

[About](#)[Services & Assistance](#)[Members](#)[WorkLife](#)[Collective Agreement](#)[Resources](#)[Issues in Depth](#)

Message from the President – Update on Return to Campus

Posted on August 09, 2021 at 9:55 AM

Dear Colleagues,

On 12 July 2021, I, as FA President, sent a letter to the UBC senior administration asking a variety of questions about the reopening plans for UBC's campuses. The questions were prompted by many communications we had received from our members. Some of the questions were questions of detail regarding expectable scenarios in our classroom, labs, libraries, and offices that were not addressed in the 5 July Guidelines. I also asked, however, to see the University's risk-benefit analysis, in order to see the facts and the values underpinning the decision not to go beyond the provisions in 5 July reopening guidelines. The FA has not to-date received a response to this letter of 12 July.

In light of the recent massive increase in cases in BC, the virulence of the delta variant, which is beginning to dominate here, and with the advantage of seeing what is happening in other jurisdictions that are relying only on voluntary measures, but without the benefit of the University's own thinking, the FA has decided it must now formulate its own position. In our thinking we have

QUICK LINKS

[Membership Services](#)

[Contract Faculty Info & Events](#)

[Salaries](#)

[Benefits](#)

[Contact Us](#)

considered the preeminent moral concern of the University to be the health and wellbeing of its employees and students and of their families. We also owe special consideration to those among us with the greatest health vulnerabilities.

So today we have sent a letter to President Ono and the Chair of the Board of Governors Nancy McKenzie proposing the following set of measures:

“In light of the known knowns, known unknowns, and the unknown unknowns, and in the absence of any risk analysis brought forward by the University, we now believe that a robustly precautionary approach is most appropriate. We therefore call upon UBC to adopt an indoor mask mandate in all its spaces and a vaccine mandate for all its employees and students (subject to the normal legal exemptions) in advance of the September reopening. This course of action will not only do the most to alleviate well-founded anxiety but will also allow the most secure planning of teaching and research activities.”

We look forward to working with the University to bring these policies into effect.

Alan Richardson
President

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Executive Committee
Standing Committees
Staff

Services & Assistance

Workplace Problems
Advocacy
Housing

Members

Research Stream Faculty

WorkLife

Tenure/Tenure-Track
Librarians
Sessionals

Collective Agreement

Bargaining 2019
Bargaining 2016

Constitution and Bylaws

Programs and Events

Educational Leadership Stream Faculty

Promotion & Tenure Process

Bargaining 2014

Privacy and Protection of Personal Information

Lecturers

Leaves

Bargaining 2012

Grievances and Appeals

Lecturers

Retirement

Bargaining 2010

Resources

Sessional Lecturers

Salaries

Bargaining Blog Index

Annual Reports

Librarians

Benefits

Legal Decisions

Faculty Focus Newsletters

Program Directors

Career Development

Okanagan Bulletins

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External Links

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UBCFA Member Notices



Vancouver Campus
112-1924 West Mall, Vancouver,
BC V6T 1Z2
T 604 822 3883 | F 604 222 0174

Okanagan Campus
Arts 353B 3333 University Way,
Kelowna, BC V1V 1V7
T 604 822 3883 | F 604 222 0174