

December 13, 2021

Santa J. Ono  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
University of British Columbia  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor Walter C. Koerner Library  
1958 Main Mall, Vancouver BC V6T 1Z2

*SENT VIA EMAIL*

Dear President Ono:

The Faculty Association has noted with concern the world-wide rise of the Omicron variant, the recent covid exposure at Totem Residences, and the covid exposures at other Canadian universities serious enough for those universities to move December final exams online. It is prudent to assume that BC is like other jurisdictions and that we can expect Omicron to be the dominant strain here by the time the new term's classes begin in January. Early indications are that boosters are required for best protection against Omicron, and at the current rate at which BC is rolling out the booster program only a small percentage of UBC faculty, students, and staff will have that protection by 10 January 2022. Moreover, even if Omicron is "mild" it is highly transmissible; thus, while BC hospitals and ICUs might be able to handle the strain, we should expect widespread absenteeism due to illness or exposure in UBC courses and other academic settings. This will be highly disruptive of the academic mission at UBC.

In light of these facts, we ask, on behalf of our membership, the following questions:

What are UBC's contingency plans for Winter Term 2? In particular, what should our members be doing right now to prepare for possibilities regarding hybrid delivery or pivoting to online instruction in January or later in the term?

Will UBC be raising its mask standards to medical-grade masks in line with Canada's Chief Public Health Officer's advice that covid is airborne?

Will rapid antigen testing be widely available on UBC's campuses in order to give UBC persons more information about their own state of health, so they can take more appropriate action on behalf of the health of our community?

The Faculty Association is eager to participate in contingency planning so that we can achieve the best academic and health outcomes for the UBC community. Please let us know how we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Professor Alan Richardson  
President

C Professor Andrew Szeri, Provost and Vice-President Academic, UBC Vancouver  
Professor Ananya Mukherjee Reed, Provost and Vice-President Academic, UBC Okanagan