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Simon Fraser University - Student Concerns With Return to Campus Plans

Today, students at Simon Fraser University are set to return to in-person classes at all three SFU campuses. With the rise in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, stalling vaccination rates, and the surge of the Delta Variant, students' confidence in BC's approach to reopening Universities is at an all-time low.

"SFU Students are happy to see measures being implemented such as mask mandates for classrooms and rapid testing for the unvaccinated," said SFSS President Gabe Liosis. "But many students believe that the province and BC universities are fundamentally falling short of implementing measures that we know can ensure our safety this Fall."

Since June 2021, the Simon Fraser Student Society has called on the [SFU Administration](#) and the [Province of British Columbia](#) to implement measures that would create an equitable return to in-person learning while simultaneously taking every precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19 on campus.

With continuous monthly meetings with the SFU Administration and SFU staff, the SFSS has brought forward concrete and viable solutions to ensuring safety to students, staff, and faculty. These calls to action include:

Teaching Adjustments: working with faculty and staff to support hybrid teaching methods, mandating recorded lectures, removing mandated in-person participation marks, accommodating any marginalized student as per their needs

Mental and Personal Health: removing barriers to access accommodations/adjustments to the [Centre for Accessible Learning \(CAL\)](#),

Public Health: requiring social distancing in lecture halls, providing COVID-19 testing on campus for all community members, providing ongoing vaccination clinics on campus, mandating masks and vaccines for all community members, thorough sanitization protocols, and improved air circulation in classes,

With pressure from campaigns of the SFSS and community members, we have seen some of these calls to actions implemented, but many of them have not been acted upon.

"If students are given the choice to take a vaccine or not, students should be given the choice to attend in-person classes or not - hybrid models should be implemented and prioritized," said Vice-President of Equity & Sustainability Marie Haddad. "Many students are having anxiety or stress related to the last-minute nature and non-equitable approach to the

return to campus, they should not be forced to return to campus, risking their health in order to continue their education. The University needs to do more.”

Post-secondary institutions like SFU will only commit to what they are told to do by the province. The province’s unwillingness to give Universities agency to implement safety measures that go above and beyond provincial guidelines will inevitably lead to the spread of COVID-19 in the community that could have been prevented.

For 18 months, SFU students have been receiving their education remotely in hopes that one day, we would safely return to campus. That day has come - but more must be done to ensure that students are not put at any unnecessary risk.