



iSchool Student Townhall

Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

Date: October 23, 2020 2:30 – 3:15 PM

Number in Attendance: 54, Debra Locke (Minute Taker)

Introductions

Erik: Welcome, I'm the director of the School of Information. I'm speaking from downtown Vancouver which is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh people.

Welcome to the town hall. This is your session and your hour and a half to ask questions. We will address the current situation at the School, which is still closed due to the COVID-19 emergency. We may not know all the answers and not much has changed since we last met in September. Classes will continue to be taught online through Winter term 2. If any circumstances change, students will still finish their work online so you do not have to be in Vancouver.

Thank you for filling out the student survey. 122 students completed the survey which was really helpful. I've learned lots of points that are of importance to you and your learning experience and I have also learned about areas we can improve on. I will take these points on board and will evaluate what we can do better on moving forward.

We have received news from Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies regarding international student travel. URL: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/coronavirus-covid19/students.html>

UBC is on the list with 39 other secondary institutions which have approved Covid-19 readiness plans. There are lots of steps to take if you make the decision to come to Canada and please ensure you check the website very carefully. It is not an easy process and you will be required to self-isolate when you come to Canada. There is no need for you to come here, since all winter term 2 courses will be offered online. Lisa has popped in the chat information on housing for international students who are coming to Vancouver and need to self-isolate.

URL: <https://www.housing.ubc.ca/self-isolate/vancouver/>

Questions and Answers:

1. I had a couple requests from students who couldn't attend today about any updates regarding the iSchool lounge. Will the space continue to be closed until further notice, or can adequate precautions be taken to allow limited capacity, masks required, socially distanced, etc. study space?

Erik: The space continues to be closed until further notice. Adequate precautions have been taken to limit capacity. The design of the space does not allow for socially distant study space. We're in stage 1 of opening our school, and we've been in that stage for quite a long time. There are some very limited number of faculty offices open for faculty members who have challenges working at home. There is a possibility that when the school will enter stage 2 of the opening plan, PhD students and adjunct faculty will be allowed to use the space. We will not be able to accommodate students into the lounge for the foreseeable future. This is the directive from the Faculty of Art who are following University guidelines on safety.

Erik: There are a number of students allowed in the Irving K Barber Centre and I believe there is a signup system. I also heard that they've never hit the full capacity of 240.

Belen: Here is the official announcement from UBC Library about booking a space:
<https://ikblc.ubc.ca/spaces/book-a-study-space/>

2. Do we know anything about 2021 graduations yet?

Erik: No, I'm afraid we're taking it step by step and don't know anything yet for 2021 graduates. As for Fall 2020 graduation, the school will run its own graduation session event, and I hope to see many people there.

3. I know that you can't tell us whether Summer session will be online or in person yet, but will we know the answer to that before we sign up for Summer courses?

Erik: Yes, we will make sure that you know well in advance of the summer session. We are currently waiting for the university to decide on summer courses and we will update you all as soon as we hear more on this.

4. Once this semester ends will there be a sort of check-in regarding how the first full semester of classes went? i.e. what worked, what didn't, potential changes to be made moving forward etc.

Erik: Yes, I would love to have another student survey and we will continue to offer the surveys frequently to keep tabs on how things are going. Based on the feedback we receive from these surveys, we might change some of our approaches to teaching. The feedback is important to us. Additionally, we will continue to hold these town halls and we will likely offer another one in December.

5. I realize that this may not be your field of expertise, but what happens if we are accepted to co-op and pay the co-op fee, but then can't participate due to covid/border stuff?

Kevin: Anna Jublio would be best-positioned to answer that, as the Co-op dept has its own process. As for the COVID/border issue, this would be one of the benefits of travelling to Vancouver at this time. Even though there is no need to travel here since courses are offered online. For those specific international students who are outside of Canada, you will recall that being outside of Vancouver renders you ineligible to participate in work experiences, so this might be something you wish to consider given what came to light as of October 20th.

6. Hello! I'm curious as to what the iSchools response to UBC's Indigenous Strategic Plan is? Has this been part of any discussions?

Erik: Yes, the plan has been part of various discussions, in various capacities, with various people. The school is currently working on its strategy to implement the plan and improve curricula and courses to align with the plan. It is not something that can be done within a week, but I will emphasize that there have been explicit talks about it in various capacities. We have also included it as a key strategic commitment in our annual strategic plan which we provide to the Deans Office.

7. At the risk of flaunting my ignorance, what came to light on the 20th? Are Americans now able to cross the border? I was under the impression that it was going to be a while before that is an option, though students outside of North America are considered higher urgency.

Kevin: As Erik discussed, there has been a number of institutions in British Columbia who are approved to “reopen” to international students and allow them enter BC. Don't just dash for the border though. Read everything carefully. See if you have everything you need. I'll just add that international student advising sent an email yesterday to all international students, so please check your emails. It gives you a very detailed list of considerations and requirements and what to bring with you and what you might need to do, given different personal circumstances, etc.

8. Unrelated but: As information professionals how do you see our field changing because of this pandemic? What professional capacities do you think students should be attempting to develop?

Erik: It is too soon to say anything about it, but it seems that trying to keep some of our courses online beyond this emergency, especially for a different audience, might be a positive impact of the changing field, or at least of our role as school in that field. It is possible that the library and archival world may change in the long run because of the COVID-emergency; think of the impact of online consultation during the emergency and the proven importance of digitization in a world that consults books and archival materials exclusively online. An impact closer to home is how, if the emergency lingers, your entry in the professional world will be different than that of graduates in previous years. Think of job interviews in COVID-times.

On that note, I wish to remind everybody there's a platform called 10,000 Coffees. UBC and our school is involved with this. You can sign up, get in touch and network with students who have completed their degree and are currently in the professional work force. They can help you make the leap from school to working world, including taking some of the hurdles put in place by COVID-19.

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Belen: iSchool Student-Alumni Virtual Coffee Chats > <https://ischool.ubc.ca/student-alumni-virtual-coffee-chats/>

9. I was confused by the emails about re-registering now that classes are for sure online next term. If we don't want to make any changes to our schedule, do we have to re-register for classes or can we just ignore the new registration dates?

Kevin: You don't need to do anything because our courses are already online. No need to de-register or then re-register.

10. If we take the recommended courses for term 2 of the MAS program we have 9 hours of class on Monday. Are course schedules going to be adjusted or are they set in stone at this point?

Erik: It is too late to make any scheduling changes for term 2. The problem, has been brought to my attention and I'll make sure that it doesn't happen again for next year.

11. Will there be a FNCC info session happening this fall?

Kevin: Amy Perreault is in the best position to answer this, but I don't think Amy's here. FNCC info session tea has already happened in early Sept, but students can always get in touch with Amy directly to learn about any upcoming sessions.

Lisa: Just a plug for the FNCC Teas. Those are also a good place to share information with other students and various different people stop by those. It's a good place to learn and put some general feelers out as well.

12. On the subject of FNCC: Are there ways of receiving help finding co-op/ volunteer/ etc. positions since a lot of organizations are not operating online?

Kevin: I would greatly welcome students to get in touch with me directly. We can work with the specific organizations or just explore broad areas if you don't have a specific area in mind and you're thinking about volunteering or experiential learning. For Co-op I wouldn't be able to speak to it, although we do share the same list of potential employers and organizations.

13. I know that we have to be in Canada to participate with co-op, but can we do unpaid internships in the U.S. if that happens to be where we are?

Kevin: The answer is yes. The regulation mostly revolves around payment. If you're not a paid employee, then you know doing experiential learning outside of Canada is fine. I'm currently working with Faculty of Arts to introduce a new safety form for students on placements. There will be a few more degrees of paperwork involved, but yes, you can do that.

Anita (LASSA President): Feel free to send me your questions! LASSA will be posting more information soon about signing up for mentorship with alumni and students that are further ahead in their studies.