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2021 AMS Return to Campus Survey Report

Office of the Vice President Academic and University Affairs



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Introduction

The 2021 AMS Return to Campus survey was conducted by the UBC Alma Mater Society (AMS) to gather information on student needs, concerns, and demographics for the upcoming Winter 2021 session. A total of 7933 UBC students (including current and incoming full-time or part-time undergraduate and graduate students at the UBC Vancouver campus or affiliate colleges) participated in the survey between July 6th and July 15th, 2021. Below we summarize the key findings surrounding demographics and student concerns regarding student residences, learning experiences and COVID-19 campus safety.

Survey Demographics

Out of the 8173 total respondents to the survey, 7933 are current or incoming students at the UBC Vancouver campus. Non-UBC students were automatically directed to the end of the survey and their responses are not included in this report.

Level of Current Program of Study:

- 6441 undergraduate students (81%)
- 1492 graduate students (19%)

Faculty Distribution:

- Faculty of Applied Science (1119 respondents)
- Faculty of Arts (2261 respondents)
- Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration (675 respondents)
- Faculty of Dentistry (73 respondents)
- Faculty of Education (462 respondents)
- Faculty of Forestry (170 respondents)
- Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (169 respondents)
- Faculty of Land and Food Systems (327 respondents)
- Peter A. Allard School of Law (123 respondents)
- Faculty of Medicine (300 respondents)
- Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences (194 respondents)
- Faculty of Science (1903 respondents)
- Affiliate Colleges (4 respondents)

Domestic/International:

- 5271 students from within BC (66%)
- 979 from out of province (12%)
- 1683 international students (21%)

Vaccination Rate:

- 96% of respondents have been vaccinated with at least one dose or have immediate plans to be vaccinated
- 0.7% are unable to receive vaccines due to cultural or medical reasons
- 0.5% do not have access to vaccines
- 1.2% choose not to be vaccinated
- **Breakdown of the 96% Respondents:**
 - Within BC: 67%
 - Outside BC (within Canada): 13%
 - Outside Canada: 20%

Impaired Immune System: 13% of students reported to be or have someone in their household be immunocompromised or have a pre-existing health condition that places them at a higher risk.

Students with Disabilities: 7% of students identified as a person with a disability.

Caregiving Duties: 8% of students have dependents that rely on them for caregiving responsibilities.

UBC Return to Campus

Less than half of UBC students (46%) are confident in current plans for a return to campus. Overall, there is a great amount of uncertainty and concerns surrounding the safety of in-person classes and student residences.

General Comfort: Low Comfort Levels Surrounding In-Person Activities

Students are generally very concerned with in-person activities. Despite the high level of vaccination rate among students on campus, high-density areas such as social gatherings, buses, and lecture halls are all areas of concern for UBC students.

- Majority of students stated that being personally fully vaccinated is the **most important** factor/criterion when ensuring coming back to campus.
- High vaccination rate across campus is regarded as the second most important factor when considering returning to campus.
- Over half of survey respondents (56%) are not comfortable in participating in large gatherings when returning to campus in September.
- Over 49% of all students reported that being exposed to COVID-19 on their daily commute to UBC in the fall was a concern to them.

Learning and Classroom Experience: Rising Concerns for Large Lecture Halls

There is a great sense of excitement among students to return to in-person classes. However, students are very concerned with the risk of exposure in large classrooms, especially lecture halls with tight seating arrangements. Alternative experiences such as smaller classes and hybrid learning are a preference for students.

- Over 60% of students are concerned with being exposed to COVID-19 in classrooms and lecture halls.
- Students are more comfortable in attending smaller classes (80%) and accessing libraries, labs, and study spaces (76%).
- **Preference for Mode of Delivery:**
 - 2/3rds of respondents (65%) are in favour of having a hybrid method of learning (mix of in-person and online classes).
 - 16% of respondents are in favour of another year of entirely online classes.
 - 18% are in favour of all in-person classes.

Recorded Lectures: Massive Benefits to General Student Wellness

From the results of the survey, the mass majority of students would utilize recorded lectures to enhance their learning experience if they were offered. Offering lectures could be beneficial to student wellness as it could potentially decrease commute times and increase accessibility to office hours.

- Commute times would be significantly cut down for 71% of students if recorded lectures were offered.
- 56% of students would attend office hours more often if they were offered virtually.
- 67% of students responded that they would use recorded lectures in addition to attending in-person classes as learning materials.
- If offered, 29% of respondents reported that they would use recorded lectures instead of attending classes.
- 84% of students agreed with the statement that having “control over recorded lectures (speed up, slow down, pause, rewind) would increase my efficiency/ enhance my learning.”
- Only 6% of students reported that they would not use recorded lectures if they were offered.

Residence: Widespread Support for Mandatory Vaccinations in UBC Residence

The majority of students with plans to stay in UBC Residence are in strong support of stricter safety measures. With over half of the survey respondents commuting to UBC in September 2021, exposure to the SARS-CoV-2 virus on public transit is a glaring concern among students.

- 21% of respondents will be living in UBC Student Residences in September.
- 14% will be living on campus but not in UBC Residences.
- Around 56% of student respondents will be commuting to classes in September.
- Approximately 1.6% of respondents will be residing either out-of-province or abroad in September 2021. 6% of respondents are still unsure.
- Out of all the students with plans to reside in UBC Student Residences, 82% are in support of policies demanding mandatory proof of vaccination in Student Residences (With the knowledge that there are currently no plans for mandatory vaccinations in student residence + that there are no vaccines that are mandatory in Canada)

Question:

- “In B.C, the COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory, furthermore, there are no vaccines in Canada that are mandatory. Some institutions in other provinces (Western University, Ryerson University, and the University of Toronto) have mandated that students in their university residences have at least one dose of COVID vaccinations (with accommodations). Would you be in support of a similar policy being implemented at UBC?”

Concerns for Students Overseas: Uncertainties Surrounding Quarantine

International student concerns mostly arise from the uncertainty of international flights, quarantine regulations, and visa issues. The financial costs of quarantine upon international arrival are also a major concern among students out of the country. In addition, a surprising amount of internationally located students have expressed concerns over the ability to relocate to Vancouver by the start of class on September 7th.

- 1177 students (16% of respondents) will be relocating internationally to arrive in Vancouver for September classes.
- Out of these respondents, 68% of students are concerned with the finances associated with quarantine upon arrival.
- 56% of students are concerned with a lack of a vaccine mandate and similarly, 54% are concerned with the lack of a mask mandate on campus.
- Around 23% of arriving students have concerns regarding access to vaccines upon arrival.
- 32% of arriving students are afraid of discrimination from peers about the credibility of vaccines from their country of origin.
- Additionally, 15% of all 7933 respondents expressed concern over the ability to relocate to Vancouver by the start of classes in September 2021.

Conclusion

With nearly 8,000 students completing the AMS Return to Campus survey (15% of all UBCV students), the data of the survey was able to provide us reliable information on the demographics, concerns, and needs of the students. To summarize, the majority of students have a range of concerns about returning to campus this fall, particularly with the safety of in-person classes, large gatherings on campus, and commuting to campus. There is also overwhelming support for mandated COVID-19 vaccines in student residences. Additionally, for international students, quarantine costs and the lack of vaccine and mask mandate on campus are top of their concerns. Besides the survey questions, we also provided an additional section for comments regarding returning to campus in the fall. Over 2500 questions, comments, and concerns have been received, the findings of which will be provided upon completion of the analysis.



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