being and mental health
- recruit graduate students with higher ethical standards - those with low standards affect the morale of their peers
- I donot even know what these words mean !!
- Grading system needs to be changed. I think pass with distinction/pass/fail would give students the opportunity to pursue things outside of school, extracurriculars in Allard, and not be concerned with a 1% difference in grades.
- Ideally (if Allard gets a sudden windfall of funding), make it mandatory for each student to have an annual appointment with an in-house counsellor just to talk about what's troubling them. In a profession where "good character and reputation" are requirements for getting licensed, I think it's important for students to be able to speak about their problems (with work, family, finances, school, social life, transition, cultural friction, etc) without feeling like they're exposing vulnerabilities that'll lose them a job one day. Emphasize that everybody should do this even if they're not "struggling", because all law students struggle, but a vast majority don't seem to think they do until they're too overwhelmed to seek help.
- Free gym passes or exercise classes offered at Allard
- This desperately needs to be addressed. There is a significant drug problem that has arising out of 'coping' with the challenges of the program. Students need better access to psychiatric support- the resources at Brock Hall are overwhelmed and can take weeks to speak to a counsellor short of a very limited definition of 'emergency'. Drop in counselling strictly for law students would be a huge help.
- I think the approach to student well-being and mental health needs to take a long-term view, one which helps build students' resilience and capacity to succeed in the practice of law. The professional drop-out rate is shockingly high, in large part because the practice of law does not

support lawyers with families or adequate work-life balance. This needs to change, but law students also need to be prepared for the reality ahead of them. I would certainly not want to see approaches to student well-being that shelter law students from these realities, as we would be turning out mentally-healthy graduates only to see them crash in the workplace.

- I didn't know Allard was currently addressing student well-being and mental health?! [redacted] This is a dialogue that I don't hear happening, and it's a great concern. Many people are forced to struggle through this alone - dogs and cookies are great, but they are not a solution to a real problem for many students.
- Workload and expectations should be adjusted to reflect the reality that many law students have work, families, and other commitments outside of law school. Providing cookies and dogs doesn't seriously alleviate stress when many students are struggling to keep on top of work while also fulfilling their other responsibilities and searching for jobs and articling positions.
- I think it's an area where UBC as a whole does a good job already.
- I think the faculty should acknowledge the role it sets in establishing academic standards for its students (especially first years) and how that contributes to students' mental health and wellbeing. For example, requiring 1Ls to complete a 3,000 word essay over the course of a weekend as a take-home exam for a two-credit class (ie. public law) is nuts. Especially when one looks at the academic standards of upper year courses, which are much less onerous.
- Greater support tailored to JD students. Focus on balance during law school and in practise. Improve mental health outcomes within the profession generally.
- Keep tuition low, classes relatively small, and do more to make Allard professors open to differing opinions. Insulting those who hold different opinions doesn't exactly help improve mental health.
- It would be great to have an in-house career coach/counsellor (like osgoode hall currently does). Its difficult to obtain help elsewhere at UBC because counseling services doesn't seem to understand the unique pressures facing law students and external counsellors are cost prohibitive for many.
- Little things go a long way. Removal of the lobby coffee hurt the sense of community in a way I think. Little events and things like that can be meaningful
- I think that the school needs to focus more on helping students manage their course loads in the upper years by somewhat standardizing the workload in the courses with multiple sections, while recognizing that the courses can't and shouldn't be identical.
- provide training to professors so that they become more culturally sensitive (e.g..... be careful not to impose certain national identities on students when they are not 100% sure whether they identify as such) Certain members of the faculty may be lacking in this - I believe no one deliberately sets out to hurt other people, but some of them may lack sensitivity and make the classroom atmosphere less relaxed than it should be.
- Law school seems to foster and feed the culture of "work over everything" that seems to dominate the legal profession. I don't really have suggestions to help fix this, but it is my impression of law school and the legal profession that "work life balance" is something said but

not encouraged or achievable. Providing mental health and student support services during exam period would be helpful. There is lots leading up and during the year, but the most stressful time is during the two week period and there are no mental health services available or promoted during that period.

- Make counselling available at the law school. Ensure that counselling resources are able to address complex mental health issues and not just basic stress related concerns. Lighten the first year course load. Require fewer courses in upper years. Make the law school more inclusive of minority students. Reduce tuition fees. Dramatically increase scholarships, grants, and financial aid, and do not make them dependent on academic excellence. Match all students with committed upper year mentors. Match students with faculty mentors. Make part-time studies available to all students who request it.
- Check in sometimes when a student seems to be floundering. Express sympathy. Do more than simply refer people to the mental health people at Brock Hall. They are incompetent.
- Provide some sort of immediate, drop-in sort of service for mental health at the law school. I was in desperate need and called campus counselling at Brock Hall, only to find they did not have a slot at their "DROP IN" for TWO WEEKS! When you suffer from anxiety, you need help immediately.
- This needs to be addressed at the level of making a safe and mentally healthy learning environment for students, rather than responding once students go into crisis mode. Many students find that they develop mental health issues during law school or that existing problems get worse - this shows that the current structure of education at law school is harmful to mental health. This can be done by looking carefully at the pedagogical structure of 1L in particular - for most students this is the most stressful year of law school as well as a transitional year in their lives. I and people I know found that taking 7 courses at once made it more difficult to focus properly on all of the courses, especially if the students are also involved in extra-curricular activities (which are heavily promoted). Making the 1L workload more manageable would help prevent mental health crises from happening. Also, having 100% exams works well for some students but very badly for others, bringing on panic attacks and other mental health crises. I realize that students can get accommodations but I think it would also be worth looking into whether there is a different way we can evaluate students that will not be so harsh on their mental health and well-being while still being a fair and rigorous method of evaluation.
- More off campus activities for students to get off campus but still be connected to the Allard family
- Give people a chance to be introverted if they so choose to be. That, and engage the topic in townhall style discussions where people can actively share how they are feeling in a comfortable place.
- Change 'forced averages' to reflect more progressive grading practices: <http://www.nationalmagazine.ca/Articles/October-2015-Web/How-the-Bell-Curve-bleaches-out-intellectual-diver.aspx>

- The 1L program is particularly gruelling. I would recommend more support for first year students. Enough with the hurrah pep rally stuff. Tell them the truth about how much it is going to suck and how ok it is to feel that way.
- Law school is stressful because it is way too intense for the level practicality it offers (every lawyer I've spoken to has told me that law school and law practice are nothing alike). That sense of "I'm just learning this to learn this" combined with a high level of arbitrariness really affects a person's sense of control and therefore their mental health. For example, I think that the We Love Law Students week -- although a great idea in theory and better than nothing -- should be replaced with a week of study prep. Last year, I had class on Friday and my first final exam was on the following Monday. Not being able to take a few days to really just sit down and sort through material and catch a breath really affects a person's ability to organise and synthesise material and to then go and perform well on an exam. 7 classes in first year, when everything is new, when you have no perspective, and when everything is so overwhelming, is no joke. On top of our lack of time to prep, some professors also seem to think that scheduling make up classes in that last week of school is a great idea and so you end up with situations where you have a 4 hour block of criminal or property or whatever because you have your regular scheduled class and a make up back to back. The 1Ls complained about this, this year, and I had the same problem last year. Completely and insanely overwhelming a bright and motivated group of people for no reason at all other than to just cram as many mandatory courses in one year is unnecessary and greatly contributes to the low mental health scores we see in our profession. We are here for 3 years! Things can be spread out better than this. While puppies and massages and colouring books are great, wrapping up classes a week early and giving students time to "prepare for battle" would be better. Another strategy that can be implemented to support well-being and mental health is to give students more options with respects to final grades. A 3 hour, time-pressured exam is nothing but a test on how fast a person can type and how quickly they can sort information. While I appreciate that some aspects of the legal practice entails thinking quickly on your feet, these "how fast can you advise a client" exercises are ridiculous and not at all reflective of what law is actually like (hearkening back to my previous point about how little law school and law practice have in common). The worst part is that these grades MATTER because any and every single place I have applied to has asked for my grades. Even the December grades in 1L that supposedly "don't count" had to be sent out in application packages for RA positions etc when those were the only grades I had in March. Grades matter and the fact that they can be so unrelated to how much you learned or what you're capable of is seriously stressful and contributes to a lot of student anxiety, depression, and sense of incompetency. All classes should offer the possibility of a 3 hour exam, a 24 hour take home exam, and a paper. Seems unfair? I disagree. What's unfair is picking ONE type of examination process and then stating that what emerges is a legitimate reflection of people's capacities in that subject compared to their classmates. My grades drastically improved when I took seminar courses for which papers were the means of testing but it was too late for me and for my OCI endeavours. It also meant that I didn't get to feel confident in my abilities until second year --

that's a long time for a student who is overwhelmed and trying their hardest to feel like total crap about themselves. This system as a whole is not set up to care about student's mental health, instead, mental health is tacked on as an after thought that simply has no space to operate within the system created. The pressures are insane and the constant fear of doing poorly and determining your entire career because of it is something keenly felt by everyone. So if you want to implement strategies that support students' well-being and mental health, be courageous enough to implement real, big changes, that will have a real and big impact. We know we have counsellors and people we can talk to. we know we can pet a dog in the last week of school. But frankly, someone telling me that my experience is nothing new and the unfortunate result of a system that doesn't really work for all types of learners does not actually fix my problems or my frustration about feeling like I am not being given the opportunity to perform my best. Those resources are great when you get one bad grade or when you're worried about a specific class or when you're going through some rough personal stuff and it's affecting your academic performance. But our law school system has a bigger problem that needs to be uprooted and fixed on a much larger scale -- anything else is simply a bandaid approach.

- Re-evaluate current scholarship and grant funding to ensure that it is being fairly distributed, including among students from other provinces where provincial funding structures differ and may effectively disqualify them from receiving UBC Law aid under the current UBC Law aid terms.
- More explanation from professors regarding their expectations. Opportunities to write mock exams and receive feedback.
- Fewer (if any) 100% exams would do a lot to alleviate stress levels. Also, it is quite ironic that we're warned about substance abuse in the profession and yet I have never been provided more opportunities at school to partake in alcoholic beverages.
- I'm not sure how Allard can do a better job of this, to be honest. I should say, though, that I've had relatively serious problems with mental health generally, including since being here and I haven't felt like there's much I can do about it. I think that's a problem with me and not the school. I guess it's probably not possible to help everyone who needs help.
- Better understanding of how mental health issues as a student will effect their career. E.g.: How is it dealt with by the Bar? Will it affect the student's ability to pass the bar?
- Addressing students' mental health has to go well beyond token motions like bringing in faculty and staff members' dogs to the building the week before exams. There needs to be some kind of ongoing commitment to providing people as accessible and welcoming resources for students to contact about concerns relating to law school or to their personal lives.
- To be honest, so far I have been very impressed by the quality of support on offer at Allard. In particular, the structure of the curriculum (staggered assignments) helps keep the workload manageable and permits the opportunity to really sink my intellectual teeth into each assignment. Given that I have only just embarked on my legal education, this is something I appreciate very much. Likewise I believe the 'fail safe' examination policy for December is an excellent way to mitigate some of the stress and pressure associated with law school and

transforming the experience into an outstanding learning opportunity. April exams seem (slightly!) less daunting now that I have had a practice run.

- It seems like the school cares, and that support is available when needed.
- Bursaries.
- Allard should focus more on academic factors affecting mental health, and less on yoga and meditation. Class schedules, bad professors, courses crammed full of content, and too many readings make me more stressed than trying to do a good downward dog.
- Allow more collaborative work between students on assignments to facilitate better learning opportunities
- Potentially do away with a traditional grade system; other than that I think the law school does a pretty good job at this.
- Convert the Franklin Lew Forum into a 24/7 fitness centre (no SNAILS allowed).

Appendix C

ALSS Consultation, January 19, 2016

On Tuesday, January 19, Bruce and Nikos had a productive meeting with members of the ALSS concerning the first draft of the renewed Strategic Plan. Bruce and I outlined how the consultation process was unfolding, and also let the group know some of the broad themes which have been emerging in the Faculty meetings regarding the first draft.

In terms of the ALSS views, there appeared to be strong support for item A(3)(g) calling for a comprehensive review of the first year program. The representatives stated that this review should include not only the structure of first year classes, but also the subject matter of the courses. It was reported that there are some ongoing issues from a student perspective, such as:

- whether indigenous law should still be taught as a component of constitutional law, or whether it should be taught as a separate course with a separate grade;
- whether the first year factum should continue to be graded on a pass/fail basis;
- whether students should receive an “introduction to law” session or sessions, which would include basic legal concepts and an overview of the structure of the three years of legal education;
- whether there are still too many assignments in first year;
- whether more courses should be offered in the summer, as many students are interested in taking multiple courses in their first summer in order to lessen their course load in the next two years of law school; and,
- whether we should be taping lectures in order that students can access them off-campus, or use them for review purposes.

It was agreed that these types of specific issues would not likely be cited in a Strategic Plan, but justify the Strategic Plan calling for a comprehensive review of the first year program.

Concerns were also raised about curriculum matters not limited to first year, including the lack of full-time Faculty teaching in areas such as family law, aboriginal law, and environmental law. Bruce reported that these areas have been, and continue to be, recognized as strong need areas in the hiring process.

There were some good ideas generated in relation to engaging newer alumni. The students reported that a common frustration is a lack of resources to assist with upper year course selection and planning. Recent graduates would be well placed to give students advice in these areas. Accordingly one potential manner to implement the objective set out in section D(2)(a) and (b) and/or (c) would be to establish a system for recent alumni to connect with students to answer questions and give advice regarding upper year course planning.

It was also asked whether there are anticipated funds to help implement proposed objectives concerning student financial support (see for example A(1)(b) and (c)). It was discussed that without tuition flexibility, it will likely be very challenging to achieve significant differences in financial support for students, but that the Faculty was continually investigating ways to find new revenue sources or increase existing revenue sources to accomplish these objectives.