

November 29, 2021

Dr. Santa Ono  
President and Vice-Chancellor, University of British Columbia

Dear President Ono,

**Re: COVID-19 monitoring and measures at the University of British Columbia**

The Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer at Vancouver Coastal health has great appreciation for the leadership of UBC administration during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the actions taken by students, faculty and staff. Supported by positive ongoing relationships between public health and the university, UBC has successfully implemented the BC COVID-19 Return-to-Campus guidelines to address COVID-19 risk in all aspects of university operations. During instances when contact tracing has been necessary due to on-campus exposures, UBC personnel have readily facilitated and heeded public health action, limiting onward transmission. Furthermore, UBC has taken enhanced measures to promote COVID-19 vaccination among the community.

I am pleased to provide an update on COVID-19 in the post-secondary context, including UBC. In terms of case counts, during this academic year detailed contact tracing interviews of COVID-19 cases in VCH have found that 207 cases were students/staff of post-secondary institutions (data current to Nov 26, 2021). This represents a very low incidence rate: given the estimated post-secondary population of over 100,000 in the region, the incidence among this post-secondary cohort has been less than 3 cases/100,000 population per day, among the lowest community rates observed during this phase of the pandemic in BC. Notably, weekly case counts declined following the first week of the academic year in September.

Regarding vaccination, we are in receipt of data that 79,593 UBC students/staff have now reported their vaccination status as is required by UBC. Among this group, 76,828 report being fully vaccinated: 96.5% of those submitting disclosures. It is our understanding that verification of reported vaccination status is underway, and the process thus far appears to have validated the very high reported uptake of vaccination. This data aligns with surveys of specific sub-groups with the post-secondary sector.

UBC has supported the experience of safety in the community with measures above and beyond those strictly required by the Provincial Health Officer. For example, unvaccinated UBC students and staff are required to participate in serial rapid testing as a screen for COVID-19. VCH has received data that with over 3,000 screening tests conducted among this unvaccinated cohort to date, one test has been positive (at UBC-Okanagan).

Following evaluation of surveillance and vaccination data, and in consultation with the BC Centre for Disease Control, we would advise UBC leaders that ongoing mandatory rapid tests for unvaccinated personnel, and related employment/academic sanctions, are not required for COVID-19 control in the campus community. Vancouver Coastal Health will continue to closely monitor the

epidemiology of COVID-19 at UBC and other post-secondary contexts, and remains committed to working closely with universities and colleges in the region.

We applaud the University of British Columbia for its work to protect and promote the wellbeing of students, staff and faculty in the community.

Sincerely,



**Dr. Michael Schwandt**  
Medical Health Officer  
Vancouver Coastal Health