

18 December 2021

Dr. Greg Keefe
President (Interim)
University of Prince Edward Island

RE: Winter 2022 COVID-19 Preparations

Dear Interim President Keefe:

In early November, UPEI Administration notified the campus community that in light of their very positive assessment of our health and safety context, UPEI academic staff would be required to teach their Winter 2022 courses on-campus and in-person. Unfortunately, this academic decision was made without consulting with UPEI Senate and without fully appreciating or acknowledging the significant work that our members invest in preparing their courses well in advance of the beginning of the semester.

Today, it is clear that our health and safety context has once again changed and that this new landscape requires the sort of transition that has become all too familiar throughout the pandemic.

Pursuant to the *PEI University Act*, UPEI Senate is responsible for addressing all academic matters including (but not limited to):

- providing for such regulations as may be necessary from time to time for the safe and orderly functioning of the University
- performing all other matters and things which may seem good, fit, and useful for the well ordering and advancement of the academic welfare of the University ...

According to the *UPEI Senate Processes and Procedures*, special meetings may be called by the UPEI President to address emergency academic matters (s.7). At this time, we call on you to convene a special meeting of UPEI Senate to discuss options for Winter 2022 course delivery within the parameters outlined by the PEI Chief Provincial Health Office (CPHO) and in anticipation of any new restrictions that may be imposed. In this context, we strongly encourage UPEI Senate to consider following the lead of other Canadian post-secondary institutions by:

- requiring online course delivery for the first two week of Winter 2022 (Jan. 4 – 18);
- considering requiring online course delivery for at least the first month of Winter 2022 (Jan. 4 – 28);
- committing to providing UPEI academic staff with the resources and supports they need to transition to online course delivery or otherwise carry out their academic function;
- committing to providing anyone designated as “essential services” with additional supports and resources;
- committing to regularly consulting with UPEI Senate and the UPEI campus unions throughout the duration of this emergency.

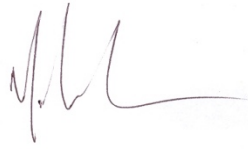
It is imperative that these decisions be made and announced as soon as possible in order to provide faculty, staff, and students with enough time to plan and prepare.

In addition, we once again call on UPEI Administration to immediately release the results of the ventilation evaluation carried out earlier this fall and to commit to keeping faculty, staff and students out of classrooms and campus buildings until a comprehensive ventilation mitigation and safety plan has been rolled out.

With the strong support of the campus community and at the urging of all the UPEI campus unions, UPEI Administration recently implemented a vaccine mandate and masking policy that exceeded existing PEI CPHO guidelines. For the sake of everyone who lives, works, and studies on our campus, we encourage UPEI Administration to work with the Senate and the campus unions to not simply follow CPHO guidelines but to act now to serve as a model of pandemic preparedness for post-secondary institutions across the country.

Working quickly and working together, we believe there is still time to provide our students with an exceptional education even in these challenging and uncertain times. But it will require UPEI Administration to demonstrate both a willingness to work collaboratively with all the campus unions and a recognition of the unique challenges that different members of our campus community face as they navigate this crisis.

Sincerely,



Michael Arfken, PhD
President
UPEI Faculty Association

cc: Mr. Patrick Sinnott, Chair, Board of Governors, UPEI
Dr. Katherine Gottschall-Pass, VPAR, UPEI
Ms. Jackie Podger, VPAF, UPEI