



25 August 2022

Dr. Greg Keefe  
Interim President  
University of Prince Edward Island

**Re: Fall 2022 COVID-19 Mitigation Measures**

Dear Interim President Keefe,

From August 4-8, the UPEI Faculty Association (UPEIFA) conducted a survey of our members to get a better sense of their **priorities with respect to Fall 2022 COVID-19 campus mitigation measures**. At the same time, we also asked UPEI academic staff what if any additional supports would be helpful for carrying out their academic function in these challenging times. The following is a summary of the responses from **113 UPEIFA Members** who completed the survey. When necessary, we have provided additional commentary to contextualize these responses.

We should note that the UPEIFA survey was completed prior to UPEI Administration distributing a message (August 9) to the campus community regarding Fall 2022 COVID-19 mitigation measures. As such, these survey results should not be viewed as a response to that message.

In our survey, FA Members were given an opportunity to indicate the importance of a number of COVID-19 mitigation measures. The *Total* column indicates the percentage of survey respondents who believed that a particular mitigation measure was either 'important' or a 'top priority.'

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***University of Prince Edward Island Faculty Association***

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	<b>Important</b>	<b>Top Priority</b>	<b>Total</b>
Campus Unions' Input on Fall 2022 Operational Plans	36%	50%	<b>86%</b>
Implementation of All Classroom Ventilation Recommendations	31%	53%	<b>84%</b>
Conduct Ventilation Evaluation (All Campus Workspaces)	37%	44%	<b>81%</b>
Vaccine Requirement	31%	49%	<b>80%</b>
Masking Mandate	35%	36%	<b>71%</b>
Physical Distancing (2m / 6ft)	34%	20%	<b>54%</b>

### **Campus Unions' Input (Fall 2022)**

As you can see from the survey results, our members have made it clear that consultation with the campus unions on Fall 2022 COVID-19 mitigation measures is one of their top priorities. Unfortunately, the plans that were recently distributed to the campus community do not appear to be the product of any meaningful consultation with our members or with campus union leadership.

In your recent message, you indicated that the Fall 2022 plan had been developed by the UPEI COVID team in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. To our knowledge, none of the campus unions are included on this team. In addition, while your message identified several external stakeholders – the President of Holland College and representatives from the PEI Chief Public Health Office (CPHO) – we remain uncertain as to which internal stakeholders were consulted in the development of these mitigation measures. While campus union leaders did receive what you described as a “courtesy” message several minutes before these plans were distributed to the

campus community, we were not given an opportunity to review these plans or provide input based on our members' concerns. It is also our understanding that worker representatives on the UPEI Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) were not given an opportunity to review these specific measures and provide input prior to their adoption by UPEI Administration (*PEI Occupational Health and Safety Act*, s. 25.7).

Given the potential for these mitigation measures to have a significant impact on the health and safety of UPEI campus workers, our members believe it is imperative that campus union leaders have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on health and safety measures prior to their dissemination and implementation.

### **Campus Air Quality / Ventilation**

After multiple requests from the UPEI campus unions, UPEI Administration provided the campus community with an update (August 10) on the implementation of MCA Consultants' recommendations for improving campus classroom ventilation.

While this update leaves little doubt that UPEI Administration's top priority remains the health and safety of our students, it appears that few if any of the long-term strategies for addressing campus building ventilation will be in place before the start of the Fall semester. Moreover, even the long-term measures that are anticipated to be completed by the end of this year or early next year are largely focused on spaces that will have minimal impact on our classrooms and the vast majority of spaces occupied by UPEI campus workers. As should be clear from our survey, UPEI academic staff find this situation deeply concerning.

Once again, we call on UPEI Administration to not only expeditiously implement all MCA Consultants' recommendations but to also demonstrate its concerns for UPEI worker health and safety by conducting a thorough evaluation of ventilation systems that impact UPEI workers across campus.

### **Masking Mandate**

As you can see from the survey results, FA Members continue to view a robust masking mandate as an important component of an overall COVID-19 mitigation strategy. In your recent communication, you indicated that while UPEI would be implementing a mandatory masking policy, there would be a number of exceptions to this policy. Given the importance that our members place on this mitigation measure, we strongly encourage you to not only outline the steps that UPEI will be taking to provide campus

workers with appropriate masks but also provide further information on how this policy will be enforced across campus.

### **Additional Supports**

In our survey, we also asked FA Members to identify any teaching, research, or service supports that would help them carry out their academic function and improve our students' learning experiences. The most common responses included:

- Clear and proactive health and safety communication from UPEI Administration
- Institutional Zoom accounts for UPEI academic staff
- High-quality / reliable campus Wi-Fi
- Dedicated technical support
- Quality cameras / microphones for course delivery
- Reducing administrative barriers to research

In previous communications, you have emphasized the importance of a positive and collaborative working environment. To that end, we would like to commend UPEI Administration for its commitment to offering both campus vaccination clinics as well as rapid testing. While we have identified a number of areas where we believe there is room for significant improvement, we hope you will view the results of this survey and our commentary as an opportunity for you to collaborate with the campus unions to improve the health and safety of everyone who works, studies, and lives on our campus.

Sincerely,



Michael Arfken  
President  
UPEI Faculty Association

cc:

Mr. Pat Sinnott, Chair, Board of Governors, UPEI  
Dr. Greg Naterer, Vice President Academic & Research, UPEI  
Ms. Jackie Podger, Vice President Administration & Finance, UPEI