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Open Letter to President Gertler

August 13, 2021

Dear UTFA Colleagues,

Please see below UTFA's open letter to President Gertler regarding yesterday's announcement on vaccinations and a safe return to campus.

Sincerely,

Terezia Zorić,
UTFA President

August 12, 2021

SENT BY EMAIL

Dear President Gertler,

I am writing to express the University of Toronto Faculty Association's disappointment in last night's announcement by the University of Toronto Administration concerning a safe return to campus. The communication was nothing more than a repackaging of the same policy that the Administration acknowledged, as late as last week, does not constitute a vaccine mandate. Yesterday's announcement was misleading and inadequate and does little to ensure a safe return to the University. UTFA has several concerns.

First, the Administration's assertion that everyone on campus will be required to be vaccinated or tested does not bear scrutiny. With very few exceptions, the overwhelming majority of those on campus are still only required to self-declare their vaccination status without any obligation to show proof. This is especially vexing because there is already a mechanism in place for U of T students living in residence to

upload proof of vaccination.

Second, the Administration's overall health and safety plan lacks the detail and structure that would ensure transparency and accountability. To date, minimum standards for a safe return to the University of Toronto campus have not been met. For example, faculty and librarians are deeply concerned about being pressured to teach in classrooms at full capacity, including classes of several hundred students, without any physical distancing or verified ventilation, and to work in common areas such as libraries that have seen no improvements in ventilation or filtration.

We need U of T to implement specific, measurable, and accountable actions in a clear and unambiguous way. UTFA, CUPE 3902, and USW 1998 provided a verifiable action plan to the Administration via a Health and Safety Checklist for University Reopening. It was developed by U of T's internationally recognized public health and indoor air quality experts. This checklist recognizes that vaccinations alone cannot keep us safe. It sets minimum standards for improved ventilation, physical distancing in classrooms and common areas, and masking requirements. Once again, we urge the Administration to implement the comprehensive checklist.

Third, the Administration continues to refuse to meet, at one table as repeatedly requested, with student, staff, and faculty association representatives so that the University community can work together to protect the health and safety of us all.

We owe it to everyone on campus to do more and to do better to create a safe, accountable, and transparent return-to-campus strategy that is inclusive and aligns with public health science.

The stakes are high. Time is limited and the COVID fourth wave is upon us. We must act with urgency. We must provide our community with a University reopening that is safe and in which we can all have confidence and trust.

Let's work together.

Sincerely,

Terezia Zorić
UTFA President

c.c.
Heather Boon, Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life
Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice-President, People Strategy, Equity and Culture
Trevor Young, Acting Vice-President & Provost

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