



2020 - 2021 AGM Report Workplace Health, Safety and Environment FPSE Representative

Dear VIUFA membership,

Thank you for reading the report below and allowing me to represent you again in this capacity this year and for the past 7 years. This has been a challenging year for all of us.

Looking for a new Representative - And an Offer to Support

When I was asked in 2014 to represent VIUFA on the FPSE's committee and by extension, to be a part of the VIUFA executive, and to participate at VIU's Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC), I jumped at the chance. It has been a wonderful experience where I have learned much, and I hope I have also been able to make some small measure of difference.

In addition to the always engaging and interesting discussion around the VIUFA Executive table, I have also particularly enjoyed the JOHSC especially for the past year and a half as co-chair.

As much as I have enjoyed it, I believe it is important that representation changes on a regular basis to bring new ideas and energy. That said, when I had thought of a 5-year plan, I did not anticipate a pandemic entering the picture!

If you have made it this far into this report then perhaps you already have an interest in this topic, and I encourage you to raise your hand at the AGM if you are willing to be the FPSE WHSEC representative for VIUFA. I would humbly suggest that now, even with the pandemic, would be a great time for someone new in this role. My position as co-Chair of the JOHSC ends at the end of 2021 so I will still be there through the Fall and I would be happy to support you as my time ends there and to prepare you for the FPSE AGM this spring, and the WHSE committee meeting in the Fall.

The time commitment is not onerous. The people you will meet and get to know around all three of these tables, are interesting, thoughtful, and often passionate and I would recommend this position to anyone who has an interest in dipping their toes in the union activism pool.

That said, if no one is prepared to step forward I would be honoured to offer to continue my service to the Union and all of you. And now, on to the rest of my report.

FPSE - WHSEC Committee Update

COVID-19 provincially

As you can imagine, the Committee's work and time at the Provincial level has been consumed with considerations around COVID-19. The greatest concern from all institutions seems to be the lack of consultation with faculty when Administration, or the Province, has imposed restrictions or conditions on campuses. At the very least there is a lack of communication.

Bullying and Harassment

On the non-COVID related front, the FPSE WHSEC remains focused on mental health related issues as they become more prevalent across all of our institutions with recognition also that this is being made worse by the pandemic. Worksafe BC has produced materials specific to COVID-19 stress and mental health.

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/news-events/announcements/2020/December/two-new-resources-address-mental-health-effects-of-covid-19-in-workplace?origin=s&returnurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.worksafebc.com%2Fen%2Fsearch%23q%3Dmental%2520health%2520covid%26sort%3Drelevancy%26f%3Alanguage-facet%3D%5BEnglish%5D>

Bullying, and other emotional harassment and violence both between students and faculty and between faculty members, is slowly being recognized in workplaces as a real threat to the health and safety of workers. There is still what one might call a cultural resistance at the Administration, Worksafe BC, and even Union levels to the idea that non-physical violence is just as serious as physical trauma.

VIU Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee

I have been serving as co-Chair on VIU's Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee since 2019. I want to thank Jessie from the Chemistry department for his help, input, and support on the Committee.

COVID-19 at VIU

The Health and Safety department continues to work extremely hard to create a safe working environment on campus and I want to first make sure that I acknowledge their efforts over the past year. Many programs have continued even during the pandemic and have done so safely and effectively which is a credit to H&S, the Faculty, the Students and Facilities for making it all work.

The safety ambassador program in particular has been key in ensuring that everyone is following the masking and distance guidelines in place on campus. H&S appreciates and welcomes all reports you might have of potentially unsafe conditions. Please don't hesitate to continue to contact them.

The expectation is that masking and distance guidelines that are currently in place will remain in the Fall. I believe the H&S and Risk Management office will continue to take a conservative approach to pandemic safety on campus. That is certainly the approach I will be advocating.

We have had —knocking-on-wood— only one confirmed case of COVID-19 at VIU that has resulted in notifications being sent to a class. This occurred at the Cowichan campus last Fall.

Health and Safety continues to work to prepare back-to-campus plans at both a department and wider level for when we expect to come back in September. If you haven't already, I would strongly encourage you to phone or email the Health and Safety office if you have any questions or concerns on your return to campus. Every department will need to complete a safety plan. If you haven't already talked to your department, Dean, or managers about a safety plan, now is the time.

That said, the latest from the Ministry indicates that we will not have a firm idea of what the September return will look like until August 1st. That is a long way away.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures - Pandemic Return Edition

Finally, while COVID-19 is certainly enough of an emergency, there are still other threats to be aware of.

This is a friendly reminder that if you are returning to face-to-face instruction, you may need to update your emergency evacuation message that you deliver to your students at the start of the term, so that it is compatible with any movement restrictions that might be in place inside or outside of your classroom and building.

Thank you for your time and attention and the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully Submitted,
Chris

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