

**From:** [FAFA](#) on behalf of [FA President](#)  
**To:** [Faculty Association](#)  
**Subject:** [Fafa] Welcome Back! COVID News, Budget Reductions and Bargaining  
**Date:** September 7, 2022 4:45:29 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[Family Status Accommodation\[2\].pdf](#)  
[ATT00001.txt](#)

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Dear Members,

I hope all is well with all of you, and that you have all had some time to relax over the summer.

Welcome back to the beginning of term, and a special warm welcome, both to UVic and to your Faculty Association, to all new faculty members and librarians.

### **COVID news**

I'm afraid I have at best a mixed bag of news for you. In some positive COVID news, the University is continuing through the coming academic year with upgraded ventilation measures (i.e., increased fresh air intakes, exchanges, and flushes, MERV13 filtration, etc.) to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, the University is not willing to implement a mask mandate for classroom spaces, as is being done at a number of Canadian universities this fall. As we heard in March, they are following the directives of the Public Health Officer in this regard. However, it is our understanding that you can still require students or others who enter your private office to wear a mask.

If you have a medical condition that puts you at greater risk of contracting COVID or of experiencing severe symptoms in the event that you do contract COVID, you may be entitled to a range of accommodation measures that would protect you against infection. Specific accommodation measures will depend on the nature of any disability or other medical issues you may have and the recommendations of an appropriate medical practitioner. At this time, medical accommodation requests related to COVID are being processed in the same way as any non-COVID medical accommodations. Members who are interested in requesting a medical accommodation should contact Kelly Simpson ([kellysimpson@uvic.ca](mailto:kellysimpson@uvic.ca)), the Work Life Consultant responsible for processing those requests.

If you have substantial familial responsibilities that cannot be delegated to another family member and that may be compromised if you were to contract COVID, you may be entitled to a family status accommodation. The office of Faculty Relations has clarified that the process for requesting family status accommodations has not changed. The first step for any member who wishes to be granted a family status accommodation is to bring, in writing, the request and relevant contextual information to their immediate supervisor (Chair, Director, Supervising Librarian, or Dean). Where a request is based in part on a family member's medical vulnerability, appropriate documentation from a

treating physician will likely be expected by the University. See attached memo for further information on this matter.

If you are unsure about whether or how to apply for a medical or family status accommodation (whether COVID-related or otherwise), our Membership Services staff would be happy to assist you. You are welcome to contact Reuben Kellen ([msofa@uvic.ca](mailto:msofa@uvic.ca)), Ben Johnson ([advisorfa@uvic.ca](mailto:advisorfa@uvic.ca)) or Nathan Todd ([uvicfa@uvic.ca](mailto:uvicfa@uvic.ca)) with any questions you may have.

### **Temporary Budget Reductions**

As some of you have heard from your Chairs and Deans, the Administration has recently announced that there is a 17 million dollar shortfall in the university's operating budget for this fiscal year (the fiscal year ends at the end of March 2023). The Administration has told us that the ongoing social and global impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with inflation and delays in processing study permits federally, have affected revenue generated by student recruitment and enrolment.

They therefore see this as a short-term financial problem. Since the University is not permitted by the government to run deficits, the Administration is seeking budget reductions. (If they got permission from the government to run a deficit, this would give the government more power to impose its own cuts, and I do not see that as being in the interests of our members).

The Administration has told Deans and unit heads of non-academic units that all units across campus, both academic and non-academic, will have to find a one-time six per cent in savings from their budgets over this fiscal year. Senior administrative units, including the Vice President Academic's Office and the President's Office, will also have to find these reductions. These reductions can come from carry-forward accounts, equipment reserves and operating funds. The Administration is apparently allowing each Faculty and non-academic unit to decide how to find this money. However, they have told us that external grant funds, and other contractual obligations of the university (including faculty Professional Development Funds, Chair research funds, etc) cannot be part of these reductions. The Administration has also told the FA that these reductions are designed to hold onto the existing employee complement and so should not result in staff layoffs. In the unlikely event that any staff layoffs occurred, faculty and librarian layoffs cannot be part of this process, as this would require the University to declare a state of financial exigency and go through a major process outlined in our Collective Agreement. It is our clear understanding that we are not currently facing this kind of financial crisis.

As part of the University's plans to reduce this budget shortfall they are also imposing what they are calling a "pause and review" (not a freeze) on current hiring, including hiring that is presently underway. This includes academic and non-academic positions, including senior administrative positions. If a unit has a very strong rationale for moving forward with a particular hiring, they can attempt to justify it through a review process as an exception with their relevant Vice President. For academic positions, this would be the Vice President Academic. However, there are no guarantees that these requests for exceptions to the hiring "pause" will be granted as approval is only granted by the university's Executive.

We trust that the administration will be transparent in how the impact of budget reductions and

hiring “pauses” will apply equally across all levels of our campus.

### **Salary/Bargaining**

Normally funding for salary increases that will be negotiated in the current bargaining round with the University is a separate pot of government funding. This is given to the University by the BC government for faculty and staff compensation when the PSEC mandate is finalized. Salary increases to be bargained in the current bargaining round will therefore not be impacted by these temporary budget reductions.

We were very pleased to hear that after job action over the summer to achieve wage increases that reflect the cost of living, that today the BCGEU has announced a tentative negotiated settlement with the BC government. This settlement still needs to be ratified by their union membership, but it means we are now very close to having a PSEC bargaining mandate for the broader public service, including the postsecondary sector. This will enable us to move forward in our bargaining with the University, set to re-start September 20<sup>th</sup>.

As I have informed you, thus far we have only been able to discuss non-monetary issues with the University, but once we have a PSEC mandate from the government, we will also be able to bargain matters related to salary, benefits and other monetary matters. The FA’s negotiating team will be working very hard in bargaining this fall to ensure that you receive the strongest possible compensation package. We will be updating you regularly about the progress of bargaining over the fall. For earlier bargaining updates see <https://www.uvicfa.ca/bargaining-updates/>

I am pleased to try and answer any questions you may have about the content of this email, and you may also wish to seek information from your Chair or Dean about the budget reductions.

New faculty and librarians, we hope to see you at our Faculty Association Welcome Event for new members, to be held Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup> from 3:30 to 5:30 in the Fireside Lounge of the University Club. More details to follow.

Wishing you all a painless and even exciting re-entry into teaching.

All the very best,

Lynne

Lynne Marks

President and Chief Negotiator, University of Victoria Faculty Association <http://www.uvicfa.ca/>

Professor, Department of History

<https://www.uvic.ca/humanities/history/people/faculty/markslynne.php>

University of Victoria

Victoria, B.C.

We recognize with respect the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich), Wyomilth (Esquimalt), and Lkwungen (Songhees) peoples on whose territories the University of Victoria stands, and whose

relationships with this land remain profound today.

We acknowledge the devastation that government-created residential schools and Indian hospitals has inflicted on the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and the ongoing effects of concentric trauma that continue to this day.