March 4, 2020

**RE: Proposed Arts and Culture Fee**

Dr. Barker,

On behalf of the Students’ Legislative Council (SLC) and the University of Calgary Students’ Union (SU), I want to thank you for the opportunity to learn more about the proposed Arts and Culture Mandatory Non-Instructional Fee (MNIF).

The value of the proposed services provided by a fee of this kind is clear. The SU is proud to have supported three iterations of the Claim Your Seat program from 2010 – 2016. Furthermore, we understand and strongly support the need for increased funding for the School of Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA) in order to increase accessibility and affordability of both student performances and spaces. The SU (through SU Quality Money) has funded important renovations to SCPA spaces in the past – such as the SCPA Intersection. It is deeply concerning to us that the department must rely on one-time money or donations to maintain their facilities on an ongoing basis.

Despite our shared concern, SLC cannot ignore the fact that the recent tuition and fee increases will have a significant impact on undergraduate students. These increases will have a long-term impact on the overall affordability of post-secondary in Alberta. As such, SLC is **unable to support the introduction of the Arts and Culture MNIF.**

SLC takes its responsibilities around the decision-making process for new MNIFs incredibly seriously. Consultation with students and student associations ensures that all perspectives are considered prior to the implementation of these fees. We look forward to future opportunities to collaboratively enhance the student experience and quality of education on our campus.

On behalf of SLC, I am happy to provide the following recommendations and conditions under which SLC may reconsider the Arts and Culture MNIF:

- Distribution of a survey to all students that focuses on evaluating the potential impact of an Arts and Culture Fee. This survey should also gauge potential student interest in the Claim Your Seat program/the fee itself. The SU is open to collaborating with the SCPA to develop survey questions. Involving students in this process and asking for letters of support from them will show that this consultation was successful and done in good faith.
• Clear marketing plans that include a mechanism for student feedback, a clear explanation of how the program will work, and a long-term vision for the Arts and Culture fee/Arts Pass program. Communication with students is incredibly important in the lead-up, roll-out, and long-term vision for this type of program.

• A trial year of the new ticket reservation and usage data collection is implemented, data from which should be included in the new proposal. While SU Quality Money has a competitive application process, it may be considered as one of many funding sources to fund this trial year.

• That the proposal only comes forward in a year when tuition and fee increases are between 0% and CPI – including any increases to the Student Services, Campus Recreation, and Athletics fees.

• Additional information on why an opt-out Arts and Culture Fee is not possible. Given the new ticket reservation and data collection process that is being proposed, it is unclear as to why an opt-out fee would be difficult to implement. The UCalgary Student Assistance Bursary fee is a current example of an opt-out model.

• The University of Calgary shows their commitment to the SCPA and to fine arts on campus by budgeting for regular and ongoing maintenance of SCPA facilities. Any examples of recent external fundraising efforts should be included in any future MNIF proposal(s).

• A written and public commitment by the SCPA and the Vice-Provost (Student Experience) to not increase the Arts and Culture Fee (if introduced) for a minimum of 5 years, with a provision that any necessary future increases past this 5-year period be limited strictly to CPI.

SLC encourages the proponents of this proposal to continue their valuable work in advocating for the SCPA and the Faculty of Arts. On behalf of the undergraduate students at the University of Calgary, I sincerely appreciate your understanding.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Revington
President
Students’ Union, University of Calgary

CC: Pascale Sicotte, Vice-Dean (Faculty of Arts)
    Dru Marshall, Provost and Vice Present (Academic)