

UVic Diversity Writing Contest 2016, Second-Place Non-Fiction Winner

By Jonathan Faerber

A Vision for the Future

To be a diverse, welcoming learning community, with a demonstrated commitment to equity and fairness.

I stood in the snow, waiting for my bus home, but my mind was 895 kilometers away, in the sun. In the sun, the grass was green, the trees were in full bloom, and the children laughed as we walked. In my mind, this was the future. This future was a vision—an illusion. In this illusion, there was a community, and a fair chance. The illusion was attractive: it represented an equitable offer.

There was no point waiting for clues, cheating time.

I had to trust my values, and make a commitment.

Would it work? Could *I* work?

To actively recruit and retain outstanding students from diverse regions and backgrounds and remove barriers to admission and retention other than academic and creative potential.

And then I thought about the children.

The provincial capital had a good school system. Its university had a Family Centre. It had child care.

But my children had the best care I could possibly want. I would never have finished school without it. I wondered whether I could manage school without care. Certainly, BC's chronic lack of care posed a significant barrier to study and work.

The last four years were exhausting. But they were rewarding. I put off a decision for four days. I declined offers that would not work. There was nothing to do but accept the one that, I thought, would.

I shrugged. There was a difference between a barrier and a risk.

I trusted my values. I made a commitment.

It *would* work. I *could* work.

To support the student experience by building a comprehensive and integrated student service environment focused on anticipating and meeting the needs of our increasingly diverse student body.

I stood in the crowd, waiting for an answer, but my mind was 895 kilometers away, some years earlier, in the snow.

I had never felt more alone.

He talked as if I was not there. I do not know if I listened. I was not there.

I had asked how a less accessible, less equitable student service *improves* our campus under the terms of our Strategic Plan. I had asked about child care.

He had said it wasn't a priority. There wasn't enough money.

He turned away. He shrugged. He snickered. He said:

I just don't want to talk about child care anymore.

To obtain adequate government funding for operating purposes to support the achievement of our goals.

And the silence was suffocating. It hung in the air, palpable and persistent.

He toyed with his pen. He studied his smartwatch.

The moment was surreal. The minutes stretched credulity.

I was running out of time. I had children to take care of. I was impatient.

So I asked, for the fourth time, why UVic had not obtained adequate government funding to support students with children.

I repeated: the BC Child Care Capital Funding Program had poured millions into child care programs at BC's post-secondary institutions. Almost all had applied for government funding. UVic hadn't.

And now, four years after renewing their Strategic Plan, *there wasn't enough money* for child care.

He turned away. He shrugged. He snickered. He said:

I am not going to answer that question.

To manage and protect our human, financial, physical and information resources in a responsible and sustainable fashion.

An answer: my university won't include me. We haven't obtained enough government funding to remove enough barriers. After all, child care is not among our *operating purposes to support the achievement of our goals*. The Strategic Plan is the basis for this jurisdiction, according to our Board of Governors.

I am standing in the snow, waiting for my bus home, but my mind is 895 kilometers away, in the rain. In the rain, the mud is brown, the buildings are gray, and the children cry as we watch.

In my mind, this is the future. This future is a vision—an illusion. In this illusion, there is no community; no fair chance. The illusion is repulsive: it represents exclusion and inequity. A broken promise. A demonstrated commitment *against* diversity.

There is no point waiting for clues, cheating time.