

August 23, 2021

OPEN LETTER RE: Safe Return to Campus

Dear President Saini,

In light of recent developments in the COVID landscape, and the lack of satisfactory safeguards and information provided by Dalhousie Administration with respect to a safe return to campus, the DFA Executive Committee is demanding the following:

- mandatory vaccinations for all faculty, students and staff;
- mandatory masking in all indoor public spaces;
- mandatory physical distancing where possible; and
- ventilation that meets public health guidelines.

These demands are widely supported by the DFA membership.

In a recent survey to which 51% of DFA Members responded only 6.2% of respondents will feel safe without having any extra health and safety measures in place if we are in Phase 4.

Further, DFA Members indicated the following:

- 71% want discretion to hold on-line meetings
- 70% want mandatory vaccines to be on campus
- 64% want mandatory indoor mask use
- 64% want ability to mandate mask use
- 57% want minimum of 6 ACH in indoor spaces
- 45% want limits on capacity in small public areas

To date, Dalhousie has failed to provide an adequate return to campus plan, and yet 90% of our respondents indicated that Dalhousie providing a university-wide detailed plan that ensures institutional support in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak in their class was important to them (78% indicated it was very important; 12% indicated it was important).

The recent letter sent to you and the Board of Governors by Dalhousie's Health Law Institute was penned by experts on our own campus, and presents the ethical, economic, and medical issues involved in returning to campus without a comprehensive health and safety plan in place.

Thousands of students, staff and faculty are expected back on campus in just over two weeks for the start of Fall term. With so many questions unanswered, and vague protocols outlined by the Administration, our Members are feeling unsafe and anxious about returning to campus.

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The Delta variant is fast spreading, a fourth wave is brewing in parts of our country, [only 58% of Canadians age 18-29 are fully vaccinated](#) (as of August 14/21), and Nova Scotia is unlikely to move into Phase 5 before the beginning of term.

There is a growing list of Canadian universities requiring vaccine mandates and other measures in order to ensure the health and safety of university faculty, staff and students.

On August 19, 2021 the University of Manitoba announced all faculty, staff, students and campus visitors will be required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. They indicated that individuals aged 12 and over are required to have their first vaccine dose by September 22, 2021 and their second vaccine dose by the end of October 2021. Further, the University of Manitoba stated that the wearing of masks will be mandatory for all indoor activities on all their campuses. Masking for outdoors while participating in university sanctioned activities off-campus will be required at any time when two metres distancing is not possible.

Memorial University has stated that vaccines are required for all students, faculty and staff and that as of August 23, masks will be required on all Memorial campuses in all indoor spaces.

These and similar actions by our comparator universities demonstrate a thoughtful and meaningful response to the COVID situation and a concern for the health and safety of faculty, students and staff. These actions are based on the latest science from experts, some of whom are part of the research-intensive universities across Canada. Dalhousie likes to count itself among such universities and it is therefore high time to behave accordingly.

On behalf of our Members, we call on you to meet our demands and provide clarity on the concerns outlined above.

Sincerely,



Dr. Tara Perrot
DFA President, 2021-22

- c. M. Shinyei, Acting Director, Academic Staff Relations
- D. Westwood, DFA Grievance Committee, Chair