



Vivek Goel, Vice President, Research and Innovation  
Alex Brat, Executive Director, Labour Relations  
Gina Trubiani, Director, Occupational Health and Safety  
Mark Drouin, Director, Research Safety and Compliance

July 2, 2020

Dear Professor Goel, Mr. Brat, Ms. Trubiani and Mr. Drouin,

The past few months have been unprecedented in our lifetimes as the COVID-19 pandemic has shut down our city and caused the University of Toronto administration, staff, faculty, and librarians to pivot very quickly to online operations. This has been a challenging time for all our members, with concerns about Health and Safety, workload, working from home without childcare and job loss.

Throughout this period, there has been some very constructive dialogue between the University Administration and the Unions and Faculty Association on a number of key issues related to the pandemic and its impact on our workplace. Management has been largely responsive when we have raised Health and Safety issues for people who are still working onsite.

We have been disappointed, however, that the JHSC worker members have not been informed about Health and Safety plans and measures in the workplace related to COVID, even though they are now more important than ever for ensuring the safety of workers and administrators alike. JHSCs have proven to be essential in protecting the Health and Safety culture in the workplace and Committee members have detailed knowledge of their workplaces. While employers have the greatest responsibility for Health and Safety in the workplace, workers' input and inclusion through JHSCs, Unions and Faculty Associations are essential.

Union and Faculty Association representation and JHSC inclusion are essential for ensuring campus workers' voices are adequately heard and best practices for protecting the safety and health of our campus community are followed as preparations are made for reopening our campuses. Without workers' input, it would be impossible to adequately identify new workplace risks created by COVID-19, to develop best practices for addressing these risks and to ensure worker compliance with new measures in place. During a pandemic, the role of these Committees and the need for cooperation between Employers, Unions and Faculty Associations is more important than ever.

As the University Administration starts to develop its roadmap for a safe return to campus, we would like to request an urgent meeting for all of the Unions and Faculty Association leaders to meet with University Health and Safety decision makers to discuss safe return plans and the University's decision making process. Our goal would be to establish regular opportunities for such joint discussions on an ongoing basis. The University will benefit from feedback from the Unions and Faculty Association which have close contact with their members and understand their workplaces and concerns. We are in regular contact with our members, many of whom are very anxious about a return to campus. If we are engaged in the planning process and are able to have input, we can use our networks as part of a joint effort of communicating the University's plans to our members and educating them on safe workplace practices. This will make the return to campus smoother for everyone. We want every member of the University of Toronto community to be able to return to campus with confidence.

Sincerely,

Colleen Burke  
President, USW Local 1998

Amy Conwell  
Chair, CUPE 3902

Mark Austin,  
Health and Safety Officer  
USW Local 1998

Farhana Islam  
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