



21 January 2022

Dr. Greg Keefe
Interim President
University of Prince Edward Island

RE: UPEI Faculty Association Winter 2022 Survey

Dear Interim President Keefe:

From January 14-17, the UPEI Faculty Association conducted a survey of our members to identify their concerns and priorities for Winter 2022. The following summary is based on the **164 FA Members** who responded to this survey.

Health & Safety

In the midst of a pandemic that shows no signs of abating, our members have made it clear that their health and safety and that of the entire campus community is of paramount importance. In our survey, we asked our members to identify their top health and safety priorities for Winter 2022. Here is a breakdown of the issues that our members overwhelmingly identified as either essential or very important:

- All PEI Chief Public Health Office (CPHO) guidance (i.e., requirements AND recommendations) is reflected in the UPEI Winter 2022 Operational Plan - (91%)
- COVID-19 testing is readily available to all members of the campus community – (91%)
- Campus unions have input on the UPEI Winter 2022 Operational Plan – (85%)
- COVID-19 vaccination clinics are regularly offered on-campus – (81%)

In addition, our members identified their top priorities for **returning to in-person instruction**. Here is a breakdown of the issues that our members overwhelmingly identified as either essential or very important:

- Maintaining physical distancing (2m/6ft) in the classroom – (83%)

- Regulation of foot traffic and seating in campus building in order to minimize physical contact – (75%)
- Campus community provided with an evaluation of the campus ventilation systems prior to returning to campus – (71%)
- Students, faculty, and staff provided with a properly fitting N95 mask – (69%)

Teaching Supports

In the survey, we also gave our members an opportunity to identify the additional resources and supports that would be of assistance in delivering their courses:

- Funding to support online teaching including software (ex. institutional Zoom license, proctoring software), hardware (ex. microphones, cameras, headphones), and printing costs
- Adequate ITSS support for virtual learning (ex. live technical support)
- Reliable, high-quality WiFi / internet access
- Funding for teaching assistants
- More access to rooms equipped with Yuja
- Additional support for UPEI E-Learning Office

It should be noted that while there are range of views with respect to returning to in-person course delivery, there is near uniformity in the view that not only should course instructors be making these decisions but that it is vital for UPEI to provide instructors with sufficient information (i.e., health and safety, CPHO guidance) to make such decisions.

Research Supports

Our members also weighed in on the resources and supports that would enable them to maintain their research productivity under these challenging conditions:

- Access to secure platforms for collaborative work (ex. SharePoint, OneDrive, Microsoft Teams)

- Access to research software from home (ex. NVIVO).
- Flexibility with deadlines (ex. graduate student registration, submission of University documents)
- Redirecting travel funding towards online conference registration
- Adequate lab/research space
- Temporarily extending PDTR carry forward
- Funding for research assistants

Miscellaneous

Finally, our members identified other resources and supports that didn't necessarily fit within the other categories:

- Clear and consistent communication
- Ensuring that all academic staff (including contract academic staff) have access to mental health supports
- Long-term planning for Winter 2022
- Funding / support for FA members who require childcare

There is no doubt that some of these resources and supports go beyond the negotiated terms of our collective agreement. But it is important to point out that post-secondary institutions across the country have recognized the unique challenges that academic staff face delivering a high-quality education to their students in these unprecedented times. In many cases, university administrations have gone above and beyond to support academic staff and the students who benefit from these superior learning conditions. Unfortunately, throughout the pandemic UPEI academic staff have rarely encountered anything comparable at our institution.

Yet it is also clear that in a number of instances, our members are requesting resources and supports that are absolutely vital for them to carry out their academic function. Insofar as the UPEI Board of Governors has a continuing responsibility to maintain a climate in which the academic functions of our members may effectively be carried out (H2.1), we consider UPEI Administration to have an obligation under

the negotiated terms of our collective agreement to provide these vital resources and supports.

As we are fond of pointing out, **our working conditions are students' learning conditions**. In these extraordinary times, our members have gone above and beyond to ensure that students continue to receive a world-class education. At this time, our members and the entire campus community are looking to you and your administration to not simply acknowledge and honour our members' sacrifices but to also provide concrete resources and supports to enable them to carry out their academic function.

We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Michael Arfken, PhD
President
UPEI Faculty Association

cc: Mr. Pat Sinnott, Chair, UPEI Board of Governors
Ms. Anagha Muralidharan,, VP AE, UPEISU
Dr. Margot Rejskind, Vice President, UPEIFA
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