Dear President Professor Goel
Dear FAUW President Professor Curtis
Dear Dean Professor Ager
Dear Chair Professor Porreca

With much concern, I have been following the communications on the planned return to campus on February 7. I do not want to doubt each of the stakeholders’ best intentions, but I think that we are missing an opportunity to come out of the pandemic stronger and more united. And this although we are much better prepared and equipped than most other institutions in Canada: with a vaccination rate that we can be most proud of and with a high number of instructors eager to return to campus and not shying away from continued high workloads to make things work, we are in a position to render the transition to normalcy a splendid success.

But we are running the risk of losing this great opportunity by frustrating the many students and colleagues who have legitimate reasons for not yet returning. The Covid-19 protocol is further inconsistent: do you think that Omicron is still a high risk for individuals on our campus (which would forbid the general return next week) or do you think it is not (and physical distancing or wearing masks is no more required)? If the latter is the case, then FAUW’s insistence on safety should perhaps better shift towards resourcing the departments and granting accommodations where needed.

My point is not to blame anyone for not knowing the one thing or believing in the other. People have their own views, hopes and fears, and the inconsistent message sent out by the administration does not help us overcome uncertainty. What it does is increasing stress and anxiety, whether fact based or not. At the same time, thousands of our students do feel an urgent need to regain their lives and are most eager to return under the current conditions.

We should hurry to escape these one-sided arguments and seek more creative and balanced paths towards a solution of our problems. I therefore suggest:

* Let the administration negotiate with FAUW and representatives of the student bodies which resources must, should, can or need not be provided for those who return!
* Let Health Services not become an administrative nightmare for those who need accommodations, but assist them in finding resources or solutions for those who are experiencing difficulties and need our help!
* Let the departments enquire into the needs and availability of their instructors and students, and be empowered to organize collegially, constructively, and pragmatically a study program that has sufficient online and offline offerings as to make sense for hopefully all students!
* Stop praising the resiliency and innovative spirit of our community – better start trusting in it!

If you think that my suggestions have merit and should inform the decision-making process, you might be interested in reading the fuller argument at <http://www.altaycoskun.com/controversies> #1.

Thanks a lot for your consideration, I look forward to reading your responses.

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