

From the Vancouver Sun, August 20, Letters.

Resignation of Arvind Gupta is a Serious Setback for UBC

As faculty members at UBC we were as surprised as anyone by the August 7 announcement of Arvind Gupta's resignation as President of UBC. Dr. Gupta had a vision for the university that was shaped by those who study and work here. He valued faculty and created the Presidential Academic Advisory Committee to seek their advice. PAAC was presented with a one year mandate when Dr. Gupta convened it on March 2. It is a cross-section of 14 faculty members from both UBC campuses on which we were happy to serve. A request for input from a group of faculty members who are on the front lines of the teaching and research mission of the university may seem like an obvious step for a university president, but it is often not the way public universities function. Typically, faculty speak to their department chairs, who speak to their deans, who in turn interact with the central administration including the provost and president. Information can get lost. Dr. Gupta's idea was in our experience a very innovative one.

After presenting a far-reaching snapshot of his activities to date and his developing priorities for the university he asked us to focus on the hiring and retention of distinguished faculty, the development of broad research communities within UBC, and improved support for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. A series of meetings followed including a highly motivating day-long retreat chaired by Dr. Gupta, and a meeting with Provost Angela Redish and VP John Hepburn on June 25 where our reports were combined with input from Faculty Deans.

Our time on PAAC has been an extremely rewarding experience for us and we believe one which was also valued by Arvind Gupta and UBC's Central Administration. Having worked directly with Dr. Gupta we can attest to his sincere and driven commitment to make the university a better place for learning and research. It also makes his announced resignation all the more perplexing in our eyes. Given that the August 7 announcement is a serious step back for UBC, we all need to learn how such setbacks can be avoided in the future. The current lack of information does make this more difficult. We hope very much that Dr. Gupta's efforts and vision will continue to play a role as we move forward.

Sincerely,

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