

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CAFA Calls for an Accommodation Process in all Alberta Universities and Colleges**

Edmonton, August 31, 2021 — The Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations is pleased that the three largest research-intensive universities—Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge—have altered their return to campus plans to reflect the scientific consensus on how to keep our communities safe: we are particularly pleased that these institutions have introduced a masking mandate across campuses, will promote and facilitate local vaccine uptake, stipulated regular testing for the unvaccinated, and have instituted an isolation policy for COVID positive individuals.

“CAFA hopes that all Alberta universities and colleges look to the example set by these three institutions in efforts to keep Alberta post-secondary students, staff and faculty safe,” notes Dr. Kevin Kane, President of CAFA and Professor of Medical Microbiology & Immunology at the University of Alberta.

While these are significant first steps, we still believe that our institutions can and must do more to keep our campus communities safe. It is the universities’ responsibility to provide healthy and safe workplaces for all their employees.

“Faculty and professional staff are still concerned that legally mandated campus occupational health and safety committees are being sidelined by university administrations. We want health and safety directions to reflect the decisions made by such joint mandated committees that are represented in part, by active faculty and staff who know working conditions and circumstances,” states Dr. Kevin Kane.

In addition, CAFA believes that our members still need a commitment by senior university leadership to provide real time information on campus vaccination rates and outbreak data. We are experiencing a fluid situation with the highly infectious CoV2 Delta variant that could prove challenging in course delivery, and in the health and safety of all members of our campus communities. In the face of this challenge, timely information on vaccination rate as well as outbreak data will best inform any potential changes in campus activities inside and/or outside the classroom on our campuses.

Faculty have the academic freedom to teach the course content and the pedagogical method they decide which best accomplishes the learning objectives of their classes: CAFA interprets that to include deciding which course delivery methods fit their teaching objectives, and will be less disruptive if the CoV2 Delta variant forces classes to pivot delivery methods. We hope that all accommodation policies will take into consideration both the campus communities' health and our members' academic freedom.

CAFA is calling on all Albertan universities and colleges to develop reasonable and scientifically valid accommodation policies. We would hope these policies take in consideration the emergence of the virulence Delta variation of COVID and the increasing case count that is emerging across the province. Professors and lecturers need to be able to make sure their classrooms are safe: not only for themselves, but their families, neighbours, and students as well.

“While the first steps of a safe return to campus have been put in place, CAFA is calling for all universities and colleges to develop clear and reasonable accommodation policies that will help faculty keep themselves and their students safe as we enter the fourth wave of COVID this fall,” states Dr. Kevin Kane.

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