The Students’ Union, University of Calgary

Campus Infrastructure and Deferred Maintenance Report

February 2018
Introduction

In the Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA) the Government of Alberta notes that one of the purposes of the post-secondary system is to enhance students’ “social, cultural and economic well-being.” However, the system cannot succeed at these goals while hampered by a continued lack of infrastructure investment at the University of Calgary and other campuses across Alberta.

The University of Calgary Students’ Union (SU) passed their first Campus Infrastructure Advocacy Policy in February 2018. In the policy, campus infrastructure “refers to the physical and technological environment” and includes “communal and student spaces, facilities, IT services, and standards of accessibility.”\(^1\) Furthermore, the policy notes that “Infrastructure investment directly impacts the student experience, student productivity, and institutional reputation.”\(^2\) Deferred maintenance specifically refers to the unaddressed maintenance needs of a university’s campus infrastructure. Most recent estimates by the University of Calgary show that the institution is dealing with a deferred maintenance liability of almost $509 million\(^3\).

The Government of Alberta, the university’s single largest investor, uses the Infrastructure Maintenance Program (IMP) to fund maintenance and improvements to facilities on campus. Even with recent increases in investment, deferred maintenance remains an issue. In 2017 the University of Calgary was awarded just 32 percent ($14.4 million) of what the institution needs to keep up infrastructure on campus. Total IMP and institutional funding for repairs and maintenance reached $27.2 million that year. This is $16.8 million short of the $45 million the institution believes it needs annually to strategically address the issue of deferred maintenance.

How can this underfunded aspect of the institution be addressed without taking funding from other areas? It is up to the Students’ Union to ensure that a holistic approach is used to advocate to both the institution and the Government of Alberta. To build a systematic solution for deferred maintenance liability at all 26 public institutions across Alberta, the province must first address those with the largest needs – the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary.

To provide context for this issue, we will look first at the University of Calgary and how deferred maintenance debt impacts students. We will also examine how institutions across the province and peers across Canada have addressed the impact of infrastructure investment on student experience. Finally, we will make recommendations to both the University of Calgary and the Government of Alberta as to how they may address campus infrastructure deficits and deferred maintenance in a strategic way.

Deferred Maintenance at the University of Calgary

Among peer institutions across the country, the University of Calgary ranks 11\(^{th}\) in total deferred maintenance deficit, with $509 million in work outstanding.\(^4\) The University of Calgary evaluates deferred maintenance on a “campus-wide” and “ongoing basis” and notes that “the majority of deferred

\(^1\) University of Calgary Students’ Union, Campus Infrastructure Advocacy Policy
\(^2\) University of Calgary Students’ Union, Campus Infrastructure Advocacy Policy
\(^3\) https://www.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/ucgy/groups/Marketing/2017%20CIP.pdf
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Campus Infrastructure and Deferred Maintenance

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Maintenance work tends to focus on older buildings on campus and is prioritized based on needs of each building, with safety being the first priority". Apart from provincial IMP funding, the institution also earmarks its own funds to address the issue. The institution’s maintenance and repairs budget for 2017-18 was $12.8 million.

In 2012, the University of Calgary established the Classroom Alteration Request (CAR) and Facility Alteration Request (FAR) processes, together known as the CAR/FAR initiative. CAR/FAR provides “funding for classroom, learning space and facility renovations that improve the quality of teaching, learning and research environments on campus, plus the spaces that support those activities.” Faculties can submit annual CAR/FAR proposals, and the funding comes directly from the institution’s internal budget. This year, the CAR/FAR program will fund twelve projects ranging from classroom upgrades and lecture theatre refurbishments to lab and research area improvements.

The federal government also took steps in 2016 to address the growing liability on campus with a $78 million injection of funds into eight projects across campus. This money was matched with $82 million in combined funding from the province, external donors and the institution. The Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) covers up to 50 percent of infrastructure projects at post-secondary institutions across the country in collaboration with provincial governments. The selected projects must “improve the scale or quality of facilities for research and innovation, and/or improves the environmental sustainability of research and innovation infrastructure.” The projects must be completed by April 2018 to receive the one-time funding.

The largest single current infrastructure initiative at the University of Calgary is the MacKimmie Redevelopment, a multi-year, multi-phase project addressing major deferred maintenance and space issues. The project, which will impact not only the MacKimmie Complex but also free up space in other buildings, is being funded by the Government of Alberta with a price tag of over $270 million and has an anticipated completion date of 2022.

The overall capacity of the university has been increased in recent years with the construction of the Energy Environment and Experiential Learning (EEEL) building and the Taylor Family Digital Library (TFDL); however, urgent refurbishments and upgrades to existing buildings are necessary to ensure the sustainability of the campus.

The Students’ Union has a unique partnership with the University of Calgary in the form of Quality Money. Quality Money is approximately $1.5 million provided by the Board of Governors to invest in projects that enhance the overall student experience. The proposal process allows the SU and students-at-large to determine where students feel money should be invested on campus. Furthermore, through the feedback and proposals process the SU is better able to inform the university about the priorities.

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5 https://www.ucalgary.ca/facilities/projects/funding
6 https://www.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/ucgy/groups/Marketing/2017%20CIP.pdf
7 http://ucalgary.ca/facilities/sif
8 https://www.ucalgary.ca/utoday/issue/2017-01-30/mackimmie-redevelopment-project-update-campus-community
and concerns of students. Since 2005/2006 the 26 largest infrastructure projects have totalled more than $8.8 million and include things like the SU Wellness Centre, West Clubs Renovation, MSC Washroom renovations and other major infrastructure projects. This is a key example of the positive impact that students can have on the outcome of infrastructure projects when given the opportunity.
Student Experience

The experience of undergraduate students at the University of Calgary is of the utmost importance to the Students’ Union. This has been exemplified through financial investment in student space in MacEwan Student Centre, advocacy efforts to the institution and government and most recently, the Students’ Legislative Council has formally defined ‘student experience’ as follows.

“The student experience is an incredibly difficult term for us to define as it does not simply entail what happens outside of the classroom but rather it is the intersection of so many different areas of student lives that play out on campus.” The students further defined a portion of their student experience as “our interactions with the facilities and environment that surround us every day and welcome us to spend time on our campus.”

The student experience is impacted heavily by the physical space that students use on campus which is known as student space. While no definitive definition exists, student space is the juncture of classrooms, learning spaces and facilities which improve the quality of education at the university as well as those spaces that support a students extra curricular growth.

The importance of student space to the overall student experience cannot be understated. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), conducted by the Indiana University Centre for Postsecondary Research, asks undergraduate students in their first and final years about their level of engagement. NSSE is an important indicator of student engagement, as the survey reports on ten engagement indicators calculated from 37 core items. These indicators are grouped within four theme areas: academics, learning with peers, experiences with faculty and campus environment. When compared to the 2014 results, the 2017 NSSE survey found a distinct increase in engagement from both first- and fourth-year students.

In 2017, 78 percent of first-year students and 79 percent of senior students rated the University of Calgary as ‘excellent’ or ‘good.’ According to the university, these numbers show improvement since 2014’s results, where “first-year students rated the University of Calgary similar or above the top five average on only seven of ten engagement indicators. Senior students rated the University of Calgary similar or above the top five average on only nine of ten indicators.”

It is noteworthy that the institution’s NSSE scores improved over the past three years, as government investment in capital maintenance and renewal has substantially increased in the same period. As the chart below notes, recent maintenance funding improvements correlate strongly with student satisfaction.

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10 SLC Resolution 75.32 Student Experience SLC 75.21-2017-11-21
11 GFC 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement Information Briefing
This is not to say that the University of Calgary is exemplary in their student experience scores. In a 2016 profile, MacLean’s Magazine noted that “admittedly, the U of C community can seem a bit frosty – regardless of the weather – for those not in business or engineering.”\textsuperscript{12} The University of Calgary is a traditional commuter campus where less than 10% of students live in on-campus residence. This has led to a perception of the school as having an apathetic populace, where students come to campus solely for class and promptly leave. The creation of an environment that welcomes students to spend their time at the university is a key mechanism to combat commuter campus issues.

While there may be some truth to this observation, over 13,450 students (over 50%) belong to at least one of more than 300 student clubs on campus shows that with the proper infrastructure and support students will engage on campus. Since the completion of the SU Clubs Space renovation in Sept. 2013, the space has been heavily used by students. In the 2013/14 Clubs Annual Survey, the top-rated response about the new space was that clubs “Love it!”.

In 2013 a new workroom bookings system was launched, allowing clubs to view available workroom spaces and reserve them online to plan club activities. There were 1142 requests that came through in 2013/14. Despite some technical difficulties with the online reservation system encountered in the 2014/15 academic year, the issues were quickly solved and workroom bookings continued to rise. In 2015/16, a total of 2116 reservations were made by clubs for the workrooms. In 2016/17 (our last available data), over 2900 reservations were made by clubs – this signifies a 154% increase in workroom bookings since implementation.

Similarly, the Q Centre was moved and renovated in 2014. This renovation allowed for increased programming and a significant increase in use of the space by students. Furthermore, according to Q Centre Coordinators the renovation allowed for more sense of community among students accessing

\textsuperscript{12} http://www.macleans.ca/education/university/university-of-calgary-411-where-to-find-the-best-cheap-lunch-and-more/
the space. According to a 2014 midterm report the renovation allowed the Q Centre to “effectively double what we were able to do in the old space.”

The improvement of student space, such as the SU Clubs Space and SU Q Centre show that with investments comes increased engagement. It is increasingly evident given the examples above that the likelihood for success of renovations is increased when student input is encouraged and considered. In short, student driven space renovations lead to an increase in use by students.
Institutions around Alberta and across Canada

As the following chart shows, deferred maintenance liability is an issue across the country. While the problem is ubiquitous, the approaches to address it have varied from one institution to another. For example, the University of British Columbia and Dalhousie University have taken important but vastly different steps to strategically address the issue. Overall the SU believes that students should not be forced to fund the deferred maintenance debt for the institution or for government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U15 Schools</th>
<th>($) Amount of Deferred Maintenance</th>
<th>Student Satisfaction (Maclean’s University Ratings of Student Satisfaction)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Waterloo</td>
<td>$113 million¹³</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Western</td>
<td>$198 million¹⁴</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen’s University</td>
<td>$235 million¹⁵</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Manitoba</td>
<td>$300 million¹⁶</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>$314 million¹⁷</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Saskatchewan</td>
<td>$330 million¹⁸</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalhousie University</td>
<td>$371 million¹⁹</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ottawa</td>
<td>$396 million²⁰</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Calgary</td>
<td>$487.3 million²¹</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>$552 million²²</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Alberta</td>
<td>$938 million²³</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹³ “Ontario Universities’ Facilities Condition Assessment Program”
¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁹ “Budgeting for Dal’s Future: A Look at Recommended Investments in Key Areas,” Dalhousie University, 2017.
https://www.dal.ca/news/2017/03/10/budgeting-for-dal-s-future.html
²³ “University of Alberta deferred maintenance bill nearing $1 billion”, 2017.
University of British Columbia

University of British Columbia (UBC) has a program called “UBC Renew” that “renovates, rather than demolishes, eligible aging buildings at UBC and makes them more sustainable.” This program cites itself as the only one of its kind in Canada, and is a partnership between the institution and the Government of BC. Phase 1 of the project eliminated $77.4 million from UBC’s accumulated deferred maintenance and avoided $89 million in new construction costs.

For UBC’s 2016-2017 budget, the provincial government expanded funding for routine capital to focus on deferred maintenance. This expansion increased provincial funding from $31 million in 2015/2016 to $59 million in 2016/2017. Also, UBC’s Five-Year Capital Plan includes plans for demolition and renovation meant to reduce deferred maintenance by $153.9 million. With UBC Renew students are not burdened with the financial impact of deferred maintenance.

Dalhousie University

Dalhousie charges a facilities renewal fee of $89.50 for a full-time student per term. This fee assists with deferred building maintenance. The Dalhousie Board of Governors has also committed to increasing the deferred maintenance budget by $1 million annually, up to a cap of $30 million. In 2017-2018 Operating Budget Plan, the university committed $1 million more for continuing upgrades to campus.

Proposed Action

It would be unrealistic to expect a one-time investment of almost half a billion dollars to address the deferred maintenance liability at the University of Calgary. Furthermore, this becomes increasingly difficult when you consider that there is close to $1 billion in liability at the University of Alberta and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Deferred Maintenance Costs</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McGill University</td>
<td>$1.3 billion²⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of British Columbia</td>
<td>$1.38 billion²⁵</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²⁶ “UBC Renew,” the University of British Columbia. https://sustain.ubc.ca/campus-initiatives/green-buildings/ubc-renew
²⁷ University of British Columbia Project Services, the University of British Columbia, http://www.projectservices.lbs.ubc.ca/portfolio/renewal/auditorium.htm
over $150 million at the University of Lethbridge. Nevertheless, this situation is unsustainable without decisive action from government and institution. The three institutions highlighted above are some of the oldest in the province, but all post-secondary institutions have some form of deferred maintenance issue that is not being addressed due to a lack of funding. The issue of deferred maintenance at the Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutions must be addressed now so that deferred maintenance at newer institutions can be effectively addressed in the future.

Based on the need for a strategic plan to address deferred maintenance liability at institutions across Alberta and specifically the University of Calgary we recommend the following:

- The Government of Alberta increase funding to the Infrastructure Maintenance Program to reach ten per cent of total deferred maintenance debt at institutions across Alberta so that they may begin strategically addressing the issue. To receive this funding, institutions must put forward a plan which would address their existing deferred maintenance liability within 10 years and an annual plan to address maintenance of the institution to ensure that deferred maintenance does not continue to be an issue after the existing liability is reduced.

- The University of Calgary must look at programs (such as UBC Renew) which focus on renovation rather than demolition. The increased investment made by the Government of British Columbia has enabled the province to save money in the long run and the institution to increase the impact that their own deferred maintenance funds have across campus. This program has meant that the institution can strategically plan to decrease their total deferred maintenance liability by over $150 million within five years. CAR/FAR would be the perfect, already in place, program to further develop, expand, and invest in.

- In collaboration with the Students’ Union, the University of Calgary must continue to develop and implement inclusive, transparent processes that involve students from the start, as early as project selection. As noted above, the more students are involved in the renovation process, such as with the SU Clubs Space and SU Q Centre, the more likely that the outcome will be student focused and heavily utilized by students.
Appendix I – Campus Infrastructure Advocacy Policy

Campus Infrastructure Advocacy Policy

Students’ Legislative Council (75.48)

Passed: February 13, 2018 (75.29)

Definitions

Campus Infrastructure refers to the physical and technological environment of the University of Calgary campus. Campus infrastructure includes (but is not limited to) communal and study spaces, facilities, IT services, and standards of accessibility. Infrastructure investment directly impacts the student experience, student productivity, and institutional reputation.

Campus Alteration Request/Facilities Alteration Request (CAR/FAR) refers to a University of Calgary program which addresses Deferred Maintenance by updating and improving specific spaces on campus.

Deferred Maintenance refers to a university’s Campus Infrastructure maintenance needs which have not been addressed, and which have been consciously deferred in favour of other budget priorities, generally for reasons of available funding. An institution’s total Deferred Maintenance liability is the amount of funding that would be required to address all outstanding Campus Infrastructure maintenance needs.

Authority

1 (1) Section 93(3) of the Post-Secondary Learning Act legislates that the students’ association of a public post-secondary institution shall provide for the administration of student affairs at the public post-secondary institution, including the promotion of the general welfare of the students consistent with the purposes of the public post-secondary institution.

(2) Article VI, Section B of the Constitution establishes the Students’ Legislative Council (SLC) as the policy-making body responsible for the business and affairs of the Students’ Union (SU).

Purpose

2 (1) This policy demonstrates that the SU recognizes Campus Infrastructure as vital to student welfare, academic success, and the student experience.

(2) This policy provides a guiding vision for SU governance, advocacy, and operations as they relate to Campus Infrastructure and Deferred Maintenance.
(3) This policy identifies student priorities which guide SU advocacy in the realm of Campus Infrastructure at the University of Calgary.

Policy Statement

3 (1) The SU will strive to advocate for all student needs related to Campus Infrastructure, and will:

(a) Promote a holistic, inclusive understanding of student needs in the realm of Campus Infrastructure, including but not limited to classrooms, study areas, social spaces, accessibility, and IT support;
(b) Promote student needs as priorities for CAR/FAR and other University of Calgary programs which develop and maintain Campus Infrastructure, including efforts to address Deferred Maintenance;
(c) Assess and respond to Campus Infrastructure development and maintenance issues related to the student experience;
(d) Assess and respond to student satisfaction with development and maintenance of Campus Infrastructure;
(e) Advocate to government and the University for strategic measures to address Deferred Maintenance liability; and
(f) Play an active role in discussions with the University of Calgary regarding Deferred Maintenance and Campus Infrastructure.

3 (2) The SU will make accessibility a priority in its advocacy efforts, and will promote Campus Infrastructure development and maintenance measures which improve accessibility, especially in spaces used by students.