

# AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT BARNARD



***The UM needs more full-time academic staff, research funding for graduate students, and childcare support: An open letter to President Barnard about the University budget***

March 21, 2018

Dear President Barnard,

At this time of year the administration is hard at work preparing the University's budget. While we're angry about the government's decision to reduce the University's operating grant and shift even more of the financial burden of higher education to students, it has to be acknowledged that tuition increases will likely more than cover the decrease in public funding. Similarly, the Association is once again forced to raise concerns about financial surpluses generated at the University: the financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2017 show that UM's operating surplus before inter-fund transfers was \$102 million. Given these choices and realities we owe it to our students to ensure that our budget priorities see more of our resources go to the University's core functions of teaching and research and make this university the best place it can be for the entire university community.

To that end, as the new budget is developed I urge you to address three key priorities that me and my fellow UMFA members have strongly and consistently identified over the past two years:

### **1) Increased hiring of full time, permanent academic positions.**

Instructors and professors continue to struggle with their heavy workloads, managing increased class sizes and graduate student supervision, and their service activities. Academic librarians face similar problems, with many librarians doing the work of two or more people. A strong faculty complement means we can provide the best student experience possible while performing the research necessary to advance knowledge in our fields and maintain and enhance UM's reputation. In last year's budget \$3.6 million was allocated to faculty and support staff renewal in academic units. Nevertheless, members electing early retirement or leaving for other reasons contribute to the chronic understaffing of our academic units. We ask the administration to make a commitment for faculty renewal as least as large as last year in the upcoming budget year.

### **2) Funding for graduate students**

Competitive and stable funding for graduate students is desperately needed and would be transformative for UM and the members of the UM community. Five years of GETS funding – from 2011 to 2016 – led to a 30% increase in the number of graduate students per research faculty in science, taking us to 85% of the U15 average. GETS funding has since been rolled back, now funding a maximum of one graduate student per faculty member. Furthermore, GETS funding is tied to tri-council funding, which has been underfunded for decades, disadvantages basic science, and is subject to the whims of government (see the Get Science Right campaign at <http://science.caut.ca/>).

This budget should include a robust program of multi-year guaranteed graduate student funding that is uncoupled from other faculty grant funding and accompanies students' offer of admission would allow us to: 1) attract talented graduate students; 2) provide our graduate students with a fair and reasonable wage; 3) provide gifted and motivated TA's to our undergraduate population; and 4) allow our faculty to strike a better balance between doing research versus chasing research funding.

### **3) Daycare spaces for the entire university community at Bannatyne**

As the 2013 report of the UM Childcare Working Group indicated, childcare spaces are desperately needed to serve the university community. The Fort Garry childcare chips away at that need, but many more spaces are needed and there are no childcare facilities at the Bannatyne campus or even in the surrounding neighborhood. With the construction of new buildings taking place at the downtown campus, now is the time to make space for a childcare facility.

We suggest that the administration create a non-profit daycare centre accommodating 100 childcare spaces to the university community at the Bannatyne campus, and that the premises be provided to the daycare centre by the university for \$1 per year. The estimated cost would be \$4.5 million in one-time capital funding, approximately the savings realized by the administration in UMFA wages during the 2016 3-week strike.

Cameron Morrill has been appointed by UMFA to be our representative on the UMFA Budget Advisory Committee. He is well versed in the financial situation of the University and the priorities of UMFA members, and we hope will serve as a useful resource to the committee.

Yours truly,  
Janet Morrill  
UMFA President

cc. Lynn Zapshala-Kelln, VP Administration  
Harvey Sexter, Chancellor  
Tanjit Nagra, President, University of Manitoba Student Union  
Carl Neumann, President, University of Manitoba Graduate Students' Association  
The Manitoban



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