

Dear UFV Administration,

SUS would like to convey our disappointment in learning that UFV decided not to take action based on the voices of students.

This is the first time in SUS's history of surveying that there has been such a unanimous concern regarding University plans, and yet the response to your students has not addressed the strong concern and the reality of how they are feeling. With our survey, now closed, the final figures indicate that 68% of students disapprove of returning to campus on the 24th, and 70% believe that back to campus should be delayed. The comments indicate massive concern, and express incredible amounts of anxiety, fear, and ultimately disappointment that UFV is not providing as safe an environment as they are capable.

SUS is even further disconcerted by the University's reliance on public health statements to inform academic decision-making; statements that continue to stray from being grounded in public and transparent data. You have cited that "from September 7, 2021, to December 11, 2021, according to Fraser Health, just 1.7% of total reported cases among Fraser Health residents have been associated with staff and students attending post-secondaries", yet the first case of the Omicron variant appeared only on November 28th – a crossover of only 9 instructional days from the end of the Fall semester not including the examination period.¹ Data used from the period of September 7th – December 11th cannot in good faith be used in any way to evaluate the risk of the omicron variant when the majority of universities in BC are either returning on the same date planned as UFV or delayed even further. We plead that you, having ultimate responsibility for your students, go beyond the recommendations and put the health of students first.

Students are struggling to make informed decisions on this semester, which is hindering their ability towards academic success as the lack of transparency is being met with negative mental health effects. Delaying the start of in-person classes would have provided students comfort and less mental stress. Additionally, due to the lack of transparency students are feeling inadequately equipped to return. SUS requests that UFV addresses the following common questions that students raised in our return to campus survey:

Safety Protocols and Procedures

1. Will there be limits on class sizes?
2. How often will classrooms get cleaned throughout the day?
3. How will the proper use of masks be enforced?
4. Will you be able to eat or drink in class?
5. Will added safety measures be put in place to protect the health and safety of students and staff (increased cleaning, social distancing in classrooms, access to hand sanitizer, etc.)?
6. Will UFV ensure social distancing occurs in classes and on campus?
7. Will health checks be required before attending a class in person?

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/omicron-variant-canada-travellers-1.6265927>

If a Student is Ill or Tests Positive for COVID-19

1. Will students be notified if someone in their class tests positive for COVID-19?
2. Will students get penalized for having to miss classes or exams due to illness or COVID-19?
3. What is the procedure if a student tests positive for COVID-19? Whom do they need to notify?
4. Who will be responsible for ensuring that all students attending class in person are not ill?

Financial Questions

1. Can students get a refund for their classes this semester if they cannot attend or do not feel safe attending classes in person?

Logistical Questions

1. Will professors have the option to keep their classes online for this semester?
2. If a student is at elevated risk or lives with someone who is at elevated risk for COVID-19, will accommodations be made to allow them to continue their learning online?
3. If classes return in-person and cases increase at UFV, will the university have to move back to remote learning?

SUS expected heavier consideration of student feedback in its decision to return to in-person learning. SUS has provided UFV with a large sample size in an effort to have students' questions answered. Answering these questions will aid and support student mental health while transitioning back to campus. Students have been waiting for answers and struggling with the lack of transparency. SUS and students are looking forward to UFV's response regarding their questions.

On behalf of the SUS Executives,

Nikiel Lal, SUS President

