

MEDIA RELEASE

What Will Campus Look Like This Fall? New Campus Health & Safety Measures Raise
More Questions Than Answers

(xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səlilwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) Territories – Vancouver, BC, August 25, 2021) – The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) says [the Government’s announcement yesterday](#) on post-secondary health and safety measures raises more questions than answers and, for many, does not go far enough to reassure faculty at the eleventh hour of the start of term.

“We welcome the re-introduction of indoor mask mandates and proof of vaccination for some activities on campus, though these measures seem insufficient for the complex space of a university and make it hard to imagine what a university campus will look like come September 7,” says CUFA BC President Dr. Daniel Laitsch.

Post-secondary campuses are not the same as K-12 schools because class sizes are much bigger and you are regulating adults in a less controlled, more mobile setting. Universities are highly complex spaces that combine discretionary and non-discretionary spaces as well as fully public spaces that aren’t entirely discrete from one another. The proof of vaccine requirement in certain spaces like conference or seminar meetings seems arbitrary when they don’t equally apply to classrooms with hundreds of students.

Post-secondary institutions are permitted to introduce their own supplemental health and safety measures but only for faculty and staff and not for students, raising yet more questions about the constraints on institutional autonomy to establish campus safety measures. Earlier this month, CUFA BC released an [open letter calling on Minister Kang to affirm institutional autonomy](#) over decisions of campus safety.

“We thank Minister Kang for responding to our open letter calling for institutional autonomy,” says Laitsch. “We welcome in part this affirmation but reject the notion that institutions cannot extend safety measures to all campus community members, including students.”

Government noted during the announcement that further guidance and revisions to the [Return-to-Campus Guidelines](#), released earlier this summer, would be coming soon. CUFA BC acknowledges that Government is responding to a highly fluid situation. Unfortunately, these announcements just days before the semester starts leave institutions in an awkward space of trying to implement complex policy without a full understanding of provincial requirements and with no added funding to offset necessary expenditures. It is now apparent that the responsibility falls to university administrators, faculty and staff unions, and joint occupational health and safety committees to go beyond the minimalist approach of Government in order to make campuses safer for everyone.

We look forward to continuing to work with Government in clarifying these new campus safety measures as well as continuing our role as a stakeholder in revising the [Return-to-Campus Guidelines](#).

For further information or comment please contact CUFA BC Executive Director Annabree Fairweather at 604-367-5856 or executive.director@cufa.bc.ca.

CUFA BC represents over 5,500 faculty members, including professors, professional librarians, lecturers, instructors, and other academics at the five research-intensive universities in British Columbia, which include University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, Royal Roads University and University of Northern British Columbia. CUFA BC [celebrates fifty years](#) of working closely with the member Faculty Associations at each institution. Our purposes are to support high-quality post-secondary education and research in British Columbia and to advocate for the interests of our members.

